

08 Surf

Surfing, the sport par excellence, originated on the beaches of the Polynesian islands in the Pacific Ocean. All were born of volcanic eruptions, and the soil and sea along their coastlines form depths and angles, conducive to the generation of huge waves.

Legend tells of a rite of passage for Hawaiian princesses and kings. They had to face the test of huge waves, mounted on simple wooden planks.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Americans took inspiration from this and "riding a breaking wave" became a game, a challenge to oneself. The abundance of practitioners gradually led to the introduction of specific rules, codes and vocabulary.

The craze became worldwide, and by the early 1960s, surfing was also being practiced in France, on the Basque coast.

In 2020, at the Tokyo Olympic Games, it was recognized as an additional sport. The events are formalized and consecrated Olympic, for the Paris 2024 Games.

Within France's vast marine territory, the extraordinary waves of Teahupo'o, Tahiti, are selected as the Olympic venue.

Twenty women and twenty men, the world's best surfers will therefore take part, from July 27 to August 11, 2024, in the events, to win medals and Olympic recognition.

Surfing differs from other balance and sliding sports, such as skateboarding or snowboarding, in that it is a highly demanding water sport. This weather-dependent sport requires, above all, a detailed analysis of tidal coefficients, swell movements, wind directions and wave formation systems.

Every athlete is looking for the right "SPOT"! In other words, the moment when, on approaching the shore, the wave swells and inflates on the outside and simultaneously, on the inside, it deepens, while laterally, it splits into supple movements of differently oriented water.

Of course, if the wind comes from the shore and heads towards the ocean, the wave's internal curvature will extend while smoothing out at the surface. Of course, you need to aim for a solid wave, taller and larger than a person.

Beyond this preliminary deciphering, the surfer must join these water movements, equipped with a board that allows him to glide.

So, after jumping into the water, he lies down on his board and, slightly arched, "paddles" with his arms, alternately, with all the power of his shoulders.

He seeks to position himself at sea, between swell and wave, on the lookout for the right opportunity. He's not alone: from the beach, the water is crowded! Everyone is on the lookout for "their wave", which becomes "their priority". In this hectic environment, to be safe, you must feel the sea, observe the intentions of the other surfers and make up your mind.

Then it's "Pop-Up", you must unfold quickly, go from lying down to standing up, maintain your balance and the direction of your frail skiff as you accelerate into the water.

The first to stand gets "priority", while the others wait for the next wave.

He or she quickly gets close to the "PIC", i.e. the highest part of the breaking wave, and begins the gliding phase to the right or left, accompanying the liquid flows and surface currents.

The surfer aims for the "PIT", the deepest part of a pipeline wave, and enters the tube, surrounded by moving water. It's one of the ultimate sensations, the addictive green room, the annex to paradise! Speed, balance and trajectory are controlled simultaneously by the

movement of the crest and lip of the wave. In other words, the top and sides where the foam forms.

Then, using his or her toes and heels, he or she pilots out of the wave, possibly with a few acrobatics to leave the water, reach the beach and find a new equilibrium on dry land!

At the top left of page 8, to the right of the number, you can see the outside of a wave, with the water moving up and down and rounding out gently. Further to the right, you feel the lip of this wave, i.e. the edge where, in the same movement, foam forms.

On the right-hand side of the page, the inner part of the wave, the movement is reversed: the strong surface current flowing from the steep slope of the shore towards the sea generates a water movement that goes from bottom to top.

In the center, the surfer concentrates on controlling his position in the tube formed by the closing wave and all the elements around him, gliding smoothly and at full speed on his board.

At the bottom of the page, note the nose of the board, then the rails, i.e. each of its lateral sides. At the rear, a clip connects the board to the surfer's left ankle.

The knees are flexibly bent, the pelvis and upper body slightly bent forward, ensuring balance. The right arm, head and gaze are oriented, absorbed by the direction, the trajectory. The left arm, slightly bent, skims the water, in a slight trace parallel to that of the board.

Shortly afterwards, the enormous mass of water closes in, trapping the air in the tube, before bursting and shattering into thousands of splashes of water and foam. Surfers call it foam...

If they don't get off the wave soon enough, caught up in the bursting foam, they go "to the washing machine", they say! It's time to hold your breath!

Experienced champions, immersed in the action of their performance, are aware of this risk and know how to finish their sessions and series differently!

Judges generally base their assessments on these main criteria:

Commitment and degree of difficulty

Innovative and progressive maneuvers

Combination of major maneuvers

Variety of maneuvers

Speed, power and fluidity.