

speed and planing ability, but this point has not been proved satisfactorily to most free bodysurfers who regard the handboard as more of a hindrance than a help.

The effectiveness of handboards aside, the most important thing to realize is that they are potentially dangerous. If a churning wave thrusts your hand into your face, or into any other part of your body, or into someone else alongside you, the board may do some damage. Therefore, handboards should be used with caution.

### Paipo Board Surfing

In the days of old, Hawaiians referred to bodysurfing as *kaha* (or *kaha nalu*) and *pae* (or *paepo'o*). During the early 1900s, the term *paepo'o* was commonly used in Waikīkī, and it meant riding a wave with only the body. After World War II, this particular word took on an alternate definition, referring to bodysurfing with a small board. The pronunciation of the original word, *paepo'o*, was altered, and now even the spelling is changed to paipo. Today “to paipo” means to go bodysurfing with a “bellyboard.” The board itself is called a paipo board.

Paipo board surfing is an intermediate development between bodysurfing and surfboard riding. The paipo board is small (3 to 4 feet long), thin (about ¼ inch thick), and usually made of plywood that is protected by paint or some other waterproofing. The shapes and sizes vary according to individual preferences. Because paipos usually are ridden in a prone position, some spectators call them “bellyboards.” The paipo board rider has much more speed and freedom of movement than does a bodysurfer and often catches much longer rides. Some paipo riders prefer to kneel on their boards, a technique that reduces their speed but allows them maximum maneuverability in the critical sections of the wave. The big outside breaks at Makapu'u attract some of the best paipo riders on O'ahu, and it is well worth the drive to watch them perform on a good day.

A variation of paipo board riding is “mat surfing.” Instead of a board, the rider surfs on a small, air-filled, canvas mattress. However, several shortcomings have kept mat surfing from gaining widespread popularity. The mats are very buoyant, which makes them hard to take out through incoming surf; they are reluctant to go

in any direction other than straight toward shore; and finally, they deflate when punctured. In spite of these drawbacks, mat surfing still remains a very enjoyable sport.

### Sand Sliding

“Sand sliding” is the art of riding the shallow water of a wave as it is receding over the sand. After a wave washes up on a beach and the greater part of it returns to the ocean, a thin layer of water is left trailing over the sand. It is this layer that is used in sand sliding. At first, sand sliders used only their bodies in this daring sport. As the wave receded, the rider would run behind it and, at the right moment, would throw himself flat upon the seemingly waterless sand. The thin layer of water still present, however, was enough to support him, and his momentum carried him skimming over the beach, riding along on his lower chest and stomach while he held his arms close to his side. As might be imagined, the key to successful sand sliding was, and still is, perfect timing. If the rider dives too early, while the water is yet too deep, he simply sinks to a stop. If he dives too late, he misses the fleeting moment entirely—and ends his attempt in an abrupt, belly-scraping halt.

The older style of the sport, that of using only the body, is rarely seen anymore. In recent years the paipo board has been put to this use also. The rider runs after the receding wave, drops his board in front of him, jumps upon it, and goes skimming over the thin cushion of water.

Another variation is to use an air-filled bag instead of a board. The rider grasps a corner of wet air-filled cotton bag in each hand and holds it in front of him, runs after the wave, falls across the bag at the right moment, and slides along, his body supported entirely by the bag. The original bags were military mattress covers. Sometimes even plain sheets were used. In recent years, bags designed specifically for the sport, usually called “bellybags,” have been put on the retail market.

All three forms of “sand sliding” look easy, but in fact they take quite a bit of practice and coordination. All are fun, though, and they also provide good exercise because they require the rider to run in wet sand.