

FAST BELLY BOARDS

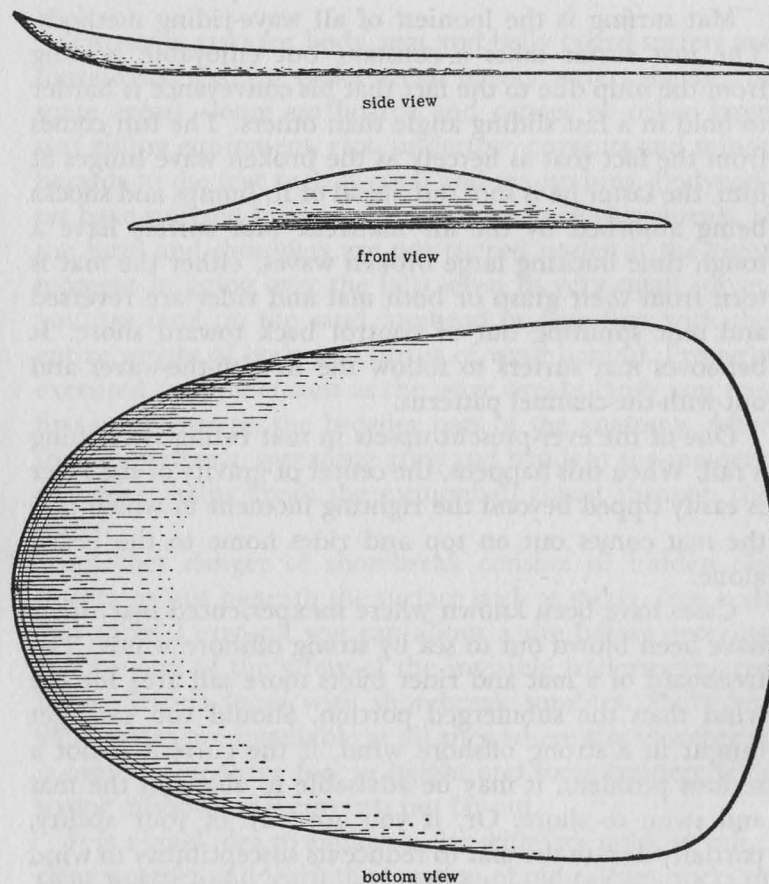
Surfers riding conventional boards not only have to contend with slower bodysurfers nowadays, but with faster belly board riders as well. A new belly board that skims the surface has put in its appearance, first in Hawaii and now spreading to other parts of the world. Developed and perfected by John Waidelich and Jim Growney, it has speed capabilities in excess of the fastest gun surfboard. Until the recent development of the hydroplane surfboard which shares some of the features of the new skim boards, no surfboard rider could keep up with them.

The skim board is very simple in design having a perfectly flat planing surface with sharp breakaway trailing edges. It has no skeg. The size of the skim board is important in relation to the weight of the rider that its lift surface must support. Average dimensions are approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet in length. The aft end is usually less than 3 feet wide, and it tapers somewhat to a narrower front end which is cambered to prevent digging. Most of them are made of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch plywood, surfaced with the usual fiberglass and resin. The curved front edge may have an elevated rim for gripping.

The riding technique consist of railing the extended aft side-edge of the skim board into the wall for the beginning of the fast slide. This enables ascent to a high position for the drop. On the drop, the board is levelled with the water and tucked beneath the rider's chest, his head and shoulders extending over the front end and legs over the back end but not touching the water. The arm on the side of the slide (left arm on a left slide) extends forward to get it out of the way of any water coming over the side. The

board then assumes a highly efficient planing position and achieves great speed.

On large waves, say twelve to fifteen feet or more, the skim board riders skid down the slopes hitting only the high spots, board and rider being airborne for a good part of the time. Without a skeg and drag produced by side



Skim board; side, front, and bottom views. Approximate dimensions: length 42", width 30", thickness $\frac{3}{8}$ ", bow scoop 3".