

BodyGun Wave Riding

The BodyGun brings surf riding to the masses.

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You want it all. You want the full wave-cresting experience. You want to ride the tube. You want to pop out of the curls and fly. You want to effortlessly carve right and left atop the big waves as they whisk you toward sandy shore. You want it all.

But you can't swim.

South African inventor Gary Barsdorf wants you to know that you don't have to trade in your wet suit for a surf movie collection just yet. Barsdorf's BodyGun, the first new surf-riding product to hit the United States in more than 20 years, brings surf riding to the masses with what he hopes to be an easier, more accessible experience. A big part of the ease-of-use factor comes from the fact that you can use both your arms and legs to maneuver the BodyGun. The paramilitary-chic 4-point harness straps the board to your chest and provides a place for you to store your large Buck knife, in case you run into sharks or fishing line, we suppose.

We tested the BodyGun and found that having our arms free allowed us to paddle and kick at the same time, giving that little extra oomph which is the difference between riding a wave and having it speed away. In addition to handsfree riding, the board requires less effort to steer. Smaller, thinner and less buoyant than a surfboard or bodyboard, we had the BodyGun darting as quickly as a cockroach avoiding the pointed shoe. The sloped rails and tail of the board make it responsive, and they helped us keep having fun even when the waves at the local PM beach hangout started to get small and wimpy.

On the subject of wimpy, the terms "easier" and "more accessible" invoke images of training wheels on a bike or a small book with large print--guaranteed to give a watered-down experience, we thought. We were pleased, however, to find that although the BodyGun has features to accommodate the beginner, the board's construction and materials are on par with a good bodyboard suitable for all skill levels. The BodyGun's base is made of Surlyn, a high-end slick material that gives great projection and speed through water while staying light, flexible and tough. The core of the board is Ethafoam, a staple of the bodyboard industry that is relatively flexible. Warm water may make the Ethafoam too flexible, meaning the board could warp over time. Then again, after a couple of seasons you'll be ready for a stiffer custom BodyGun for practicing those reverse 360 aerials with the speed and response required.

Part bodyboard and part childhood flotation device, the BodyGun brought many smiles to our faces throughout its brief stay in the PM fun shed this past summer. Its versatility is great--not only accommodating the beginner-to-intermediate range surf-riding crowd, but also serving as a swim-training and water-rehabilitation tool. We hope to see more advanced, stiffer models with rails for steeper waves mass-produced in the future. And we hope to see the rash that broke out on our chest disappear soon. We definitely recommend a rash guard when riding the BodyGun.

You can pick up a BodyGun for \$85 to \$95 plus \$10 for shipping and handling, depending on what board size you require. Custom boards for the more advanced rider are available for \$139 plus \$10 for shipping and handling.

Check out the BodyGun at www.bodygun.com or www.bodygun.co.uk. You can also call 801-765-4777 or 801-372-6800.



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