

DOWNWIND STAND UP PADDLING REQUIRES A BIG HEART



Aloha and welcome to the world of downwind stand up paddling! I know you are hooked on this insanely fun, adrenaline elevator element of SUP if you are reading this article written exclusively for Naish. I've written about this a little before some time ago, but I thought I'd bring it back again in greater detail as we approach the 2014 Downwind Season.

Maximum Heart = Maximum Glides = Maximum Fun!

I'll touch upon the importance of increasing your lung capacity to increase your endurance and paddling capacity and will also give you some cardio training tips, exercises and a special workout. These will help you while you're paddling and help you structure your water and gym time so you can get better results and have more fun.

Now, we know and appreciate that downwind paddling requires finesse, really great footwork, experience reading the bumps and not being afraid of big wind gusts slapping you in the back. Some surfing experience does help and will allow you to save your energy and cardio capacity for faster paddling.

The coolest thing about catching a bump or glide is that you just "go". For example, once you catch a bump or glide which can require you to apply quick, intense bouts of cardio to paddle like hell to catch it, then you step back as your nose enters the trough and enjoy the scenery. But it doesn't end there, nor should your cardio effort.

When it comes to downwind paddling or racing, not all waters, courses or crossings are the same. You'll find that the wind won't always cooperate in your favor, forcing you to paddle on one side, head on, or in many different directions. The tides can also act as a mean backwash that makes you feel like your paddling in mud. That's when you quickly discover you may need some extra heart, and I don't mean courage.

Down we go!

First, I always tell my clients to train on both land and water. It's important to push to the point where you get uncomfortable and stay there for one more minute, then two, then five and so on. Bottom line, "you gotta get comfortable being uncomfortable".

A great tip I once got from Michi Schweiger (Naish) is to stroke hard and fast twice then step back two steps and surf. He is a very strong paddler with a fierce mindset, great lung capacity and incredible footwork. Sometimes, I refer to his technique as the 2 & 2 or 2-3 and 2.

As you're paddling, be mindful of your breath. Is your heart pounding out of your chest wall? Do we call 911? Or is it a nice smooth, trained, nicely elevated rhythm? Can you maintain this for 5, 8 or 15 miles?

Remember the 2 & 2 and actually step to the back of your board in a surf stance and don't stop paddling. Keep your blade in the water, moving you forward with an easy, short stroke. You'll find that the moment you come near the end of your first bump or glide as your scanning and hunting to connect to the next; that all the extra time you spent on your spin bike or doing interval padding sprints will really come through!

Now, how is your breath?

If you feel you need a quick rest or small moment of recovery, try to catch a long glide to pace and stabilize your breathing and heart rate so you can get ready for the next effort. You'll see the most experienced paddlers do this, but be sure it doesn't last too long as your heart rate shouldn't get to a full resting state until the very end of the race.

The key is to keep moving and find a rhythm that you can maintain and sustain to keep your heart rate working at a zone level or percentage of your maximum heart rate (like 70-75%) that allows for endurance.

I caught up with Naish Team Rider Manca Notar and asked her to share her thoughts on this topic. She writes:

"Comparing flat water and downwind racing is pretty difficult. Even though we are using more or less the same equipment, there is a big difference between flat water and downwind racing. When you are flat water racing, you have to equally distribute your power through the whole race and you also have to keep in mind that you need extra power when you want to pass a competitor. You don't ever have a chance to rest and let your heart rate drop, even just a little bit. In contrast, when you are doing a downwind run, you might reach your highest heart rate several times, but you also have a chance to let it drop a little bit when you catch a glide."

Additionally, you are constantly losing your energy to stay in balance, but on the other hand you also have the help of wind, waves and sometimes current. For both flat-water racing and downwind racing, you need to be physically prepared and it is more than important to know the response of your body and its limits. It is extremely important for paddlers to train in intervals with a heart rate monitor to help them watch their progress."



Tips and Workouts To Improve Cardio for Downwind Paddling

As you include more cardio in your training regime, your body, organs, internal fluid and sugar stabilizing systems will improve to help you increase your cardio training load. Once this happens, you'll start to notice a huge difference in your endurance and your paddling & recovery will improve dramatically.

Hint: Identify what types of cardio you enjoy and build your cardio capacity gradually.

For example, I ride my spin bike at least 30 minutes, 4-5x a week. This includes interval training and I'm always wearing a heart rate monitor so I can see how hard I'm working. It's a huge motivating tool for me. If a great song comes on, I really crank it up to 3rd position on the handlebars and go hard for 30-45 seconds, then, never fully recovering, drop it down to 70% of my max heart rate to "rest" and then up again after about 4 minutes.

One day a week, I may also walk really fast on a treadmill for an hour to build the other side of cardio endurance (especially if the weather is bad). I'll also change the elevation on the treadmill to allow for a harder intensity workout.

Interval, Flat-water Paddling

Before my board hits the water in the harbor and I see Connor, Bart and Kody doing their usual early morning laps and I let that inspire me and fire me up! My plan: enjoy getting lapped so I'll paddle harder!

I use the water buoys as a marker from point A-B or 1-2 as my timed interval. Now some distances may be further apart, so be mindful that it's very difficult to train at the level of your max heart rate (say at 80-90% for any long period). This is why you want to increase your lung capacity to expand and get strong with less and less effort over time.

Find your breath, then your paddling rhythm, and then think about your heart rate and how you feel. Can you push to the next buoy with reserve in the tank?

Using a heart rate monitor is a useful tool if you're wanting to see split times between point to point, or wanting to know what zone you're in to help you push, yet maintain for the next effort. I prefer to use the Garmin 310xt Forerunner.

Cardio Circuits

I found that this form of training REALLY gets your heart rate up.

Hint: Any exercise you perform with your hands over your head increases your cardio effort or aerobic effort. Try it!

When I'm training my SUP clients, I try to select challenging exercises and mix a couple of lightweight strength sets coupled with explosive ones using their own body weight, with one of those in the prone or with their upper bodies bent over. This position alone causes the heart to work 4x harder. For instance, running 4 miles is equivalent to swimming 1 mile. You're in the prone position with water resistance.

Cardio circuits shouldn't last forever, but spice up your training so you don't hit a plateau or get bored, or if you're short of time. Choose 4-5 exercises that are simple but challenging. Count for 25-50 reps or 1 minute for each exercise with no rest in between. You can count reps or time yourself.

SUP Downwind Cardio Circuit Sample:

Before my board hits the water in the harbor and I see Connor, Bart and Kody doing their usual early morning laps and I let that inspire me and fire me up! My plan: enjoy getting lapped so I'll paddle harder!

1) TRX Rip Trainer Paddling Sprints

(hop on the Indo Board Gigante Cushion + Pro Kicktail for added challenge, deflate cushion to about 4 inches high) 1 minute fast each side or count to 50-60. Try to focus on breath and obliques as heart rate rises.



2) Get up Get Downs on Bench or Chair with or without weights.

Sit with feet out at 90 degrees, feet straight and shoulder width apart. With no weight, hold your hands above your head. I use 10-12lbs and rest them on my shoulders. I then get up with feet glued to the ground, stand and sit down. All the way down. No cheating! Do this rapid fire. 20-25 is pretty good, or one minute. Helps build cardio and leg endurance. Beginner - no weights. Intermediate - hands above heart. Advanced - with weights.



3) Stability Ball Tube Paddle Breaks

25 reps or 1 minute. See my video here: <http://youtu.be/bnWg9p073bE>

4) Bent Over 2 Arm Back Rows (prone)

Select light weights. I use 8-10lb dumbbells. Stand with a staggered stance, both knees bent. Head in a neutral position and bend over at the hips. Allow your arms to let the weights fall to the ground and with your abs drawn in tight, pull both weights up toward your chest and pinch your shoulder blades as you push your breath out. Do this at a rapid tempo. 25 reps or 1 minute. Note: Once completed, leave weights on floor, wait 5-10 seconds, then rise up slowly so the blood that rushed to your heart and brain can re-equalize to a static state.



Do this circuit 1-3 times and good luck! If you've just come off the water and you want to continue training, try one set.

After each cardio session, whether it on land or water, record your results.

Be sure to list the following: Date, time of day, rate your energy 1-10 before the workout and type & length of workout. If paddling, write down the wind condition, big surf or small surf, current high or low tide, distance and goal for session.

No matter where you get to downwind paddle, keep your eye on the moving target, the glide! Get to it as fast as you can because you never know if that one is the magic carpet ride you've been dreaming about. Your heart strength does matter and it will help you enjoy your downwind paddling even more.

Currently I'm riding the new and amazing Naish Javelin 14'0" LE for all of my open ocean paddling. It is incredibly fast and catches tons of glides!

For the best SUP gear on the planet, visit Naish Surfing at <http://naishsurfing.com>.

Aloha and see you on the water!



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