

CAAMp Abilities

Camp Abilities is a one-week developmental sports camp for children and teens who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind. The camp is set up to provide a one-on-one instructional situation for each person, which is often on the contrary to other camps designed for people with vision and hearing disabilities¹.

The Camp Abilities model is expanding to other locations including Long Island, NY, Alaska, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Florida, Maryland, California, Texas, Guatemala, Ireland., Costa Rica, Canada and Puerto Rico.

Camp Abilities Puerto Rico is held at University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. In the beginning (1919) Mayagüez Campus was known as Colegio de Agricultura y Artes Mecánicas (College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts). This is the reason why our camp is known as CAAMp Abilities.

CAAMp Abilities began in 2005 and since then we have been teaching sports and recreational activities to children and youth from all over the Island. Sports and activities included are: gymnastics, cycling, judo, beep baseball, goal ball, swimming, track and field, weight lifting, rock climbing, kayaking, horseback riding, bowling, mechanical bull, dance and many more!!!

In the summer of 2012 we decided to give Stand Up Paddle Board (SUP) a chance, and the campers LOVED IT!!!! Therefore, here are some important tips on how to teach this sport to people who are visually impaired.

Stand Up Paddle Board – History

Stand up paddle boarding is the fastest growing sport in the world because it is so easy to learn. Riders of all ages and skill levels will be paddling with confidence in minutes. So whether you want to take a SUP along a scenic shoreline, surf some waves or prefer to experience the natural beauty of a river or a lake, paddle boarding has something for EVERYBODY.

Stand up paddling began in the 1960s when surfing instructors used the technique to position themselves for taking photographs. More recently, professional surfers used the technique for training and has become "wildly popular." Supporters cite the ease of learning as a key to its popularity, with beginners becoming comfortable in as little as an hour of training.

Laird Hamilton and Dave Kalama re-introduced the ancient sport of paddle surfing to the modern water sports world. The first "modern" surfer to bring Stand Up Paddle Surfing out of Hawaii and to the mainland United States was Vietnam veteran Rick Thomas. Custom surf shaper Jimmy Lewis, created one of the first modern production boards, the All Around.²

Stand Up Paddle Board for People with Visual Impairments

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Factors to consider when teaching SUP to people with visual impairments

Last summer (2012) we decided to try this growing sport as a pilot project in CAAMp Abilities. Since this new sport is for everybody, why not trying it with children and youth with visual impairments? First, we made a list of factors to consider when teaching SUP to people with visual impairments, then, gave the campers the opportunity to explore the sport. Safety, proper equipment and teaching techniques should always be present for a meaningful and successful experience.

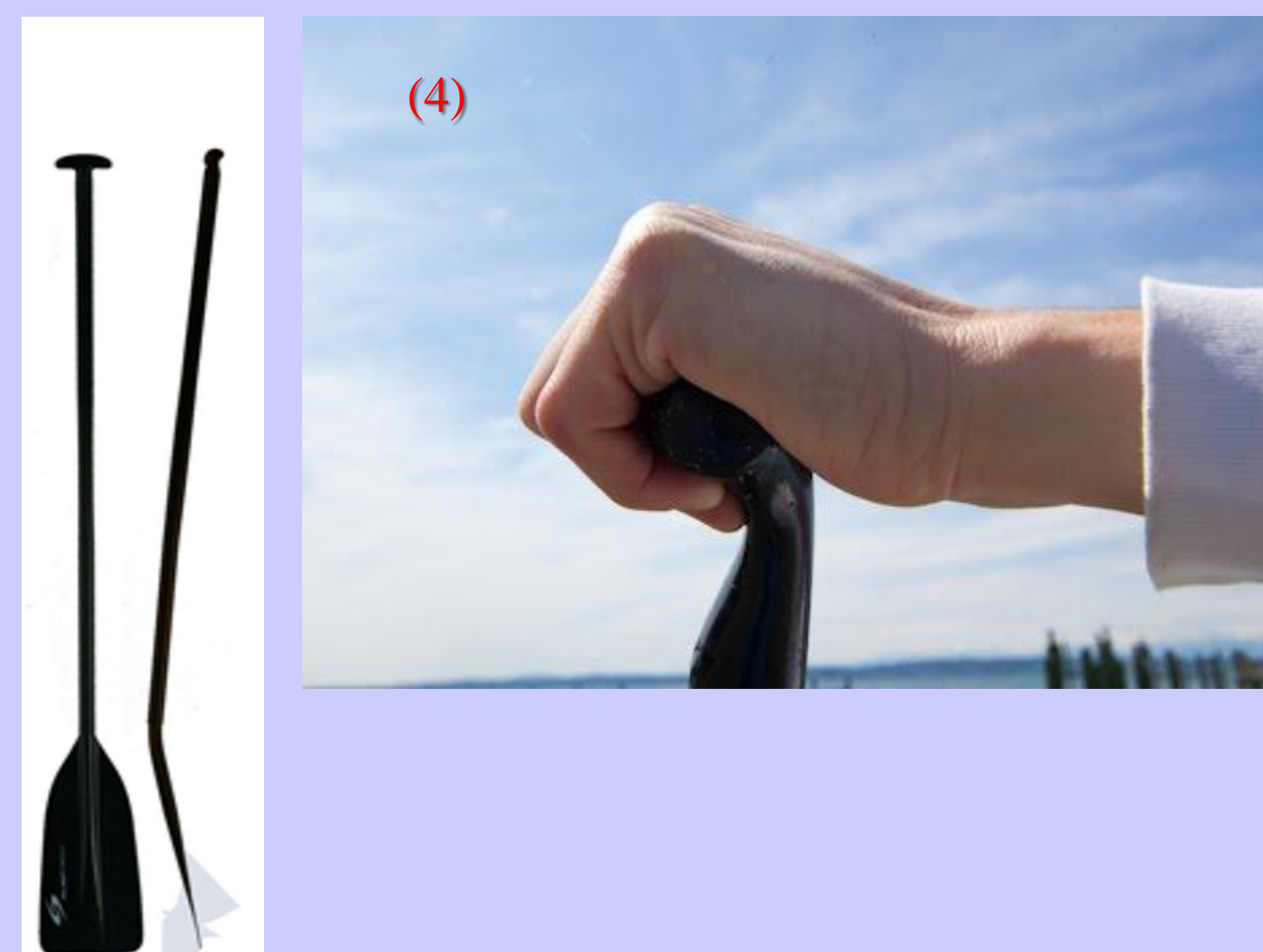
SAFETY

- Know your playing area: tides, current, and wind. If teaching SUP in a pool, be aware of having enough space and using the lane lines to assure not getting too close to the edge.
- Participants must wear lifejacket and a leash (1) at all times, even if the participant is a very good swimmer, and two instructors must be with the participant (one on another board and one in the water near the participant).
- Participant must learn how to fall from the board
 - Never to the front or the back of the board and always to the side (into the water)
- Participant must learn how to retrieve the board using the leash
 - Grabbing the leash from his ankle and tugging the cord while keeping one hand in front of his/her face for protection
- Teach the participant the signal for distress (2)



EQUIPMENT

- Make sure the equipment is appropriate for beginners and it is in excellent conditions (board, paddle, leash, fins and deck pad)
 - Board should be around 11' long X 32" wide and 5" (depending on the level of expertise and weight)
 - Paddle usually goes 6" above head high
 - Leash must be well secure to the board and to the participant's ankle
- Participant must explore the equipment on land (3)
 - Where to stand on the board "sweet spot" – usually feet parallel to the groove ("soap dish") on the deck
 - How to identify the appropriate grip of the paddle (proper hand position so the blade is in the right position) (4)



TEACHING TECHNIQUES

- Verbal instructions must be specific (ex., paddle two times on your right, etc.)
- After getting to know the board on land, take it to the water and tell the participant to kneel with each knee alongside the board groove keeping the paddle perpendicular on the board in front of him.
- One foot at the time, the participant should stand up keeping the knees a little bent and the paddle in front of her for balance, this is called "balance stance" (5).
 - Once on the "balance stance", the instructor should move the board a little so the participant get the feeling and work on the balance.
- If paddling on the right side, the left hand must be on top of the paddle while the right should be somewhere in the lowest part of the shaft's upper third (6).
 - Both arms must be straight in front of the body, placing the paddle in the water and start bending the right arm while moving the paddle to the back.
 - Change sides for paddling on the left side.
- If the participant is too afraid to try it standing up, give him the opportunity to get the movement feeling by paddling on a kneeling position (7).
- Give plenty of opportunities and encouragement!!!!



REFERENCES

1. <http://www.campabilitiesbrockport.org/othercamps>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand_up_paddle_surfing
Pictures courtesy of Ibrahim Cordero and Joshua Ortiz