

# KASK Committee Blog - May 2022

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## Waihi Surf Camp 2022



*Photo courtesy Robby Benson-Cooper*

As I serve my COVID isolation time, I reflect on my recent adventures. A stand out was the now annual Waihi Surf Camp. The focus of last year's event was around Training the Trainer; it was then a natural evolution for most of those trainers to lead the way this year.

Shaun managed to coordinate the Waihi Surf Club for all to sleep in and hang out. With Covid linkering, we weren't sure who and how many would show up. Then the forecast came in!

With that came some nerves and head-scratching. Friday saw 2.5m - 4m swells and wave faces up to 5m. After an 8/9hr drive up from Wellington, I was like a coil spring and eager to get out to feel the surf and stretch my legs. With a variety of empty boats on the beachfront and not a lot keen to get out, I borrowed a boat I had already ordered. So I thought what better opportunity to feel it out. Steve Cooper's NDK Romany Sport has a proven pedigree and comes from the Romany Surf, the composite version. Whilst they are the same kayak, there are subtle differences between the plastic & composite versions.

So I burst out into the surf along with Robby Benson Cooper in his Romany Surf, as he played in the whitewash I tentatively pushed out further with the aim of getting out the back to catch some of the clean green waves. As I tried to burst out through 1 then 2 storey waves I got the full power of the waves and got instant flashbacks of misadventures at Piha & Muriwai beaches and then BOOM I was over then up, then over, then up and then out.

Now in the impact zone, I had very little time to attempt a self-rescue about 8/9 seconds at best. I attempted a re-entry and roll but failed, a scramble rescue but failed. Between each attempt, I got hit with the weight of several elephants which caused severe strain

on my outstretched arm which was clung to the deckline, the other attached to the paddle in the opposite direction. Rescues failed. I began to work through my other tools in order to get me, Steve's Boat and my paddle in safely and in as many pieces as they left in.

As I got worked over by the elephants, I could see my audience in the grandstands watching on, no doubt having a good auld time. In my head, I was relaxed, calm and aware. I thought to myself, it's been a while since I've had a good swim in big surf so there were some cobwebs which were quickly washed away after another double-decker barrel rolled us. A combination of different tools applied multi times got me into the soup where I found myself in the rip and slowly circulating back out again. I worked hard to catch some waves which helped push in far enough to get my feet down. By now, exhausted and ready for a hard drink Robby popped by on a wave to say hi and offer up some help. I declined and trodden up the beach to a heroes welcome (joke, my audience had turned on me and had a good laugh at my performance) Feck them, I was chuffed to have survived and more importantly got a feel for the surf along with experience to teach with. Steve was delighted to have it boat back all be it with a few loose parts! I caught my breath, talked up my performance and went back out in my trusty Noddy and played in safe in the soup zone.



That evening we all gathered for fish n chips put on by the surf club followed by a chat about the weekend. With the surf forecast to be as big on Saturday and gradually dropping to labrador sized waves by Monday, it presented a big challenge for the team of volunteer leaders & instructors.

Saturday saw some heavy surf and plenty of competition for real estate amongst surfers. We divided up groups into skill levels and were fortunate that we had keen and experienced leaders to take on the challenge. The morning saw most warming up in the soup which although only waist/shoulder deep was still quite powerful. Some organised chaos ensued and some miraculous skills saw boats, boards and humans glide seamlessly passed each other without touching. People & boats were shuffled around to help get people the best boat fitment and chance of performing.

By the afternoon, everyone was settling in. The stoke was building...

That evening most enjoyed an evening meal at Flat White and shared their stoke & learnings of the day.



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Sunday saw the conditions drop slightly. After the morning briefing, with confidence building from Saturday the groups ventured out a little further into the surf. Our fearless leaders helped develop skills further such as low bracing, side surfing, stern rudders, high brace, holding position, timing, and awareness. With a varying degree of these skills, everyone was able to catch and ride waves into the beach in control and most importantly in STYLE (sometimes hah)...As the students tired or focussed on themselves, the leaders got out back to play. I personally had one of the sweetest rides in Noddy and also watched Ian Ganderton disappear in front of my eyes backwards down a wave the length of his boat and then some!

A lot of laughs were had and some awesome surfing skills were on display.

Sunday evening saw groups gather and digest what they learnt from the day, share new ideas and regale tall stories from their best moments of the day. Some took notes and wrote down shopping lists of new gear to purchase for next year.

Monday being ANZAC Day saw some paddlers take off early while the rest of us enjoyed the chilled clean waves on a crowd less beach before hitting the road.



*Photo courtesy of Noel Pepperell*

A MASSIVE thank you goes to Shaun Maclaren for all of the work that he did in the background to make the event happen. Big thank you to Ian Ganderton & Doug Aitken who brought and shared their wealth of experience & knowledge as outdoor Instructors & educators.

A HUGE Congratulations and thank you to our leadership team, without them there is no way we would have gotten 40 people on and off the water safely and with so much fun.

I'm so stoked & impressed to see the progression of the leader's who partook in the Train the Trainers event last year and the level of paddlers has certainly evolved!

Some key lessons I think most took away from the weekend:

Boat fitment is key to success and fun in the surf. The right boat makes all the difference.

Boat control skills improve our fun factor & safety in the surf and SKISL events are certainly helping this.

Lucas learned the value of a skeg boat and has agreed to purchase one. A Dagger Stratos I believe.

Disclaimer: No rudder's were used in the making of this event, everyone was well prepared and managed their and others safety very well.

Enjoy the Autumn Conditions and Paddle Safely



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