



## Best Practices for Programs with or considering Stand Up Paddle (SUP) Programs

Stand Up Paddle (SUP) is a unique sport with much to offer Special Olympics athletes. To ensure a safe and fun experience for all participants, Special Olympics Florida recommends the following best practices.

- Consult with Special Olympics Florida PRIOR to planning and Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities or programs. This is to ensure that the SUP instruction meets Special Olympics standards for safety and knowledge, that your activities are sanctioned by Special Olympics Florida, and that the appropriate insurance coverage and waivers have been reviewed and approved by Special Olympics Florida prior to commencing activities.
- Receive proof from the instructional entity that Special Olympics Florida, Inc. and Special Olympics, Inc. have been added as additional insured on the other party's insurance policy, PRIOR to commencing Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities. Forward a copy of the insurance to Special Olympics Florida, Michelle Braxton at [michellebraxton@sofl.org](mailto:michellebraxton@sofl.org) or fax to 352-243-9568.
- Forward any proposed contracts, agreements or waivers to Michelle Braxton at [michellebraxton@sofl.org](mailto:michellebraxton@sofl.org) or fax to 352-243-9568 PRIOR to planning Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities.
- Special Olympics Florida has generated a permission slip that all athletes or their legal guardians must complete prior to participation. (2012 SOFL Stand Up Paddle Parental Consent Form Statewide). This form must include the starting and ending dates of your SUP local training program and must be submitted to the SOFL Director of Sports and Training. The reason specific dates and times are requested is to avoid any confusion surrounding exactly when Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities are sanctioned Special Olympics events, versus recreational Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities on your own.
- As swimming strength is crucial in a Stand Up Paddle (SUP) environment, all athletes should be current and proficient/strong swimmers capable of swimming a minimum of 25 meters independently.
- Good balance skills and basic strength are important: athletes will need to learn to go from a prone, sitting or kneeling position on the board to standing independently.
- All athletes with Down syndrome must have a completed Atlanto-axial stability form on file.
- Ensure that there is a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio of athletes to instructors.
- Ensure the Special Olympics standard ratio of one lifeguard for every 25 Special Olympics athletes.

- Confirm the swimming/first aid/CPR credentials of the instructors prior to any instruction.
- At least one certified Special Olympics SUP coach must be present at all sanctioned Stand Up Paddle (SUP) practices and competitions. This could be one of the existing SUP coaches.
- Recommended practice time: 90 minutes, including on-shore/classroom instruction and in-water instruction.
- Special Olympics programs should work in conjunction with SUP instructors to gauge safety based on weather conditions such as riptides, excessive waves, marine life threats, thunderstorms/lightening, extreme water temperatures, wind, currents etc.
- Have bottled water on hand for athletes: hydration, even surrounded by water, is important.
- Have water-resistant, water-proof sun screen on hand for athletes.
- All athletes must wear a personal floatation devise (PFD) and a leash.
- All Training Programs must complete the Registered Training Program (RTP) Form and submit it to SOFL.
- All participating athletes must have a current Application for Participation (medical) and Official Special Olympics Consent Form on file with SOFL.
- If instructors are paid for their training services, than it is not necessary for them to be a Class A Volunteer.

## **Stand Up Paddle Rules**

The Official Special Olympics Florida rules for Stand Up Paddle shall govern all Special Olympics Competitions. Special Olympics Florida has created these rules based upon World Paddle Association (WPA) rules for SUP.

WPA rules shall be employed except when they are in conflict with Special Olympics Florida rules for Stand Up Paddle or Special Olympics Rules Article I. In such cases, The Official Special Olympics Florida Rules for Stand Up Paddle will apply.

### **SAFETY STATEMENT – World Paddle Association**

**“The safety of the participants and competitions is the number one priority of the WPA and should be treated as such for all races. Race Directors need to post the typical conditions of their venue and also the day of conditions to be expected. Race Directors need to warn the competitors of any dangers that could occur and where all safety personal will be located on the course during the pre-race meeting. Race Directors need to remind all competitors of the hand signals to be used if someone is injured/danger (In Distress and Needs IMMEDIATE ASSITANCE- wave of hand-call 911) need help but not injured (one hand on head). All competitors should be mindful of any persons that may be in danger during the course of the race and should help or help get safety staff attention”.**

## Overall Safety

SUP athletes, coaches, administrators, parents/guardians and officials must recognize that the SUP environment involves variable conditions, is at times unpredictable and can become dangerous quickly. All competitors and participants should be prepared for adjustments made by the event organizers in order to protect the safety of all involved. All participants, coaches and delegates must recognize the authority of the Race Director as having the final word.

The organizing committee must declare in the race information its policy of course changes (such as shortening or changing directions), postponement or abandonment of the competition due to dangerous weather or water conditions. SUP events can be conducted in any natural or man-made body of water deemed safe. These bodies of water may include oceans, bays, seas, lakes, rivers, dams' reservoirs, lidos, lagoons, lochs, ponds, creeks, estuaries, straits, channels, canals and rowing basins.

**Event Safety Requirements:** The event safety requirements begin long before the athletes arrive at the event, and in order to insure the safety of all participants the Safety Officer and safety plan should be appointed and developed in conjunction with all event planning. All competitions should have 6 officials on the water for every race; these 6 officials will enforce the rules and make judgment calls on safety concerns for competitors (no coaches on the water except level 4 at turn area).

**Marking:** Prior to the start of each heat, SUP'ers shall be marked with their race numbers on their legs. Numbering on competitors shall be done utilizing black permanent ink markers, clearly legible.

**Disqualifications:** Failing to paddle the prescribed course (notification of the infraction shall be made to the head coach as soon as reasonably possible). The Head/Start Official may disqualify a SUPer without prior warning if in his opinion the action of the SUPer is deemed to be unsportsmanlike. Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct include intentionally striking another SUPer and refusal to re-round a turn mark after being advised the mark was missed.

The Head/Start Official shall in cooperation with the Race Director:

- a) Enforce all rules and decisions of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules, WPA and Special Olympics SUP Rules
- b) Have the authority to adjust rules on a case-by-case basis for the safety and well-being of all individuals involved
- c) Have the authority to intervene in the competition at any stage to ensure that the appropriate rules and regulations are observed
- d) Have the discretion to allow for certain modifications and interpretations of the rules
- e) Adjudicate all protests related to the competition

- f) Have full control and authority over all officials, approve their assignments and instruct them regarding all rules and Special Olympics features and regulations related to competition
- g) Ensure that all participants, coaches, and event support personal are briefed about the course, safety procedures and any site-specific rules applying to the event
- h) Have the authority to stop the race or to change the distance and/or race course due to safety concerns or unforeseen circumstances
- i) Have the authority to use any video or electronic or mechanical judging device in judging the finish order or in making other rulings

The Head/Starter Official shall assume a position clearly visible to all competitors and use an audible (whistle) start signal.

### **Divisioning**

1. All athletes competing in Stand Up Paddle state competitions will be divisioned by the Competition Director based on their determined level of competition in the pre-race timed heats.
2. Athletes will be divided by gender.
3. The following age groups will be utilized within each level:  
8-11 12-15 16-21 22-29 30+ Age will be determined as of the day of competition.
4. Minimum division of 3 – maximum division of 8. If less than 3, genders will be combined but awards given per gender. Example: age 8-11 2 female and 2 male; awards will be given for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> female and 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> male.

### **Unified**

Unified SUP shall consists of two athletes and one unified partner. A unified Coach may not participate as a Unified Partner.

### **Protest**

It is the racers responsibility to act in a sportsman like fashion and avoid a collision at all times. If there is contact or unsportsmanlike conduct during the race that effects the outcome of the race, and the racer feels that interference has occurred (which caused lost position and/or time), the racer's head coach must file a written protest up to 30 minutes after the conclusion of the race. All results become official once the protest period has elapsed and the Head/Starter Official has made a final ruling on all protests.

## Stand Up Paddle Equipment

### Boards

- a) SUP 12'6" Class
  - Length – 12'6" Maximum
  - Board Weight – No weight restrictions
  - Board Design – No minimum dimensions
- b) SUP Surfboard Class
  - Length – 12'2" maximum
  - Board Weight – No weight restrictions
  - Board Design – Board must be a surfboard style in shape with the minimum dimensions, nose 17" wide (12" back from nose, 14" tail (12" up from the tail) and maximum thickness of 5".
- c) SUP Prone Class
  - Stock, unlimited boards or prone boards
- d) Twin Hulls (catamaran) are not allowed
- e) Fin(s) are allowed except for fins that have one or multiple points protruding from any one fin.
- f) Rudder(s) are allowed except if deemed not allowed at specific races.
- g) Foil(s) are not allowed on any fins or attached to the board.

**Paddle** – A paddle shall be a single blade design, with a blade at one end and a handle on the other end. The length of the paddle may be adjustable. Only a single paddle may be used while racing (a replacement paddle may be fixed to board) unless prone paddling; then use of arms only.

**Fins** – Fins may be any length, width or shape, provided the fin design does not promote the upward lift characteristic of a foil and is not angled greater than 30 degrees from perpendicular to the bottom of the board (90 degrees). Fins are fixed to the bottom of the board, do not pivot and do not have controls for steering.

**Foils** – Foils are defined as any Fin that is angled greater than 30 degrees from perpendicular to the bottom of the board (90 degrees) or any fin with appendages, or any fin designed to promote and upward lift.

**Rudders** – Rudders are defined as any Fin or Foil that pivots in order to steer the board.

**Length** – The board is measured from nose to tail at ninety (90) degree angles from the board's natural flat laying position with the deck facing up.

**Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's)** – Personal Flotation devices **MUST** be coast guard approved and mandatory equipment that must be worn/utilized.

**Leash** – Leashes are mandatory equipment and must be worn/utilized.

## **Competitor Rules**

Except for levels 4, 3 and prone races (see section on Specific Competition Levels and Rules below), a competitor must be standing while paddling once a race has started until crossing over the finish line. A competitor is allowed to sit, lay or kneel to rest without making forward progress. If a competitor takes more than five (5) strokes while sitting, laying or kneeling (5 stroke rule) once a race has started the competitor may be disqualified (DQ). The exception with this would be for safety reasons where the competitor needs to avoid or may be put into potentially dangerous situation that would put them or others at risk of injury and or property damage.

A competitor shall only use the paddle and hands for prone, waves and wind to propel the board forward during a race. No outside assistance from boat wakes, sails, clothing designed to catch wind or any other speed device not considered the norm to SUP racing is allowed. Boat wakes are considered natural conditions unless a competitor is deemed as getting unfair advantage over other competitors.

## **Race Courses, Types and Procedures Defined**

Short Course – It is recommended that short course races should be conducted on a safe and manageable course free from going in and out of surf. Short course participant – An athlete who is just beginning to participate in SUP.

- a) Out and Back – Generally an Out & Back course will be set up to head either into the wind or downwind and then back in the opposite direction.
- b) Triangle – Generally a Triangle course will be set up to have upwind, side or off the wind and downwind conditions in the shape of a triangle. A triangle course can be set up as multiple loops depending on the length of race or venue.
- c) Surf Slalom – A Surf Slalom is a race course that would be set up to go through the breaking waves or surf zone of a particular area with buoys placed outside of the surf area and inside the surf area. There may be multiple buoys for the racers or competitors to go around both outside and inside the surf area.
- d) Downwind – A downwind course is set up to run from point A to point B and to have participants race with the wind at their back the entire race with the start line set as a location upwind from the finish. Distances may vary depending on the conditions of the location and typically downwind races are 40-50% longer in length than a standard race.

A race director may choose to mix the combination of stated courses to give their event the best competition for racers, spectators and the safety of all attending the event. The race director also

has the right to change or amend the course the day of the race given the conditions. Upon any change of course the race director must give all competitors advance warning and or announce their intentions at least 30 minutes before the race has started and before the competitors leave the launch area.

### **Race Starting and Finishing Procedures/Moving Marks**

Starting Sequence –Timing Sequence announced at the SUP Coaches meeting-give minimum of a 3-minute warning before the start a countdown sequence (3, 2, 1...) blow whistle.

Water Start – Athletes line up on the water, standing on or beside boards in between two designated markers.

Water finish – Athlete’s remain on boards and cross a marked area.

Beach Start – Athletes start on the beach standing on or beside boards and paddle to first buoy.

Beach Finish –Volunteer/s catch board & assist with leash removal if needed. Athlete dismounts board & runs holding paddle to a finish line unless it is determined that it may be unsafe to racers.

Moving Mark or Buoy – A race director must notify competitors of a mark or moving mark and either anchor the mark before the first competitor has reached the stated mark or replace the moved or moving mark so all competitors are racing the similar distance and or shape of course.

### **Specific Competition Levels and Rules**

**LEVEL 4** – Starts the event from marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal and physical assistance during competition.** This can include verbal instructions, physical assistance onto the board & aid turning. (*Athletes can either stand, kneel or sit on the board during competition*). Competition will be out and back within a minimum of 25 meters & a maximum distance of 50 meters. Divisions will consist of no more than 3 athletes. Athletes start on boards, **MUST** have 1 coach per athlete at turning area to aid turn without aiding forward movement (**does not go around buoy**).

**LEVEL 3** – Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal and physical assistance preparing for competition.** This can include verbal instructions & physical assistance steadying the board. (*Athletes can either stand, kneel or sit on the board during competition*). Competition will be within a maximum distance of one mile with simple turns (**must go around buoy/s**). **Athletes start in water next to board & must independently get on the board.**

**LEVEL 2** – Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal instruction preparing for competition but no physical assistance.** This can include verbal instructions onto the board. Athletes must stand on the board during competition. Competition will be within a maximum distance of two miles with turns (**must go around buoy/s**). **Athletes start in water next to board & must independently get on the board.** The 5 stroke rule will be in effect (athlete may kneel on board in the event of falling & getting back on board, may use 5 strokes to gain forward movement & then must regain standing position).

**LEVEL 1** – Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Competes independently with no verbal or physical assistance.** Athletes must stand on the board during competition. Competition will be a minimum distance of 2 miles with turns (**must go around buoy/s**). **Athletes start in water next to board & must independently get on board.** The 5 stroke rule will be in effect (athlete may kneel on board in the event of falling & getting back on board, may use 5 strokes to gain forward movement & then must regain standing position).

**PRONE 2** – **Can use any SUP style board (narrower the better).** **NO PADDLE, use of arms only.** Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal instruction preparing for competition but no physical assistance.** Athlete must be prone or kneeling on the board during competition. Competition will be a minimum distance of 50 meters with a minimum of 1 turn (**must go around buoy/s**). **Start in water next to board & must independently get on board.**

**PRONE 1** – **Must be on a prone style board.** **NO PADDLE, use of arms only.** Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Competes independently with no verbal or physical assistance.** Athlete must be prone or kneeling on the board during competition. Competition will be a minimum distance of 100 meters with a minimum of 2 turns (**must go around buoy/s**). **Start in water next to board & must independently get on board.**



**RELAYS – All state relays will be demonstration/exhibition for 2015. The SOFL SUP Team will determine what relay teams will be used.**

**Traditional** – 3 athletes per team. Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal instruction preparing for competition but no physical assistance.** This can include verbal instructions onto the board. Athletes must stand on the board during competition. Competition will be a minimum distance of 50 meters with a minimum of 1 turn each athlete (**must go around buoy/s**). **Athletes start in water next to board & must independently get on the board.** The 5 stroke rule will be in effect (athlete may kneel on board in the event of falling & getting back on board, may use 5 strokes to gain forward movement & then must regain standing position).

**Unified** – 3 athletes per team (2 athletes & 1 unified partner) Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. **Can receive verbal instruction preparing for competition but no physical assistance.** This can include verbal instructions onto the board. Athletes must stand on the board during competition. Competition will be a minimum distance of 50 meters with a minimum of 1 turn each athlete (**must go around buoy/s**). **Athletes start in water next to board & must independently get on the board.** The 5 stroke rule will be in effect (athlete may kneel on board in the event of falling & getting back on board, may use 5 strokes to gain forward movement & then must regain standing position).

**NOTE:** Due to different water conditions (beach, back water, lakes etc.) that counties train on, we will division according to gender and age. State competitions will run pre-race timed heats to determine final divisions. Each county/delegation **MUST** have a medical & SUP permission form on each athlete to compete.

Age brackets: 8-11, 12-15, 16-21, 22-29 & 30 +

**ALL ATHLETES MUST WEAR A LEASH & PFD (Personal Flotation Device)**

Minimum division of 3—Maximum division of 8. If less than 3, genders will be combined but awards given per gender. Example: age 8-11—2 female & 2 male; awards will be given for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> female & 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> male.