Stand Up Paddle (SUP)
Initial Start-Up Phase

What is SUP in Special Olympics?

Stand Up Paddle offers a totally unique opportunity for Special Olympics Athletes to move a “step beyond” normal sports activities. It is an excellent physical challenge on its own and also an outstanding adjunct training for other sports offered in Special Olympics. It is also clearly a community-based opportunity that would permit Special Olympics to increase their involvement in community-based activities outside of the Special Olympics sphere.

Stand Up Paddle is a joint venture between Special Olympics Florida, SOFL county programs and Stand Up Paddle communities in Florida. Currently, Stand Up Paddle in Special Olympics Florida is strictly a local training initiative. No state, area or county level competition will be conducted until a minimum of 10 counties have Registered Training Programs. Special Olympics County SUP Training programs must follow SOFL Registered Training Programs policies and procedures and register as a “Registered Training Program” with SOFL prior to conducting any training activities.

Pre-Event:

- Local SUP stores and SUP communities are encouraged to provide a “Training Day” for local Special Olympics athletes AND their coaches to introduce them to the sport.
- SOFL athletes are recruited via emails from local stores, County Coordinators and the state office.
- Goal is to have one-on-one assistance for each athlete by an experienced SUP participant
- Emphasize that it is not a “learn to swim” program. Ability to swim is a pre-requisite (25 yards minimum) See Rules and Safety Guidelines attached
- Participation limits are set by the local Training Day organizers.
- Draft SOFL Rules for Stand of Paddle must be used by Training Day organizers, athletes and coaches
Training:

- Any training group must be registered as a Registered Training Program with SOFL
- 10 session training program provided to all participants
- Participating athletes must have a current Application for Participation (medical) and Official Special Olympics Consent Form on file with SOFL
- Certified SUP coach along with volunteers
- All Special Olympics volunteers must be Class A and completed Protective Behaviors before assisting
- Goal is one-on-one volunteer with athletes
- Training should be geared towards getting the athlete comfortable on the board and then determining the proper event for the athlete for competition

Equipment

- To get the program started, local stores/SUP communities need to commit to provide boards and paddles free or at minimal cost to the local program.
- Athletes must attend properly dressed.
- Ankle leashes and personal flotation devices are required.

Coaches Education

- Athlete's success in Stand up Paddle is directly related to the coaches' knowledge of the sport, enthusiasm for the sport and ability to teach the sport.
- Special Olympics endorses the curriculum of the World Paddle Association which covers the following topics
  - Board/equipment considerations
  - SUP etiquette
  - Safety planning
  - Injury prevention
  - Water dynamics
  - Boating laws
  - Board/paddling skills
  - Rescue techniques
  - Water safety information

- SOFL will be working with qualified WPA instructors and Special Olympics instructors to develop instructional materials and guidelines designed strictly for Special Olympics Athletes.
- SOFL coaches are encouraged to attend WPA courses for coaches and successful completion of a WPA course will qualify coaches to teach Special Olympics Training Schools in this sport.
- SOFL has offered one coaches course and commits to offering one training school in the sport annually.
- SOFL Draft rules and Safety Standards must be a part of any training course and used by the Registered Training Program and Local Event organizers offering a Special Olympics SUP Division in their local events.
Local Races
- The athlete can enter the events offered by the local organizers as a regular participant following all entry guidelines and policies established by the local race organizers. **No Special Olympics funds can be used for entry fees.** Because Stand Up Paddle is currently in a Training Phase, any athlete participating as a regular participant in a local event does so as an individual and is **not covered** by any Special Olympics insurance coverage or funds.
- The event organizers can offer a separate Special Olympics Division based on established Special Olympics eligibility policies and insurance procedures and following SOFL SUP rules and the ability levels of the participating athletes. **Special Olympics funds can be used to support this event.** Special Olympics athletes must be part of a SUP Registered Training program to participate in this type of event.

Local Fundraising and Sponsorship:
- Fundraiser – Local SUP events can be used as a fund-raising event to raise money to cover costs of local training programs. SOFL fund-raising guidelines and approval must be followed for all such events just like any other SOFL fundraising activity.
  - County Management personnel can solicit and accept donations (equipment/in-kind, monetary) for their local SUP Programs and become local sponsors just like any other sports sponsor in the county. A Fundraising Authorization Form and Logo Usage Form is attached and must be approved by SOFL prior to the event. Athletes, families and other volunteers need to direct any donation possibilities and opportunities to their local county management team or county coordinator.

State Sponsorship
- Sponsorships - Special Olympics Florida has the sole right and responsibility to arrange for sponsorships for its Stand Up Paddle Program. So as not to jeopardize future SUP donations, please keep the Director of Sports & Training informed of any volunteer/coach/training/sponsor/other donor interest in your local Stand Up Paddle Program.

For more Information, please contact Phil MacHarg, Director of Sports and Training, Special Olympics Florida at philmacharg@sofl.org.
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 any Stand Up Paddle (SUP) activities or programs. This is to ensure that the surf 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 or fax to 352-243-9568.
- Forward any proposed contracts, agreements or waivers to Michelle Braxton at 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, unassisted.
- Good balance skills and basic strength are important: athletes will need to be able to go from a lying down or kneeling position on the board to standing, no assistance.
- All athletes with Down Syndrome should 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 aquatics coach should 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/lightning, extreme water temperatures wind, currents etc.
• Have bottled water on hand for athletes: hydration, even while surrounded by water, is important!
• Have water-resistant, water-proof sun screen on hand for athletes.
• All Training Programs must complete the Registered Training Program 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 Class A Volunteers.

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 Stand Up Paddle.

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 1. 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 for 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 (paddle in the air, waiving or erect) or in need of help but not injured (hand in the air). 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.

Divisioning

1. All athletes competing in Stand Up Paddle will be divisioned by the Competition Director based on their determined level of competition.
2. Athletes will be divided by gender
3. The following age groups will be utilized within each level
   - Junior   15 years and under
   - Senior   16 to 21 years
   - Masters  22 years and over

   Age will be determined as of the day of competition
4. If there are less than 3 competitors in a specific level, age groups will not be utilized.

**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 the nose”, 14” tail (12” up from the tail) and maximum thickness of 5”.

c. **Twin Hulls (catamaran) are not allowed**

d. **Fin(s) are allowed except for fins that have one or multiple points protruding from any one fin.**

e. **Rudder(s) are allowed except if deemed not allowed at specific races**

f. **Foil(s) are not allowed on any fins or attached to the board.**

**Paddle** - A paddle shall be a single blade design, with one 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.

**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. Foils may be of any design and shall be allowed only on Open Class Boards.

**Rudders** - Rudders are defined as any Fin or Foil that pivots in order to steer the board. The Paddler will usually have a device on the deck.

**Length** - The board length 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** - Personal Flotation devices are recommended for all levels of competition and mandatory for level 1 events.

**Leash** - Leashes are mandatory equipment and must be utilized.

**Competitor Rules**

Except for Level 1 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 strokes while sitting, laying or kneeling once a race has started the competitor may be disqualified (DQ). The exception with this would be for safety reasons where a competitor needs to avoid or may be put into a potentially dangerous situation that would put them or others at risk of injury and or property damage.

A competitor shall only use the paddle, 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 an unfair advantage over other competitors.

**Race Courses 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 the surf.

**Short Course Participant**

A person that does not race on a regular basis or is just beginning to race in the sport and is also not interested in competing at a high level of competition.

**Race Types and Procedure Defined**

a) Out & 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 and the race 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 multiply 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 starting line set at a location upwind from the finish. Distances will 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 for all attending their 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 Mark**

Starting Sequence - A start of a race should provide a start timing sequence that would have been announced at the paddlers meeting that would give a minimum of a 3-minute warning before the start and a countdown sequence giving the racers a one minute count down outside of one-minute and a minimum of a 30-second countdown inside one-minute.
Water Start - To form a straight line perpendicular to the first buoy rounding and between two points like with two buoys, start boat and a buoy or two start boats in the water.

Beach Start - To form a straight line perpendicular to the first buoy rounding and between two points like with flags or other points of reference to determine the starting line in which racers will start.

Beach Finish - Where racers will exit the water and cross a point for reference like with two flags or other points of reference to determine the finish line. Paddlers must carry their paddle with them across the stated 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 moved 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.

Protests

It is the racers responsibility to act in a sportsman like fashion and avoid a collision at all times. If there is contact or unsportsman-like 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), that racer and their coach must file a written protest within 15 minutes of the last person to finish the stated division, class or race. In doing so the racer must inform the other party(s) that they may have fouled them during the course of the race and also bring in any witness’s to attest to their claim and or protest to the race committee.

Specific Competition Levels and Rules

1. Level 1 - Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. Can receive verbal and physical assistance during competition. This can include verbal instructions and physical assistance getting onto the board. (Athletes can either kneel or stand on the board during competition.) Competition will be a downwind Race course with a maximum distance of one mile with three simple turns.

Level 2 - Starts the event from the marshalling area in the water or on the beach. Can receive verbal instruction during competition but no physical assistance. Athletes must stand on the board during competition. Competition will be within a maximum distance of two miles or 6 turns.

Level 3 - 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 maximum distance of 3 miles with turns.
Special Olympics Florida Stand Up Paddle Opportunity
Permission - Parental/Guardian Consent
(This form must be fully completed prior to participation)

I agree and understand that I/my minor child/ward will be participating in Stand up Paddle lessons, as part of a Special Olympics Florida Registered Stand Up Paddle Training Program.

I/my minor child/ward will participate in weekly lessons, scheduled to be held between ___________________________ and ___________________________.

I/my minor child/ward further understands that only those scheduled, sanctioned Stand up Paddle practices conducted under the supervision of approved Special Olympics representatives, are considered official Special Olympics Training Sessions and therefore are subject to the rules and coverages of Special Olympics Florida. No additional (outside of Special Olympics) or personal Stand Up Paddle activities during the season are covered or considered sanctioned Special Olympics Florida activities.

By signing this form, I give my consent to participate/allow my minor child/ward to participate.

If athlete is 18 years of age or older and can sign for themselves:

Athlete Name (print clearly): _______________________________________________

Athlete Signature: ______________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________

If athlete is under 18 years of age or cannot sign for themselves:

Athlete Name (print clearly): _______________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Name (print clearly): ____________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: ____________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________
Stand Up Paddle use of Personal Flotation Devices

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has officially classified stand up paddleboards (SUP) as a vessel. With the rapid growth of SUP in recent years on the West and East coast of the United States, the Coast Guard recently classified “paddleboards”, meaning SUP’s as “vessels.” SUP, the newly classified vessels must comply with federal Navigation Rules and “carriage” requirements when operated beyond the limits of a swimming, surfing or bathing area. Adult stand-up paddlers are required to have a USCG-approved life jacket also known as Personal Floatation Device (PFD, Type III) for each person, a sound signaling device (whistle), visual distress signal and navigation light (flashlight).

With this said there are many details with the new PFD law that most cities and harbors are now enforcing. All persons 12 years old and under are required to wear a USCG-approved life jacket or PFD however all operators over 12 years of age are only required to have a Type III adult USCG-approved life jacket or PFD either attached to the vessel or on the operators person. As stated in the first paragraph, SUP operators are not required to wear or have a PFD if you are in the surf line. So, SUP surfers are not required to wear a PFD. The WPA will be inquiring for an exception with the new PFD law with the USCG. The letter will state “if the stand up paddleboard operator is tethered (wearing a leash) to their board or vessel, can this be deemed as an alternate or replacement for having a PFD.” Most would feel that a stock (12’6”) or larger SUP board would be a better floatation device as long as the operator were attached to the vessel. How much easier would it be to administer CPR or first aid to a victim or person in need on a SUP board rather than in the water?

The same requirements apply to kayaks and other manually propelled vessels of similar size. Stand-up paddleboards are exempt from hull identification number and registration requirements. Please know that motor and large sail vessels have the right of way over paddleboards, kayaks and SUP crafts. It is your responsibility to know the rules of the water, so be safe considerate of other large vessels. The Harbor Patrol will continue to educate and enforce the new law with all stand-up paddlers.