

IT'S EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY STAND UP PADDLING, OR SUP FOR SHORT, IS ONE OF THE MOST EXPLOSIVE WATER SPORT CRAZES AROUND THE WORLD.

It's popular because anyone can do it and nearly any body of water will do - you don't need to go big-wave chasing or wait for a windy day. In addition, it's a great way to develop a strong core, upper body and fitness whilst having fun in the sun. ▶

INTERVIEW WITH
ETHAN
KOOPMANS



AS THE POPULARITY OF THE SPORT SPIRALS, SO TOO DOES THE GROWING POOL OF TALENTED LOCAL RIDERS.

In South Africa, we have a number of riders who are making a name for themselves both locally and internationally. One such rider is 17-year-old Ethan Koopmans from Cape Town. Not only is he an outstanding wave rider, he's also quite the accomplished racer with a number of wins under his belt, including that of the current N1SCO World Champion. Robin Taylor caught up with Ethan to find more about this young man with a big future in SUPing. ▶



PROFILE

Name: Ethan Koopmans

Nickname: Smiley/Ethdog

Age: 17 years old

Local training: Melkbosstrand and Derdersteen for surfing, the Waterfront for race training

Years SUPing: 4 years

Sponsors: Naish, O'Neill, BronZinc and Sunski Sunglasses





Q: HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE SPORT OF SUPING?

I was surfing my mom's board in Melkbosstrand and started talking to Ivan van Vuuren. He then offered to set my brother and me up with some boards and it took off from there.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR BEST ACHIEVEMENTS?

I came first in the N1SCO World Championship, first in Junior SA and second in the Open Men's racing in 2013. I also came second at the SA Champs for wave riding.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT SUPING?

SUPing is really good for fitness, cool for wave riding and when there are no waves you can do a downwind or just flat water paddle. Thus there is always something to do. One no longer has to sit at home and do nothing.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER HOBBIES/SPORTS?

Surfing, skateboarding and kiting.

Q: HAVE YOU DONE ANY INTERNATIONAL TRIPS FOR SUPING AND WHERE?

Yes, last year August I went to Switzerland to compete in the N1SCO European Championships, on Lake St. Moritz. It was a beautiful place, with snow on the mountains and so many lakes for SUPing. I ended up coming first and won a trip to the World Championships last October. So I am currently the N1SCO World Champion.

While in Europe, we also travelled to Italy where I SUPed on Lake Como, which is amazing for paddling. In May, I was a member of the SA SUP team that took part in the World Games, in Nicaragua. That too was an awesome experience. Unfortunately, I snapped my paddle in the 18 km long distance but still managed to finish. I also ended up coming 12th in the sprinting section.

Q: IS THERE ANY PLACE IN PARTICULAR YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUP?

Definitely Hawaii, as I would love to do the Molokai next year.

Q: SINCE YOU STARTED SUPING, HOW HAS IT CHANGED AND WHERE DO YOU THINK IT'S GOING?

The level of riding and racing is getting better all the time, not to mention the equipment that is also getting better, lighter and faster. I think more and more people will get into it as it's something almost everyone can do on some level. ▶

Q: HOW IMPORTANT IS EQUIPMENT WHEN IT COMES TO COMPETITION AND WHAT SPECIFICALLY AFFECTS YOUR RACING ABILITY?

Because the equipment is improving so fast and so much, every piece makes a small difference and all these small increases affect my overall ability to perform. Although this is the case, at the end of the day, training is the most important. I'm very fortunate to have access to the top boards and equipment, thanks to Naish.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY DIVISION WHEN IT COMES TO COMPETITION?

Racing and downwinding, but I love wave riding too.

Q: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH IS WHEN IT COMES TO RACING?

I train hard, eat well and never give up.

Q: NOT MANY PEOPLE GET OR TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SURF DUNGEONS (AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING BIG WAVE TO SURF, EXPERTS-ONLY TYPE STUFF), IN HOUT BAY. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF BEING OUT THERE?

It's always awesome, always humbling and always scary. One of the best feelings in the world is to take that first wave. Every time I go out there, it's so surreal, like a dream.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE ETHAN IN ACTION, AS WELL AS ALL OUR OTHER TALENTED SOUTH AFRICAN RIDERS, DON'T MISS THE NEXT RACE TO BE HELD AT THE MARINER WHARF RACE IN HOUT BAY ON 16 AUGUST. RACING STARTS AT 10H00 AND PROMISES TO BE AN ACTION-PACKED DAY AS IT IS A SA QUALIFYING RACE FOR THE WORLD GAMES IN MEXICO. •



For more information on SUP and events to look out for, visit www.supsa.org.za

