

## **Competitive Surfing History**

By Fred Hemmings

The history of competitive surfing is long and quite intriguing. It is important that journalist's and historians accurately document this history. Sadly there are those, most especially in contemporary surfing who distort the history of the sport to accommodate their own political or economic agendas. It is interesting to note, that throughout history starting with cultures dating back thousands of years, only the ancient Hawaiians developed the sophisticated art of riding waves for pleasure.

In pre-contact Hawaii, there were numerous competitions and even a Heiau temple dedicated to Surfing. The impact of western culture beginning in 1778 began dramatically altering the Hawaiian culture . Surfing did not disappear, but did fall to the wayside. In the early 20th century a number of things came together to repopulate Surfing.; specifically the notoriety and wonderful accomplishments of Hawaii's greatest citizen, Duke Kahanamoku. He, along with the founding of the Outrigger Canoe Club, and soon after, Hui Nalu, spawned a new popularity of the ancient sport.

After winning several gold medals in the 1912 Olympics, Duke Kahanamoku became the ambassador of Surfing, taking it around the world. In 1915 Duke is credited with introducing Surfing to Australia. It should also be remembered that Peruvian, bon vivant Carlos Dogny, after visiting Hawaii in the 1930s took Surfing to the shores of Peru and Europe. Carlos founded Club Waikiki on the coast of Lima Peru, South Americas first Surfing club.

In the first half of the 20th Century, surfing competitions were localized and small. The inauguration of the Makaha international Surfing championships in 1954 marked the first truly major International competition. The contest was operated by the Waikiki surf club. Leaders Wally Froiseth, along with John Lind, and other club members are credited with the founding of the contest. The Makaha contest went out of the way to invite surfers from around the world including from Australia, continental USA, (especially California), Peru and Hawaii.

Eduardo Arena of Peru is credited with putting together the first recognized International Surfing Association. In 1964 Australia held a contest they called the World contest. In fact it did include many of the World's major Surfing competitors, nor did it include recognized teams. The following year Peruvian Eduardo Arena created an International Surfing Association and official world championship. Felipe Pomar of Peru won the first sanctioned International competition held in Peru. The contest featured teams selected by the individual Country's amateur associations. The Huntington Beach contest In California is also recognized as a premier founding event in surfing competition.

In 1965 Kimo McVay, a Hawaii entrepreneur, started Dukes restaurant. Kimo also started Duke Surf team, featuring Butch Van Artsdaken, Paul Strauch, Joey Cabell and Fred Hemmings (your's truly). In 1965 Kimo also inaugurated the Duke Kahanamoku Surfing classic which became the first invitation only surfing competition. It was also covered by network TV; this was significant in that there were no Cable outlets, and only three major Networks NBC, CBS, and ABC. At the urging of TV producer Larry Lindberg, the Duke contest awarded the first major prize money of \$1,000.

As a result in 1967, I, Fred Hemmings, wrote a surfing magazine editorial urging the creation of Pro Surfing as an organized sport. In 1969 along with several others, I received a contract to produce the Smirnoff pro surfing contest. After winning the 1968 world amateur surfing championship in Rincon, Puerto Rico I retired from competition and founded a company that owned and produced pro surfing events. I became the executive director of the Smirnoff, and in 1971 founded the Pipeline Masters, and soon after, inaugurated the Women's Masters, the Hawaiian Pro, and World Cup competitions for Men and Women. In 1976 along with Randy Rarick and Patti Pannicia we inaugurated the International Professional Surfing organization, or IPS.

The mission was to sanction burgeoning professional events and award rating points to determine world pro Champions. Randy Rarick and Patti Paniccia became the executive directors of the men's and women's World Circuit of Professional Surfing.

I then tied all three of my Women's and Men's competitions together under the banner of the Triple Crown of Surfing. It's interesting to note that in 2021, the Pipeline Masters will be in its 50th year! Triple Crown Events were covered by Network Television, achieving worldwide coverage that further popularized the Surfing athletes and Professional Surfing.

In 1978 two Australian surfers, Ian Cairns and Peter Townend, founded the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) to compete against and replace the IPS organization.

I was interested in focusing on producing events and opted out of managing the World Surfing Tour, so ASP took over. By this time Professional surfing was a legitimate Worldwide Sport with events being held in Australia, California, Japan, South Africa, Florida and of course, the homeland of surfing, Hawaii. In the ensuing years Surfing grew exponentially. Pro surfers have lucrative promotional contracts and win hundreds of thousands if not millions a year. The world surfing circuit is now managed by an organization called the World Surfing League or WSL. Just when you think Surfing had hit it's zenith, entrepreneurs headed by surfing phenomena Kelly Slater (11 time World Surfing champion), created a wave machine in Fresno California that produces quality waves. It would be safe to say on almost any day in California the best waves are in the farm fields of Fresno at the Surf Ranch. The floodgates of wave creation innovation have been thrown open. Surf machines are being created around the world. Surfing is going inland.

In 2020 surfing athletes will compete in the Olympics.

The best is yet to come!