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## Contest Preparation

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Correct preparation for any competition can mean the edge over your competitors but it can also mean the difference between a good and a great surf.

### **FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES BELOW FOR LONG AND TROUBLE-FREE SURFING:**

1. Don't over-surf in your lead up to the event, pace yourself
2. Get into bed early prior to and during the event, especially if it's over a 3 to 8 day period. Plenty of sleep is necessary to maintain strength.
3. Arrive at contest site early to check it out on different tides and have a warm-up surf.
4. Have a warm-up prior to your heat but don't over-surf and get tired. You only need to get the feel of the waves and loosen up your muscles. If you can't surf at the contest break try to select a similar wave nearby.
5. Stay off your legs during the day. Surfing tires legs, rest them as much as possible.
6. Check heat times/start procedure/interference rule and number of waves counted (This should basically be the same as your SWA Rule Book). Remember if you must leave the contest area check with the Beach Marshall or Contest Director (if available) in case the program moves forward. Always leave someone with your contact details as times can change. Arrive back at the contest at least one and a half hours before your scheduled event.
7. Collect your contest singlet early to avoid rushing your preparation. If the last competitor has not returned it, there is time to find it without causing you problems.
8. Accept the quality of the waves as they are the same for all competitors. Put all your energy into how to cope and win in the conditions.
9. Prepare in a quiet place with a friend, this is the most successful method for many surfers.
10. Watch the heat prior to yours – see who wins and why – where are the best waves breaking and why. It is your last opportunity to study the conditions and the closest time to your event, so don't spend it all getting changed and chasing singlets, etc.
11. Be aware of tide changes and the effect on the waves. The peak may shift along the beach or one direction and improve in quality, or the peak may move closer to shore and be harder to catch, etc.

## BASIC CONTEST STRATEGIES

1. Don't over-surf the day before or in practice sessions during your event.
2. Always have a quick warm-up prior to your heat.
3. Study waves and establish your strategy before going out. Where to sit, which direction has the longest workable wall. Are the biggest set waves the best ones to catch? If the waves are inconsistent then it may be better to get three inside waves then move outside.
4. Be the first one out, have 100% concentration for 100% of the time. Ignore crowd, friends and judges. Concentrate on getting the most out of all your waves for the heat.
5. Get three solid waves – get started quickly and use the heat time to the fullest. Don't be over selective for waves early. A good wave, early puts you in a good position for the remainder of the heat time.
6. Build on your three solid waves. If you have scores of 6, 7.5 and 8.5 then it is of no value for you to take any wave with a potential score of 6 or less, as it will not improve your position. Taking off on a useless wave will only keep you out of the take-off and lessen the competition for the better waves coming in.
7. DON'T FALL OFF! KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS. Percentage surfing will win heats. Pick your manoeuvres, don't go for anything you have a small chance of success in.
8. Do big turns out the back and finish clean. The judge is just deciding at the finish whether he will give you a 7 or 7.5 for instance. You have already earned your 7 points with your potential 7.5 if you complete your wave well. A tight controlled manoeuvre will get the extra point. A radical fall-off won't.
9. Always ride the longest wave – take the longest section off the peak. Gives you more opportunities for manoeuvres and keeps you in the judge's eyes for maximum time.
10. The best waves win for you – be confident. Go out and place yourself in the best wave zone – someone will ride them – it could be you.
11. Be aware of what is happening in the water so that you can adapt your plan if conditions change. Always watch for take-off positions, length of ride etc. of competitors, to give you extra clues to changing of conditions.
12. Do not become pre-occupied with the performance of your opponents. You only see parts of their rides, which is very often misleading.

## **COMMON COMPETITION ERRORS:**

- Bad finish to waves.
- Foam re-entries – board one way and rider the other. Rider is not over the top of their board during the re-entry.
- Rail digs on cutbacks and rebounds. Too much weight on front foot. Board must hit foam flat on rebounds so the rail will not dig in.
- Nose dives. Needs more weight on back foot?
- In re-entries, rebounds etc. when stability is necessary the surfer should bend knees and keep low to lower his centre of gravity.
- Bad wave selection.

## **FOUR PARTS TO PERFORMANCE**

Athletic performance is dependent on four major components:

1. Physical condition
2. Skill Level
3. Equipment
4. Psychological Condition

## **LOOKING AT THESE IN MORE DETAIL:**

1. Physical condition refers to our inherited body size and characteristics. i.e. short stature lower centre of gravity which is a benefit for stability, especially in smaller waves. The amount of conditioning undertaken prior to the event (i.e. surfing and associated exercises), plus efficient warm-ups and good flexibility (from constant exercises) are also most important.
2. Skill level revolves around your-actual surfing ability and your effective use of tactics and awareness during the contest.
3. Your surfing equipment must be as current as possible.
4. The psychological state of a competitor is seen to be crucial and at this point seems to be the area of biggest improvement along with contest tactics.

The surfer must have sufficient emotion for his task. Being over emotive will cause confusion in decision making. The football coach type amp will in many cases be inappropriate. It is better to be under aroused and let the occasion provide the final boost. The amount of stimulation for best performance will vary between individuals and be moderated by their experience.

Contestants should be aware of competition stress and how it varies from recreation surfing pressure.

They should be questioned at various times after competition about their person feelings and emotions at different stages of their events. How they felt after they fell on their re-entry on their second wave? Etc. If they are aware of their feelings they are in a better position to control them.

Panic is often the cause of the action “grovelling for the slop” When contestants catch useless waves (in regard to their scoring benefit) or when they persist in catching poor waves because they are uncontested. They look for the sense of relief when they catch a wave and are no longer facing confrontations in the peak.

No matter what the result is, a good contest surfer will accept the decision and move on.

**Analyse the result –**

if you did well you should know why it happened for you. If you didn't achieve the expected result use the experience to improve your strategy for the next event.

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**If you enjoy yourself whether you win or lose you will always be a winner.**

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