DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER

PARABOLIC V PARABOLLOCKS

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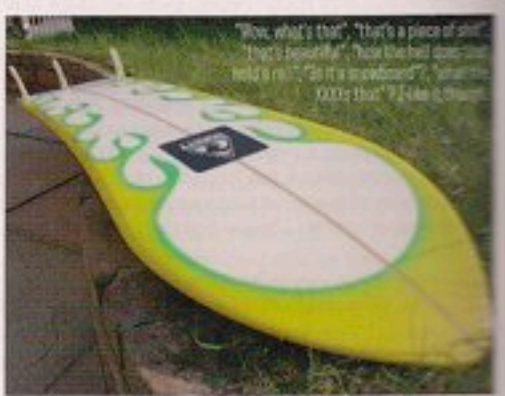
IF MEMORY SERVES ME RIGHT, AND IT SELDOM does, the first time I saw Grant Strovers parabolic surfboard was at the Board Masters event in Newquay a few years back. He brought it down and left it with me to photograph. Wandering through the competition site on my way home, board tucked under my arm I remember being amazed by the fact that so many people should feel so keen to tell me what they thought of it, simply because I was carrying it. "Wow, what's that", "that's a piece of shit", "that's beautiful", "how the hell does that hold a rail", "Is it a snowboard"?, "what the XXXXs that"? I liked it though.

The official blah is that it was designed by Grant Strover, and developed by the Trinity Board Sports Engineering Department who have studied the board using fluid dynamics (CFD) software for over two years. Trinity Board Sports has invested heaps into the R+D of the project which now has the support of the Government of Navarra over in Spain and Nigel Semmens and Chops Lascelles back here in England. It was first test ridden by Grant Strover in 1996. Out of a total of six test riders, from Newquay, Biarritz and Peniche only one person has given his board back to the company!



So, now its time to see what you think? What do you reckon? Before you decide, listen to a couple of opinions, first, Mr Grant Strover. Inventor of the Parabolic surfboard. Take it away Grant:

Snow Boards in Powder are planning vehicles, if they lose the plane they sink and invariably get stuck. In powder, speed is required to get the board onto the plane and keep it there. Surfboards are also planning vehicles and are as such, governed by the same rules, hydrodynamics. I believe these Parabolic rails produce a more high powered, carving vehicle that grips the face and digs deeper on bottom turns. The wide nose brings the centre of lift forward on the board meaning that the board breaks out on to the plane more easily. Then the tapered body means that the water accelerates down the length of the board, where it squeezes out again by the tail and fin section producing higher planning speeds. A simple single concave and thruster set up, round tail, combined with the parabolic rail shape, produces a faster, more stable, more carve able board, as capable as any other traditional tear drop board on the market. The rails being cut in the same direction as the arc of the carving fins, means that the action of the rail, complements the action of the fins, combining forces in the same direction, producing a much smoother carve. On a traditional teardrop shaped surf board the arc of the rails contradicts the action of the fins, often producing a speed wobble at higher speeds. This phenomena can be seen most clearly on deep bottom turns on big waves. The Parabolic board completely cuts that speed wobble out and creates a more efficient, faster and more powerful surfboard. My dream would be to make big wave boards, short boards with straps and big swallow tails, like the high mountain powder boards. Nigel Semmens and Chops Lascelles have brought their years of experience into the project and consequently its accelerating at pace now, we are keen to work with UK pros who might be interested in developing this project further into England and Ireland

More information and boards are available at www.trinityboardsport.com

Next up, Mr Roger Mansfield, author of The Surfing Tribe, started off as a disbeliever but was gradually won over by the boards performance.

When I first saw Grant Strovers parabolic surfboard I wasn't at all sure it could work. I was a sceptic but I immediately appreciated his genuine experimental innovation. I knew it had some history, as in my research I discovered Dale Velzy, possibly the biggest innovator in the world of early 60s Malibu's in California, had built a long board version, which reputedly worked but never caught on.

Now with Grants short 'noughties version' it looked like a condensed, complicated plan-shape which as I mind-surfed it the wider nose rails looked like they'd catch on any hard turn. Wipe-out!

However, once I saw Grant riding it in one of our student contests, I perceived speed and an increased manoeuvrability. The tail platform of the parabola was delivering him more direction change capacity than other competitors were finding on more conventional plan-shapes. Grant won the comp, the parabolic surfboard fights on.

Roger Mansfield
Surf Science & Technology Lecturer
Cornwall College Newquay

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