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CATALINA CLASSIC: These Watermen Have Balls

Surfer/Shaper Brian Syzmanski takes top honors in stock class. 70-year old Mike Eaton finishes race.

by

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Brian Syzmanski: 1st place stock division.

up the host of young guns, and a finish by 70-year-old Mike Eaton. This race, a Herculean accomplishment in and of itself, also highlighted many true feats of age, and was a testament to the benefits of life as a waterman.

Paddleboarding is a sport much like marathon-running, where constant training is needed and a healthy relationship between mind and body essential. Consummate paddleboard builder and pioneer Joe Bark explains: "Building your own boards and especially being comfortable with your own equipment is really helpful with paddleboarding. Paddleboards have come a long way since the '60s but the basic facets of training, endurance, and technique remain much the same. Surfers have an edge on swimmers because they're used to the technique of holding the neck a certain way, but proper training is essential for everyone."

The individuals who compete in these races come from all over, united in their quest to prove their endurance and adroitness in challenging conditions. The contest concluded without a hitch and was a classic, memorable event for all involved.

The annual Catalina Classic Paddleboard Race went off last weekend, continuing a legacy of emphatic competition and good vibes. The race, a grueling 32-mile paddle from Catalina Island to Manhattan Beach in Southern California, traditionally encapsulates the spirit of being a waterman. The race challenges the minds and bodies of weary competitors who devote their lives to ocean adventures.

The race started off slowly as gusty winds and churning tides created disagreeable conditions for the first 20 miles. The elements, particularly intense for even the most fit entrants, were almost too much to properly hold the event. Eventually, however, the 71 competitors hit their strides, overcoming the adversity of the first few legs and smoothly paddling the calmer 12-mile finale.

Brian Szymanski took 1st Place in the stock class, a division restricted to a 12-foot board or smaller with a minimum weight requirement of 20 pounds, while Brian Zeller took 1st Place in the unlimited class, which has no weight or length requirements.

Highlights of the day include a 2nd Place finish in the stock class by 58-year-old Brian O'Connor, showing