

## TIME OUT

Andrew May  
chief executive  
StriveStronger

**How long have you been surf skiing and how did you get into it?** I've been surf skiing for over a decade now. In my 30s, I lived next door to the dual Olympian and Australian surf lifesaving legend Dennis Heussner. He used to joke that when I was ready to "mature into a man" and swap my running shoes and racing bike for an ocean ski, he was there to help. I eventually yielded and Dennis gave me one of his old skis. I started going to Bondi every Friday morning for a combination run, swim, longboard surfing and paddle session.

**How often do you go surf skiing and where?** Once a week in the warmer months and a few times a week in the summer break. In Sydney, I paddle around Middle Harbour or Sydney Heads, leaving from Balmoral Beach. In Gerroa, on the NSW South Coast, I paddle off Seven Mile Beach. On Queensland's Gold Coast, I paddle in the canals around Burleigh Waters. I also like getting out on a stand-up paddleboard.

**The biggest waves you will tackle** About 1.8 metres is where I tap out, unless it is unbroken swell offshore.

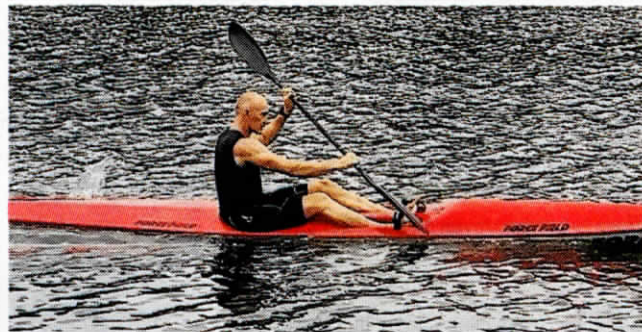
**Do you surf ski in all temperatures?** I paddle all through winter. Sydney winters are pretty mild. Try living in Norway for three months – our winters are tropical by comparison.

**Favourite spots in Australia** I love paddling from Balmoral Beach early in the morning as the sun rises over Sydney; there is no better place to be. I also do a bit of paddling on the Gold Coast. Tallebudgera Creek is divine.

**Most memorable surf skiing experience** Two come to mind. The first one was catching my first proper wave after many botched attempts. I remember slicing across the face of the wave, feeling exhilarated. I was hooked. The second time, I was catching waves with a pod of dolphins just off Blacksmiths Beach, south of Newcastle. Pure beauty.

**How many surf-skis do you own and what are they?** The ski I use the most is a compressed fibreglass Fenn Swordfish 18-foot ocean ski. It lives in my spare car parking space in Sydney. I also own an 18-foot Force Field surf ski that I keep at my parents' home on the Gold Coast.

**Do you go out on your own?** Yes, regularly at Gerroa and on the Gold Coast. In Sydney, I tend to paddle with other people.



**Favourite surf skier** Specific to ocean surfing skills, you can't go past 12-time world surf ski champion Oscar Chalupsky.

**Tips to become a better surf skier** Take lessons as early as you can. Getting proper coaching and guidance on the right technique and approach is invaluable. Otherwise, you will develop a poor technique that will be much harder to change down the track. I know this lesson first-hand.

**Ever been scared in the water?** Yes, very. I was out surfing along the break wall near Blacksmiths Beach. The swell was pumping and I paddled out to where surfers were being towed into the waves. As I took off on a wave way too large for my skill set, my ski flipped

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and I was dumped. My ski ended up more than 300 metres away. Swimming back to retrieve my ski in a huge swell where great white sharks had recently been spotted was unnerving, to say the least.

**Any serious injuries or catastrophes**

No. Only damage to my ego.

**Favourite gear** My ocean ski.

**Dislike about surf skiing** When I drag the ski to shore and find my arms and shoulders are barely able to lift it on to the roof of the car. But if that's the biggest problem I have, things are looking pretty good, right?

**View on sharks** I appreciate these beautiful beasts and respect that "we" are playing and training in "their" environment. That said, I feel much better seeing a shark from a ski than while I'm swimming.

**Most like about the sport** It builds muscular endurance, a strong core, cardiovascular fitness and stability, but it doesn't feel as if I am doing "fitness". It's fun. Being in the sun and out on the ocean is good for the soul.

**What do you think about when you're sitting out there** Sometimes, absolutely nothing. This is one of the things I love about paddling; no technology, no distractions, just you and nature. And sometimes a few big fish.

lifeandleisure@afr.com