

Sky Surfing - Overview

Sky Surfing is a team sport or team parachuting. Each team has only two players. One of them is a sky surfer and another camera flyer. As all the events take place on air, the players must be well-equipped. In this sport, each surfer is totally responsible for preparing themselves before the start of surfing.



Sky Surfing is one of the toughest sports that human being has ever invented. Still it is very popular because of the objectives of playing the sport. The main objective of the sport is to present a sequence of sky surfing moves on sky with a free fall as technically and as artistically as possible but with sure safety.



Sky Surfing Team

Sky surfing team includes two players the surfer and the camera flyer.

- **Sky Surfer** – Sky surfer is the one who first jumps from the plane and performs different tricks. The sky surfer has to be well equipped in order to be safe in the air and also to land safely.
- **Camera Flyer** – The camera flyer holds the camera and records the performance of the sky surfer. There are also equipment or safety guidelines for the camera flyer. He must have helmet which covers the full face of the person.

Sky Surfing – Championships

Sky surfing is now being played widely across the globe. Here is a list of some of the important sky surfing championships is as follows –

- USA national sky surf Championships
- Sky surfing world Championships
- ESPN X games
- European Sky surfing Championships
- SSI pro tour sky surfing

Participating Countries

Sky surfing is a dangerous but popular game all over the world. In this game, player need to jump from the aeroplane and perform various tricks high above in the sky.

Some of the major dominating countries in this game are Canada, California, France, Australia, and United States.

Sky Surfing - A Brief History

Sky surfing is a part of sky diving in which the surfer has a board which is connected to his feet. The surfer performs surfing style aerobatics while free falling from around 13000 feet above ground level. The boards used in sky surfing are generally smaller than the surfboards which are used in other surfing sports.

- Sky surfing was first invented by two French sky divers in 1986 named **Jean Pascaloron** and **Dominique Jacquet**.
- Sky surfing became popular during the 90's because of the efforts of the first few great players who gave ideas to master the complex aerobatics to the players of sky surfing. These players were **Jerry Loftis** and **Patrick de Gayardon**.

The first evidence of proper sky surfing dates back to 1987 when **Joel Cruciani** made a free fall from a board by standing in a proper surfing position. It

was for the film **hibernator** and he used regular size wave board with snowboard type boot bindings.

- In 1988, it was French driver **Laurent Bouquet** who made an experimental jump with his skateboard along with his own parachute system. Another French driver Patrick de Gayardon modified the small bouquet board with soft bindings and cutaway systems to facilitate easy release of board in case of emergency.
- In the year 1990, sky surfing became world's first video sport when cameraman Pete Mckeenman decided to organise Freestyle World Championship for the first time.
- In November 1990, first Freestyle Sky Surfing World Championship was held in Texas. Each performer was accompanied by a gymnast and a cameraman. Twelve teams had participated in this championship.
- Second World Championship was held in Nov 1991 in Vero Beach. This time, 15 teams from 6 nations actively participated.
- In the year 1993, WFF formulated the rules and grass root sky surfing competitions were organised. In the same year, WFF organised the first official Sky Surfing World Championship where USA became the winner.
- In 1994, women made their debut into this game. Soon after that, it was played as an extreme sport in ESPN X games.

Sky surfing is of two types – one is **free flying** and the other one is **free style sky surfing**. We will discuss more about it in the subsequent chapters.

Sky Surfing - Equipment

In this chapter, we will discuss the equipment used by the sky surfing team.

Surf Cutaway System

Among all the equipment, **surf cutaway system** is an important one because it can be activated by the surfer at ease. To activate it, the surfer need not have to bend at the waist level. The surf cutaway system is an efficient speed improver for the surfer. This surf cutaway system is designed in such a way that it ensures easy, reliable, and fast cutaways for the surfer.

Helmet

The helmet must be of a hard shell category to cover the whole face including the jaw and chin of the face.

The surfer and the camera holder must wear helmets which not only protects the head but also the whole face. If anything hits you around 10000 feet above the ground, then it is difficult to get immediate help, so helmet is must.



Audibility Meter

All the jumpers are instructed to use at least one visual or audibility meter with them. They can also use both of them.

Recovery Pilot Chute

A recovery pilot chute is used when the sky surfing board is released. This parachute is used for the boards that weigh 6 or 7 grams. This system slows the falling speed of the board.

Sky Surfing - Eligibility

The sky surfing competition is an invitational event, invitational because anyone can't take part in this competition. The competitors can take part only by submitting application form and they join after getting an invitation from the organisation. So the competition comprises of sky surf teams. The competition consists of a total of five jumps. Each jump will count some points for each team.



At the end of the competition, all scores will be counted. But it does not mean each participating team will make five jumps. In fact, all the teams will make four jumps each and after the fourth jump is completed, top five teams are selected. The last or the fifth jump is taken by those top five teams. After this, the fifth jump total is added to the overall total which makes the jump worth double points because of the fifth stage point. Last but not the least, the competitors are free to perform any type of moves they wish to show to the audience. The moves can be performed in any order and in any jump.

Sky surfing grade 1 and grade 2

Sky surfing grade 1 and grade 2 or SS1 and SS2 are designed to teach the parachutists all the necessary skills and guidelines to enable them to fly with style but in a controlled manner with a sky surfing board.

Eligibility

Before entering into professional sky surfing, the parachutists should have completed at least a to e of the FS requirements. FS stands for **Formation Skydiving**.

- The players must have the qualities which are necessary for a sky surfer.
- The surfer must maintain a stand up position for at least 12 consecutive seconds. Different tournaments are setting different standards. Some are setting the stand-up position for 15 or 18 seconds, so it may vary but the minimum standard must be maintained by the players.

- In addition, the players must perform a controlled turn of 360 degrees in both directions while remaining in that stand-up position.
- The surfer must be able to perform a forward or backward loop with a straight body position by starting and returning back to the stand-up position.
- The surfer must be able to return back to a stable position within five seconds which is necessary. He can return to this stable position from a fast side or a back spin of at least 2 to 3 revolutions per second.
- In sky surfing or in any surfing, the stable position is defined as the position where the surfer has his belly towards the earth or the surfer is in horizontal posture with his belly towards the earth.

Besides all these physical eligibilities, a surfer must hold a BPA 'C' licence. The surfers must take all the required appropriate equipment and dresses with them.

Sky Surfing - How to Play?

The height is minimum 10,000 feet above the ground level. The level of height gives the surfers more time to showcase their talents in the open air. The ground level upon which they are performing should not be a crowded one. This is because at the end of the game, they have to land on an open surface probably on a water surface for their safety.

- A surfer must wear all the equipment and the dresses required for the sport. The players must carry a **hook knife** with them.
- All the jumpers are instructed to carry at least one **visual or audible altimeter** with them. They can also use both of them.
- Among all the equipment, the recovery system is the most important equipment for the sky surfers.
- The surfer and the camera holder must wear helmets which not only covers the head but also the whole face to provide safety to the players. Because around 10000 feet above the ground, if anything hits you, then you can't get immediate help, so helmet is must.

Besides helmet, a first aid kit, proper dress which sustains wind pressure and shoes will be good for the players. Communication device should be with the players to avail help when necessary.

Sky Surfing Grade 1

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- The surfer must perform a controlled turn of 360 degrees in both the directions while staying upright on the board.
- The player must know how to exit and for this he must perform a type of exit which is known as **surfing down the slipstream**.
- After these, the surfer must have expertise in loop which is controlled back and front. The surfer should also demonstrate the forward movement by tracking while at the same time he must stay upright on the board.



Sky Surfing Grade 2

Besides SS1, there are also techniques for sky surfing grade 2 (SS2).

- The player should have the eligibility to clear the SS1 and then only he can move into SS2.
- The surfer must perform a controlled seated turn of two 360 degrees or a 720 degree movement. This is called as sit spin.
- The surfer should be an expert in performing loops. He must perform a full 360 degrees of back loop or front loop forming a standing position with a half twist fully under control.
- The surfer should perform a controlled helicopter spin, rotating for a minimum of 3 times in 360 degrees but not exceeding six complete revolutions.



Evaluation of Scores

In sky surfing, each jump is evaluated by a minimum of three judges. In some tournaments, there are also five to six judges depending on the level of competition in the tournament.

- Each judge gives scores in two sub-scores basis which ranges from 0 to 50.
- The two sub-scores are called as **technical merit** and **artistic merit**.
- The two sub-scores are added together to reach a total score of 0 to 100 for each team's jump and the scores of all the teams, which is measured and given by the judges, are added for a cumulative total of each team's jump.
- It is cumulative because there are five jumps performed by each team.
- The competition consists of a total of five jumps and each jump will count some points for each team.

At the end of the competition, all scores will be counted. But it does not mean that each team will make five jumps. In fact, all the teams will make four jumps each and after the fourth jump, five teams are selected.

The Fifth Jump

The last or the fifth jump is taken by the top five teams.

- The scores obtained in the fifth jump by the teams will be added again to increase the weight of the final jump which will count for one-third the total of the event.
- The sum which is obtained by the cumulative scores after all the jumps are completed will be the final score for each team.

- The team with the highest cumulative or total scores is declared as the winner of the match.

Judging

The judges in sky surfing have eagle eyes. They closely observe the sequences that are happening.

- Sometimes the judges may use a live transmission or recorded air-to-ground video.
- If air-to-ground video is not available, then they can also take the help of air-to-air video recording as both are helpful to judge the moves performed by a team.
- If a live system is used by the judges, then they will be able to watch each jump as it is performed live, while it is also being recorded from the air to ground signal.
- The entire jump or some portions of the jump may be reviewed via an **instant replay** option. This option can only be chosen if it is requested by two or more judges available during the scoring.

Sky Surfing - Rules

Though sky surfing is an extreme sport where the surfers play with utmost energy, but they have to adhere with the rules and regulations of the sport strictly. Undoubtedly this is one of the craziest and one of the most exciting sport that human being has invented. The players have to jump from a minimum height of 13,000 feet above the ground level which is around 4000 metres.

Rules for Jumping

There are certainly no exiting postures or positions for the surfers unless imposed by the chief pilot of the plane. There is a chief pilot for safety reasons concerning with the players.

- The team can't jump haphazardly without maintaining any order in fact there is a strict jumping order for the surfers.
- For the first jump done by the players, the jump order will be determined by placing of a reverse order. It is also based on the standing position from the previous jump records.
- If there is a tie between the teams, then the jump order between the teams is determined by a draw.
- After each round, the jump order will be done in reverse order so that each team will get an equal chance to showcase their talents.



Rules regarding jump procedures

There are jump procedures for surfers. If a live air-to-ground system is used, then each team will receive an exit pass of their own.

- No team can exit the aircraft in which they are sitting until they have a signal which shows 'EXIT' sign.
- The EXIT sign is to be signalled by the jump master. If this does not happen, then the exit procedure will be conducted by the normal rules and regulations as stipulated by the judges.
- After the EXIT signal is received by the jump master, each team will have sharp thirty seconds. In these thirty seconds, the surfers have to exit the aircraft.

Rules regarding landing

Each team is responsible for going back to the officially designated landing zone to avoid any injury. Once the rule has been set up by the jump master and the conditions are acceptable for jumping, it is up to the team to jump and show their talent. We have mentioned about the conditions for jumping because the players have to jump from 13000 feet above the ground level, so weather conditions have a huge impact on this game.

Rules for Newcomers

A novice or a new comer should at first familiarize himself with flying with a board attached to his feet. This game looks very tough, so before entering into the sport, a player must practice a lot in his institute on ground.

- The player can take part in training programmes which are organized in enabling the newcomers to spend the initial board jumps flying in a belly-to-earth with the board tucked up behind them for canopy deployment which makes their back strong.
- Once a novice or a newcomer is confident enough to maintain and perform the heading control while staying in a belly-to-earth” position, it means he is fit and can attempt to stand upright on the board. But a newcomer must do it on ground so that he could get confidence and familiarise with the equipment.

After regular practice, the sky surfer becomes confident and he can start competing through a small sky surfing board. After practicing on a small board, he can go for a little larger board. The performer has to perform while being in an upright position.