



Surfing is one of five new sports that will feature at the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. **Ellie Ross** explains the appeal

WHY do I love surfing? Because it's just me, my surfboard and the sea. No WhatsApp beeps. No noisy traffic. No moaning commuters. It's a rare dose of peace and one I cherish. It's the closest to meditation I've ever got.

Surfing became an Olympic sport this month when the International Olympic Committee confirmed it as one of five new events for Tokyo 2020. It's a decision that has left some 35million surfers around the world feeling stoked.

'Surfing embodies a cool, playful lifestyle that would add a completely new element to the programme, helping the Games reach new fans,' said Fernando Aguerre, president of the International Surfing Association.

He's right. The drive towards getting the sport included in the Olympics began in 1992, so this is a milestone for surfing – and one that will most definitely increase its popularity.

One woman who hopes to be among the 40 competitors (20 male and 20 female) riding the waves at Chiba (east of Tokyo, where the competition will be held) is Lucy Campbell, who is one of Britain's best pro female surfers.

'It will be amazing to have more people watching and understanding how the competitions work,' she says.



Seeking gold:
Lucy Campbell

My own relationship with surfing began six years ago. I was lured to Cornwall by the appeal of weekends away from my frantic lifestyle as a student and was immediately hooked by the feeling that comes when you're repeatedly smashed in the face by the Atlantic – and are left feeling thrillingly alive.

However, surfing is more than a physical experience. A surfer's chilled-out nature may seem a cliché but I have found myself much more at ease since taking it up. It's important to remain calm in a wipeout when you might be held underwater for a long time. So I enrolled in a freediving course in Newquay, where I learnt to hold my breath underwater for long periods. I now have the mental strength to stay underwater without panicking and when I need to calm down

on dry land, I apply the same techniques and my problems wash away. I used to be a worrier but surfing has changed my outlook.

It's rare for two waves to be the same, so you're always adapting and learning, and it's the same with life events. I'm finally learning to take each crest as it comes.

I'm obviously not going to be on Team GB's surf squad in 2020 but this new wave of enthusiasm for the sport will surely herald a golden time for the British surf industry.

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