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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****The South Bay Boardriders Club Unveils Catalina Classic Commemorative Statue Presented as a Gift to the City of Manhattan Beach**

Manhattan Beach, CA – The South Bay Boardriders Club officially handed possession of the Catalina Classic Commemorative Statue to the City of Manhattan Beach Thursday August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. A reception was held to celebrate the occasion, just days before the 46<sup>th</sup> running of the annual Catalina Classic Paddleboard Race.

Through a long seven-year effort the South Bay Boardriders Club (SBBC) was able to design, fundraise, secure community support, and install the statue at the south end of the Manhattan Beach Pier Lower Parking Lot; immediately adjacent to the strand and bike path and within a stone's throw of where the annual 32 mile open ocean race culminates off the world famous Manhattan Beach Pier. The race is the premier paddleboard event in the world, attracting both international talent and a serious list of homegrown contenders each year. Surfers, swimmers, and other ocean athletes raised in the cities of the South Bay are intrinsically aware of the race and its world-renowned prestige. Most feel the need to complete the grueling challenge at least once to earn their place via one of the most revered events in our collective cultural heritage.

Efforts were spearheaded by SBBC President Tom Horton, Treasurer Ed McKeegan, Architect Michael Lee, and Designer Brian Kingston. Sculptor Chris Barela was commissioned to create the life-sized statue after previously leaving his indelible mark on the South Bay by creating memorial statues honoring Lifeguard Tim Kelly and Body Glove Founders Bill and Bob Meistrell in Hermosa and Redondo Beach respectively. Heritage Bronze Foundry in Hesperia, CA, turned Barela's hand-crafted designs into life sized bronze figures. Finally, the complex and complicated installation process was completed by Bennett Tasky, Peter O'Campo and Craft Construction. Designer Brian Kingston explained that the statue was crafted in such a way "to not only honor the amazing athletes and their equipment but create a clean, contemporary, and timeless look that would stand the test of time. The base was designed to represent the ocean with the inset paddlers angled in such a way that would match the trajectory and line they would take while paddling from the the races starting point at the Isthmus on Catalina Island."

The South Bay Boardriders Club would like to thank the City of Manhattan Beach for supporting this important and relevant addition to the cultural heritage of the City. The Club would like to thank the citizens of Manhattan Beach for overwhelmingly encouraging the City Council to recognize the race as a cherished part of our collective history and deserving of this permanent tribute. Over several months the club was able to amass thousands of signatures in favor of the project, motivating Councilman Richard Montgomery to ask at a subsequent City Council meeting, "Has there ever been anything put in front of this Council that has ever received this level of positive support? I cannot remember anything moving so many people to speak so heavily in favor of an initiative." Finally, the club thanks our members and supporters. Learn more at [www.southbayboardriders.com](http://www.southbayboardriders.com).

**The South Bay Boardriders Club:**

Established in 2009, the South Bay Boardriders Club (SBBC) is dedicated to celebrating the rich history of South Bay surf culture, being guardians of our local shoreline, and introducing families, youth, and our community to all aspects of ocean activities.

**The Catalina Classic Paddleboard Race:**

The Manhattan Beach International Paddleboard Race was started in 1955 by Los Angeles County Lifeguard Bob Hogan and members of the Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce and was the pre-cursor to the Catalina Classic. Many legendary watermen and waterwomen have taken the challenge and helped make the Catalina Classic the pre-eminent paddling event of the year. Paddlers leave the Catalina Island Isthmus at 6am and paddle 32 miles to the Manhattan Beach Pier on paddleboards between 12 and 19 feet long, using only their hands to propel them through the water. Swell, currents, and wind conditions play into what is notoriously one of the most grueling endurance events in the world.

**The City of Manhattan Beach:**

Manhattan Beach is a laid-back South Bay community popular with families and outdoor enthusiasts. The Strand bike path winds along the oceanfront between modern mansions and wide stretches of sand lined with volleyball courts. Manhattan Beach Pier features a quaint aquarium and views of surfers. There are several parks, and a small downtown area with boutiques, cafes, pubs & upscale eateries.