

FULLY COMMITTED

SPEEDBOARDERS PUSH THE LIMITS

With every issue I have to fight tooth and nail with the editors to get more speedboarding coverage. There is just so much happening, and the list of talent I want to cover has been stacking up to such an extent that Mr. Brooke has finally relented to doing an interview issue. After being a part of this skateboard rollercoaster for almost 25 years, I can honestly say that today's speedboarding phenoms encompass the true spirit of what it means to be a real skater. I recently read a press release about some pro street skater getting his shower renovation pimped by that Axe company that man-perfume, that's hardly what I think of when I think of true spirit of skateboarding. The following article is proof that all over the world people have committed to riding skateboards fast and putting the rest of their responsibilities on standby to make the trip to the next race.

We'll span the planet to meet just a few of the speedboarders changing the face of skateboarding today. From Vancouver, Kevin Reimer reflects on his incredible season and unofficial speed record. One of my personal favorite skaters, Ryan Theobald - whose oozing style has made him into a speedboarding legend himself - brings us up to date with two more British Columbians who've had amazing seasons: Nate Lang and Scoot Smith are prime examples of how the youth are flying across oceans to ride new hills and take over the podiums. We even briefly connect with the Swedish charger Erik Lundberg while he vacations in South Africa after his latest 1st-place win.

We move out to Quebec, where I interview my teammate J.F. Baily and tease him about his long period of 2nd place blues and how he mixes parenthood and skateboarding. Joe Lehm's Timeship prodigy David Price in New Mexico gets interviewed by another charger, Andrew Mercado. The Swiss skater Martin Siegrist, who has been one of the most consistent racers in the last 10 years, enlightens us about his favorite roads in the Alps, and in the dying moments of this piece coming together we were able to get a few comments from Noah Sakamoto, who is putting Northern California on the skateboard map in a whole new way. We really couldn't do Noah or Erik proper justice in this piece, so watch for full-length interviews from them in the coming year.

Thankfully, we finally get to meet with the Coloradan legend Rob McKendry on paper. Rob is one of the very few speedboarders to ever see his name on the bottom of a pro-model speedboard, and now that he's riding for Never Summer we hope to see that company carry on the tradition of celebrating this man's undying journey to be with fellow speedboarders. This is a guy who showed up in Sweden this summer for an event that got cancelled at the last minute, but he had no idea because he chose buying a plane ticket over hooking up to permanent Internet access. That's commitment!

Skateboarding fast has always been the backbone of just about all other forms of skating. Do you think Jeremy Wray could ollie that triple set if he wasn't comfortable at speed? How would Paul Machnau set up for an 18-stair Smith grind without knowing how to push? At CW we find it odd that the skaters who are pushing the boundaries of speed remain hidden from the limelight in every other skate mag. How are we going to convince Old Spice to pimp out K-Rimes' john if he can't get any coverage?

— Jon Caffen

CW: How did you wind up riding for Sector 9?
NS: Danny Connor, Jeff Budro, and all the nice people down at the factory.

CW: Craziest road story?
NS: Olinda Rd, Maui—Patrick Rizzo- in the dark with a headlamp.

CW: Who are some of the speedboarders you look up to and why?
NS: Eric Lundberg because he's humble but hungry, and Scoot Smith because Team Green is the shit!

CW: Why do you think speedboarding is growing in popularity?
NS: Brian Lyons and Coastlongboarding.com.

CW: What was your most memorable competition?
NS: Ohio 2004—Meatball, Striker, Hayhead, The Rizzer, Jimmy Dangle, and Aki WaWa!

CW: What's next for you in the world of downhill racing?
NS: Helping it grow.

Martin Siegrist

Interview by Michael Brooke

Michael Brooke: Reading your bio at your Web site, it appears that you caught the speedboard bug about a decade ago while watching the X Games. What was running through your head when you first saw downhill?

Martin Siegrist: Well I was fascinated by the speed, and the way these guys used their skateboards. I'd already heard of longboarding before, but didn't come across downhill skateboard racing. I wanted to do that too!

MB: Did you feel somewhat isolated in Switzerland, or did you manage to find other folks to race with?

MS: In the beginning I was just riding on my own. That wasn't a problem for me. Riding roads in and around Liestal was enough of a challenge. Then one day in spring 1999 I saw a poster of a skateboard race in a skateshop in Zürich; I was really curious so I went. It was an indoor boardercross race. To my surprise I ended up in the final, racing against Chris Hart, the owner of Airflow Skateboards. The final race was really hard; both of us wanted to win. Chris did end up winning the race, but I was hard on his heels. About a year later I met another guy from the Airflow team, we went to ride at Gempen, which became my home spot. On this hill I learned how to foot-brake and how to ride corners.

MB: Looking back over the last 10 years, did you ever think that you'd wind up doing so well in competition?



"The perfect technical road is something I didn't find yet." —Martin Siegrist

PHOTO: JON HUEY

MS: I started racing because I wanted to be #1. To be honest I never thought that I could win a race so early in my career. After two years of racing and a lot of practice, my chance was right there at the 2004 IGSA World Championships on the Auerberg road in Germany. We had five timed runs and I won all of them... I was surprised but at the same time I realized that I could actually win my first big race. Due to the narrow and technical racetrack we were riding in two-man heats, which made it a little bit easier for me. Nevertheless racing was intense and I was happy that I qualified for the final. I was really afraid of that final run. Douglas Silva from Brazil won the other semifinal and crashed in the finish area. He had to be airlifted because of a hip injury. So to come back to your question I saw pretty soon that I could win a race.

MB: You are in school for design—can you explain your philosophy of design as it relates to skateboard equipment?

MS: My design is reduced, highly functional and aesthetic. Right now, most of our equipment is adapted from other sports. Only boards, trucks and wheels are designed specifically to satisfy the needs of downhill skateboarding. There are so many new technologies and smart materials. Countless improvements and innovations can be made. How about a real downhill racing helmet, gloves that last, a suit that is aerodynamic but still protective? How much simpler would it be if we had special downhill racing shoes with replaceable rubber soles? Basically I always try to tailor and optimize my equipment in order to have the best setup possible. Like that my physical and mental health is the one and only parameter that can cause failure. I don't want to lose a race due to inappropriate equipment. High-end equipment isn't necessary to be suc-

cessful. But it makes everything so much easier if you don't have to worry about stuff. You can concentrate on other things, such as winning races!

MB: What is it about technical roads that make them so interesting for you? Describe for us the perfect technical road.

MS: Technical roads are challenging to ride. The ongoing challenge of getting faster is my motivation. Riding technical roads requires skills, practice and experience. A fast run on a road like Gempen, Sustenpass or St. Ursanne feels awesome; it's a great feeling when you can stick corners and get the most out of it. I'm trying to get faster and push my limits. There's so much more to discover on a difficult road. It makes me think and experiment what works best. That's what keeps me going. The perfect technical road is something I didn't find yet. I'm still looking for it! It's an endless mix of various corners, chicanes and speed, high speed, a mix between Sustenpass, Teutonia, Auerberg and Bukit Tinggi for example. There's a lift which takes you to the top of the hill and the road is dry whenever you want to skate.

MB: What are some of your most memorable races?

MS: I will never forget the last Hot Heels in 2003. It was my second time in the Kaunertal. The weather was nice the whole week and there were many fast riders. I had some very frightening moments riding through The Carousel and Hell's Gate. I won the consolation final and got 5th. I'd love to go back one day and ride that road again. The IGSA World Championships on the Auerberg in 2004 was the first big race I've won. I love that hill, especially the run all the way down to the village we practiced on in 2003. There's the 2005 race in Teutonia, Brazil. After I saw a video of the hill, I couldn't

get it out of my head anymore. I haven't seen any other hill like that before. It is gnarly and much steeper than you expect it from pictures or videos! It was the first time in my life riding that fast. I got eliminated somewhere in the quarter finals and my GPS measured an incredible speed of 118 km/h. The spectators at the side of the road, they're going crazy every time skaters are coming down the hill. Racing in Brazil with so many new people was a very nice experience.

Another race that I won't forget is the 2006 IGSA World Championships in Tomils, Switzerland. The racecourse is long, steep, quite fast and really technical. You have to footbrake five times. It's essential to ride the corners as clean as possible in order to get enough speed for the relatively flat corner exits. For me it was a perfect week. It started with an interview in the Swiss magazine "Facts." It was published right before the race. I mentioned that I wanted to win the World Championships again. The day the magazine was published I got a call from Swiss Television. They came to portray Aki and me at the race, which turned out as a very good promotion for the sport. The race day was simply perfect and I won the World Championships again! I'm proud of winning both races on Col d'Izoard in 2006 and 2007. The World Championships in 2007 was nice too. Somehow I still can't believe that I've won this race!

MB: What are some of your favorite places to ride?

MS: There are so many good roads in Switzerland; my favorite is Sustenpass. I can't describe the feeling I get, riding down Sustenpass at 6 o'clock in the morning. It's a 15 km run in one of the most beautiful landscapes in Switzerland. The road is surrounded by snowy peaks, glaciers and rocks. You're riding through uncountable dark tunnels and perfect corners. I know basically every meter of that road. It's a very intense run when you push it from top to bottom! Then there are a few roads in the Jura. The Jura is a hilly countryside in an elevation zone from 300 to 1200 meters above sea level. Glovelier is about an hour from my parents' house. There are four nice roads in a small area. Two of them are fast and the other two roads are more on the technical side. There's everything from rough to smooth road surface which makes it even more interesting. I also like riding my home spot, Gempen. I'm living 15 minutes from the top of the hill, which offers two nice runs on each side of the hill. People give me rides up the hill easily. I think I'm blessed with a great playground for downhill skateboarding here in Switzerland.

MB: Do you ride other types of skateboards (i.e. slalom, street or vert)?

MS: Airflow Skateboards is a slalom-oriented company. I was into slalom for a while but

never really practiced. I participated in big races such as the Paris World Cup. I'd love to ride real GS. It's not so easy to find a good road, steep and wide enough, without traffic so you can set up cones. I enjoy riding slalom every once in a while on a freshly paved highway link, and I still participate in smaller slalom races here in Switzerland. I was never into street or vert but I like riding bowls. When the roads are dry I'm using the skateboard for transportation daily. Sometimes I'm riding the parking lot in Liestal, which has 12 levels and an elevator. You can choose from different lines. Drifting the corners standup, without touching the ground is a big challenge. I like it!

MB: By all accounts, Maryhill was a very good race; what are your thoughts? Also, I heard there was a bit of a dustup at the end of a race between you and a competitor; what is your take on that?

MS: Maryhill was a very well organized event. The road is really nice, the new black surface looks awesome on pictures and the corners are beautiful. But the hill is too slow. Even the tailwinds didn't make it gnarly. In my opinion this is not a challenging racecourse. Nevertheless I'm happy I could win the time trials. On race day, however, I made up my mind after getting pushes from behind during the semifinal and final. It was on a straight line and there was enough room for everybody, so I don't see a reason to give someone a push. It's simply not fair! Downhill skateboarding isn't a team sport. The IGSA does have a rule which says that intentional contact isn't tolerated on the racecourse. There's a rule book, but riders never read it and [just] do whatever they want to do. I kind of exploded in the finish area and overreacted. I'm sorry for what I did. It was a mistake. I'm disappointed the race ended like that. Actually I don't have a problem when other riders are faster than me. But when some riders suddenly get a friendly boost from behind I'm getting angry. That's cheating!

MB: What is your favorite road trip story?

MS: In summer 2005 I traveled to Bologna, Italy, just to ride this crazy bowl with the first full pipe ever built in Europe. I knew that the Italian railway personnel were in a strike, but I wanted to go no matter how. So I took the train to the Swiss Italian border in Chiasso. I passed the border and at about 02:00 am. I was standing on the highway, trying to hitchhike. Six hours later I arrived in Bologna, right next to the bowl. I rode it until it was dark. After some attempts I even made the roll-over over the full pipe. For dinner I cooked ravioli on my gas stove and then slept under the trees. I woke up in the morning and stepped back on my skateboard. My legs were feeling tired but I carved around all day long again. Late afternoon I took the train back home.

MB: The Swiss are a proud nation. A Swiss citizen, what are you most proud of? Chocolate? The Mountains? The Swiss Army knife? There must be something!
MS: I'm proud of the mountains, for sure. What would a downhill skater do with mountains? And I'm definitely thankful to be at such a nice spot on earth.

MB: What are some of the differences between the downhill scene in Europe and North America?

MS: I don't know much about the North American scene. But it seems big. I think since we all travel a lot and also due to the World Wide Web, riding styles have merged, so you can't say that a nationality/scene has a unique riding style. Riders chose the style that goes best with a certain hill or racetrack.

MB: Any final comments?

MS: I'd like to thank my sponsors for all trust and support!

David Price

Interview by Andrew Mercado

Andrew Mercado: When did you start riding downhill? How did you get into it?
David Price: I got into longboarding through a good friend in high school (ducks, Anthony) who had a board, and we would go cruise around San Francisco's hills on our lunch break. Shortly thereafter I bought my first longboard. We got around for awhile, slowly progressing. Around 2002 I hooked up with the Comet Skateboard crew in Golden Gate Park doing slalom sessions. Trips to the Berkeley hills followed shortly. I remember my first run ever down Old Tur Road, the first real hill I bombed. Riding with guys like Eli Stojose, Dave "Caveman" Bryant, Patrick Rizzo, J.M. Duran and Jonathan Reese really helped improve my skills quickly. I entered my first race in 2003, the San Francisco Golden Gate trial. I was hooked after that.

AM: What did you think when I first asked you to ride for Madrid Downhill?

DP: I was STOKED! I knew Madrid has been around awhile and has a lot of history with roots of skateboarding. To be on the same team as Sean Mallard and Roger Hickey is an honor.

AM: What do you think about the current downhill scene today?

DP: It's been a trip to watch the downhill scene grow so fast over the past two years. I remember going to Dufferin Bay 4, and there were like 40 to 50 people racing. I came back a year and there were 140-plus people! I'm stoked that so many people are discovering that skateboarding is more than kickflips and handrails. Skate EVERYTHING!