

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

A PROFILE OF THREE EXCEPTIONALLY TALENTED FEMALE SKATERS



Julie Kindstrand

Words by Sydney Goldberg | Photo by Garret Shigenaka

“I don’t mind living in a man’s world as long as I can be a woman in it.”

Roller skates and a bottle of Gatorade are responsible for Julie Kindstrand’s skateboarding career. When Julie was 11 her father, “Santa Ana Dave,” used to take her roller skating at a rink near his plumbing and tile job in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif. Then he heard about the opening of Laguna Niguel Skatepark, so he decided to give it a go. Julie brought her Britney

Spears roller skates to the park but was captivated by the many skateboarders there that day, including her very own father. “I’m gonna be cool like my dad,” she thought. Mr. Kindstrand never thought his “little princess” would stick with skateboarding, beyond her first drop-in on a ramp. But her fellow skateboarders were willing to sacrifice a hydrating Gatorade if she

successfully landed her trick, and by the third try she did.

At just 17 years of age, Julie has already placed 5th at the 2009 X Games and 1st in the 2009 Vans Pro-tec Pool Party, along with numerous other high placings.

Despite her father’s deep history with skateboarding, Julie wasn’t really immersed into riding during her childhood. On the other hand, she made it clear that her father was always a part of the community. “Whether it was at a contest or a session, he would introduce himself and share his charm with the world,” Julie recalls.

Julie’s first introduction to female riding was when her father took her to the Basic Bowl in Huntington Beach. While that bowl’s eclectic scene can be intimidating, Julie painted a more peaceful picture. As Julie and her father sat on the rooftop, female skateboarder Jules Burn was doing a frontside grind below them, with her crazy hair all over the place and fists clenched. Julie says she can still picture it now.

Hailing from Santa Ana, Julie assured me that growing up there wasn’t always peachy

keen. Gang members and tagging inhabited the vicinity, just one block away from her SoCal home. She recalled an incident in which someone threw a piece of wood at her glass window, and her mother was sprawled out on their floor in hiding. “My Santa Ana is a gnarly place,” she said.

I was enlightened when I came across the YouTube video of Julie skating in her 8-foot-deep clover bowl located in her backyard. Julie’s father always had the goal of having a bowl. The bowl was finished in December 2005, with a hot tub (as promised to Julie’s mother) still in the works. As I watched Julie honing her crail-stall transfer and backside air skills, I wondered where she originally developed these maneuvers. It turns out that the Vans Combi Bowl at the Vans Skatepark, in Orange County, Calif. was her training ground.

I asked Julie about the level of female skateboarding: Why isn’t female skateboarding up to par? “They can’t blame it on anyone else except themselves,” Julie said about her peers. “There aren’t many women like Cara-Beth

Burnside who are pushing the boundaries of what is expected of them. The higher the skill level, the more money, and the further recognition women will receive for their athletic achievements.” She suggests that girls need to have more of their own sponsors like the brand Roxy, rather than just unisex sponsors; otherwise male athletes seem to get most of the promotion, while female riders are placed on the back burner.

Aside from skateboarding, Julie is an avid snowboarder, dirt biker and lyrical diva. When asked what celebrity she would want to meet, she chose Marilyn Monroe, saying she admires her because Monroe took pleasure in setting herself apart from others. The Hollywood glamour queen didn’t let other people’s judgments affect her self-esteem.

Like Monroe, Julie Kindstrand refuses to let anyone hold her back. With 13 contest wins in a row, and many more to come in the near future, Julie lives up to Marilyn’s faithful words: “I don’t mind living in a man’s world as long as I can be a woman in it.”

Words and photo by Dave Flanagan



Laura Hatwell

The First Female “Ultra Skater”

Three years ago, Laura Hatwell looked like she had it all. Fresh out of university, she’d landed a dream job in television and was heading off along a well-paid career path that was the envy of many. But the young English-woman wasn’t entirely happy. Stuck day after day in a windowless broadcast news production suite in Glasgow, surrounded by computer monitors and under continual pressure, she desperately wanted to regain some sense of freedom. What Laura needed was stoke — but back then she had no idea what that was.

Searching for something that might fill the void, Laura came across a story on the Web about English long-distance skater Dave Cornthwaite. At the time he was trying to become the first person to push a board 900 miles down the length of the mainland U.K. — between John O’Groats and Lands End — raising money for the charities supported by his BoardFree initiative.

The idea of getting around under your own power sparked something within Laura. Intrigued, she sought Dave’s advice on longboarding and ended up ordering herself a Lush deck. After a couple of drinks to celebrate its arrival, and the start of a new chapter in her life, she took it for a roll through a Glasgow park, stacking spectacularly in front of a bunch of laughing teenagers. Undeterred, she began traveling to and from work on her board and skating whenever the fickle Scottish

weather allowed. Eventually she organized her own 26-mile charity push between Glasgow and the shores of Loch Lomond, raising cash for a few of BoardFree's good causes.

That effort caught Dave Cornthwaite's attention. He invited Laura to come join the support team for his record-breaking 3,618-mile skate across Australia in 2006. Stoked to be asked, Laura approached her boss at the BBC in Glasgow and arranged the time off she'd need for the trip. But then a few days later her employer had a change of heart, telling her she couldn't go. She quit her job the next day and was Down Under the following month, helping keep the epic trans-Australian show on the road. Some people thought she was nuts to quit her television job, but Laura knew she just had to go with the skateboarding flow and see where it took her.

Fast-forward to July 2009 and a ferry plowing through the North Sea, en route to the Shetland Islands — the windswept archipelago that's the most northerly extremity of the U.K. Laura's aim: to skate the entire length of these remote islands, sail south for six hours on another pitching ferry, push around the Orkney Islands, then travel by boat again to the Scottish mainland. Once she hits that, her plan is to roll all the way down to the English border. Along the way she hopes to meet a few Scottish longboarders and raise some money for charity, too.

It's a journey that could easily hit 600 miles, and all of it will be unsupported. She'll be facing weather that can change, even in summer, in the blink of an eye. There'll be mountains, long periods with no human contact, bursts of potentially gnarly urban skating and some crazy drivers to contend with. And she's got no real idea of how long it'll all take, opting instead just to see how it pans out.

This massive step into the unknown represents Laura Hatwell's coming of age as a distance skater. In the years since she quit her television job in Scotland and headed to Australia, she's moved back home to Plymouth, on England's south coast, and become an active figure on her local longboarding scene. And she's been officially named by Paved Wave as the first female "ultra skater" after pushing 102 miles in 24 hours — her first attempt at any significant mileage.

And the charity element isn't just something she's bolted on for the hell of it, either. She's trying to raise money for Help for Heroes, a charity that aids wounded service personnel. Earlier in the year a friend's boyfriend, serving with the Royal Marines, was killed in action in Afghanistan; seeing the public outpouring of

grief for the young man in her hometown made supporting Help for Heroes an easy choice for Laura. Also, because Laura's grandfather had served with the Royal Marines in World War II and been stationed up in the Orkney Islands, Laura was keen to retrace some of his footsteps and see what he'd seen through her own eyes.

So, using a sketchy tourist map donated by that same grandfather, Laura stepped off a ferry in the Shetland Islands on July 3 and hit the road with no idea of how things would evolve. But what unfolded during the four weeks of her journey down to England far exceeded anything she had dared to dream of.

Although she was self-supported, carrying all her food, clothing and camping equipment in a small 33-liter backpack, Laura found herself being offered free accommodation and meals in many of the places she stopped for the night. In the north of Scotland she became a somewhat reluctant media celebrity, with television, radio and newspapers reporting on her journey. She didn't go looking for all this attention, but given she was raising money for charity, it all helped bring in the cash. People recognized her out in the middle of nowhere as "that skateboarding girl," and her story captured a lot of imaginations.

She skated in sweltering heat, rolled through rainstorms, battled against howling winds, slogged up Highland mountain roads and bombed down a few, too. One day she pushed for almost 50 miles without stopping and raced a herd of curious cows. Another day, exhausted and frustrated, she could only manage 18 miles. Laura got a fighter jet fly-by from the Royal Air Force to say thanks for her fundraising efforts and was chased by confused security guards after skating across the runway at an island airport.

She hooked up with a couple of skaters in some unexpected places and was handed donations and food by complete strangers. There were several near misses with inattentive or shocked drivers, and she also took some verbal abuse from people who just didn't understand what the hell she was doing. She picked up a few blisters and destroyed several pairs of shoes footbraking down a lot of rough Scottish roads.

But, displaying indomitable spirit, Laura just kept on going and going and going. Exactly a month after she started, she reached the border with England, running into the North Sea in celebration at the town of Berwick upon Tweed. Total distance skated? Something like 540 miles, she thinks, but Laura wasn't particularly bothered about the final figure.

"It was more a silent satisfaction of knowing I'd done the job and exceeded my own and other people's expectations of what I could do,"

she says, reflecting on her epic journey. "I'd taken myself from somewhere on the same latitude as Greenland and transported myself by skateboard down to England. Travel opens so many doors, anyway, but when you're self-propelled, it blows your mind." One number she was pretty stoked about, though, was the £2300 she raised for charity — far beyond her original £500 target.

"I had the perfect blend of meeting people and having time to myself to think, really just taking in what I was doing and where I was going," Laura says. "I fought hard to make sure there were no people governing what I was doing. It was down to me. I decided where I went each day and decided where I stopped."

When she did stop, Laura was staggered at the help she got from local people, most of whom had no experience of skateboarding in any shape or form. "I'd always known that people in Scotland were very kind, especially in the smaller areas, but I'd no idea of just how kind," she says. "It restored my faith in humanity."

What was also cool was discovering a longboard scene — usually just one person — in the smallest of communities.

Laura's been pretty busy since she got back home, preparing for her teacher training, supporting U.K. riders at the IGSA downhill event at Eastbourne and trying out a new slalom deck. She's therefore not had much time to sit back and reflect on how her Scotland trip has changed her, but there's no doubt it's had a lasting impact.

"I think I'm much less afraid of things now," she reveals. "I've really mellowed, and I can really stop and appreciate things. That might frustrate a lot of people in this stressed-out world, but I'm looking *at* life now, not looking through it."

Photo by Shin Shikuma

Reine

Skateboarding has changed my life. It has brought me new friends, opportunities to know new places and new countries, and also professional fulfillment, since I work with skateboards. I own a skate shop in São Paulo.



I've always been very hyperactive and always liked radical sports. After meeting my husband, Juliano Cassemiro, who's a professional skateboarder, I started going with him to skate contests and fell in love with skateboarding and started practicing it. But at that time I used to work as an events promoter, and had to avoid broken bones and scars, something very common in skating. Therefore I couldn't skate too frequently or radically. After that I got pregnant and had to stay away from skating for a long time. Anyway, these incidents haven't made me quit skateboarding. As soon as my doctor permitted, I started skating again, and racing contests as well.

After starting to race in contests, my evolution happened naturally. Some skate mags and sports programs interviewed me; I started going skating on different hills around Brazil and started breathing skateboarding all the time and got completely involved in it.

In 2007, my skater friend Bel Aranha and I organized a skate contest, Downhill for Real Skaters, intended mainly for girls. It has been the first contest to valorize the female category, including female beginners and amateurs.

Since the contest was a success, we repeated it in 2008, and included the male category as well. Skaters from all over Brazil came to compete, and once again the contest was a show of maneuvers and full of vibe.

Last year I was crowned Brazilian champion of Longboard Skateboarding. This motivated me into going to Canada and racing at Danger Bay. Danger Bay was an unforgettable and fascinating experience that made my passion to skate increase even more.

I got back to Brazil really excited about improving each time and looking forward to taking part in other international contests.

Until new contests come, I live my life day by day in Brazil. It is filled with skateboarding in many different ways, from personal to professional. During the week I work at my skate shop, and on weekends I go skating with my husband and son. We also travel a lot to the beach on weekends. My dream is organizing a skate trip with my family! Besides skateboarding I also enjoy traveling to the beach, going surfing, going out with friends to have some drinks, going dancing and having fun. Positive vibrations and good sessions to everybody!

SLIDE OR DIE!!! ■