

Waiting on the World to Change

By Sean Klinger
Photos By Sophie Messier



Skimboarder athlete shows another side of the board.

Sprinting toward the water, toes kicking up sand, she clutches her board in what seems like an absurd game of chicken with the ocean. Launching her board into the shallow, foam laced waters, she hops on, gliding gracefully toward the cresting shorebreak. As the board and rider hit the wall of translucent green liquid, a cascade of water droplets bursts toward the sky, each brilliantly reflecting the afternoon sun.

This is where Shonna Cobb belongs. At the beach, in the ocean, she is one with the waves. As the reigning and seven time World Champion of women's skimboarding, Cobb, 24, is right at home in the warm sands of Southern California beaches. "Honestly I just love the beach so much, I grew up on it. There's pictures of my dad holding me in those sets of huge waves and you know, I just love the water."

Skimboarding is much more than what most people think of when they hear the term; people throwing oval shaped pieces of ply wood on the sand, sliding on the thin sheet of water left by receding waves. Professional skimboarding is a mix of surfing and skating, where one runs from the beach, board in hand, tosses the board ahead, jumps on it, and rides to waves crashing close to shore, better known as shorebreak. Skimboards are made from similar materials as surfboards, but are much shorter, about four feet, and thinner, between 5/8 and 1 1/2 inch. Cobb uses a Medium Pro Style from Elite Skimboards, but there are many brands to choose from.

Cobb, a former Long Beach City College student, didn't spend her childhood here in Long Beach but is a current resident. "I grew up in Laguna Canyon. Laguna is pretty small, so it's (Long Beach) not a whole different thing than South Laguna, but the kids that grow up in the canyon are a little bit more raggedy, you

know, like campers and stuff like that... it's where all the costumes are, kids run around without shoes, or shirts." It is easy to imagine Cobb growing up in this environment. There is a raw quality to her char that can be heard in her loud, boisterous voice and seen in her brilliantly blue eyes.

Attending Laguna High School, Cobb was on the soccer team, as well as club teams. She was offered multiple scholarships validating her exceptional athleticism. Though talented, she decided not to pursue soccer as a career path, opting to go to school for a more stable job. Currently, she works full time as an animal dental technician; she always has had a deep love for animals.

Though not related to her current occupation, Cobb took Anthropology at LBCC. "The class sounded really interesting and it was the study of witchcraft and religion."

Even though her academic interests are varied, her true passion has always been skimboarding. "One of my best friend's brothers did (skimboard) and when you are little kids you start looking up to your older brothers and stuff. He would take us out and we would try it." And with that she was hooked. Cobb was 11 when she started skimboarding and showed definite potential. "All my friends were telling me I should start (competing) because I was better than any other girls they had ever seen before."

With only five years between her first ride on a skimboard and her first competition, which she won, it was clear that Cobb was going to make waves in the skimboarding community. "Honestly, it's just a gift, I don't know I love snowboarding and skateboarding and stuff like that so, it all kind of combines into skimboarding. I noticed that I was getting better and better and passing up all the other