



"All my friends were telling me I should start because I was better than any other girls they had ever seen before."

Shonna Cobb

women, so I thought, I might as well stick with it. It feels good to be the best."

Since Cobb decided that she wanted to be a serious skimboarder, she has been completely dominant with a more aggressive style and versatility on the water. One of her sponsor's Web sites (Exile skimboards) states, "Not since Amber Coote in the 1980s has there been a female skimboarder as influential as Shonna Cobb." When asked about this, Cobb looked a little surprised and flustered, her mouth stretching into a huge smile, which seemed like its natural state. "That's nice. I don't know, I don't want toot my own horn but I am definitely the only girl that's getting barrels, doing shove-ins, on the wave, airs and stuff like that. There's not a lot of girls that are good at going both directions and I've nailed both."

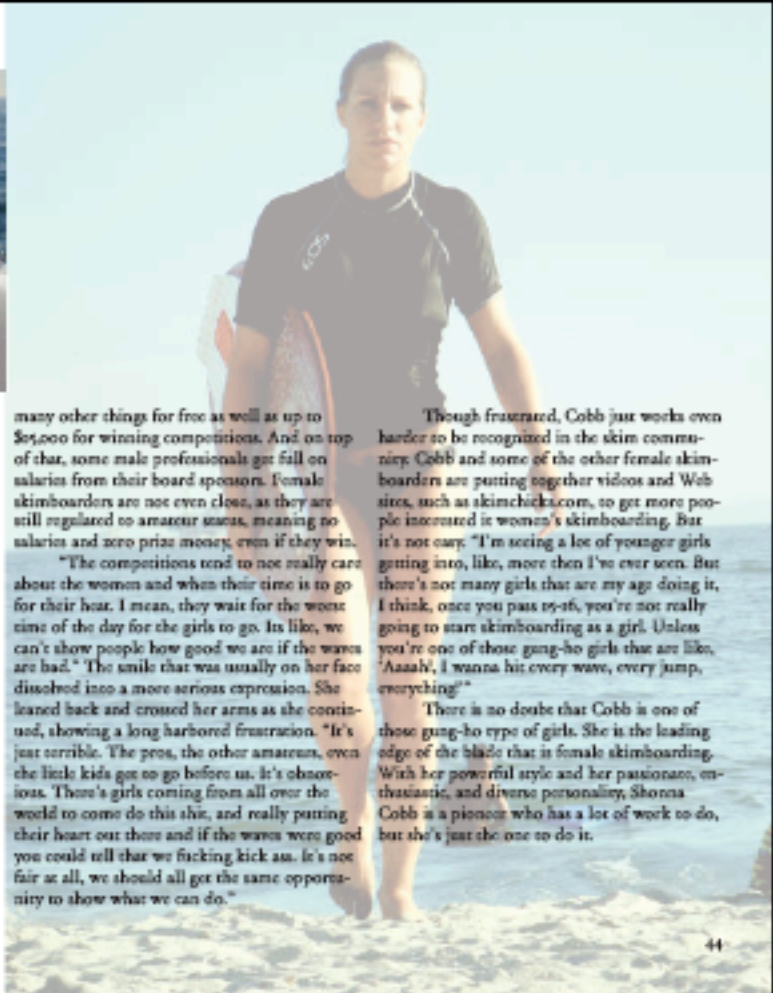
With the World Championships held at Aliso Beach, Laguna is the hub of skimboarding and is the only place that Cobb ever really gets recognized. "I never go, like across the world, and get 'Hey, it's Shonna Cobb!' but totally, when I go to Laguna people recognize me

or just know who I am." Even though it's gaining popularity, skimming is still not as well known as surfing, though most skimmers surf, including Cobb. "But if it (the waves) is good for surfing, then it's good for skimming and I would rather be skimming." Since they occupy different parts of the sets — surfers farther out, skimboarders close to shore — there aren't many conflicts or problems between surfers and skimmers. But boogie boarders, or, as they are resentfully referred to, spongers are a different story. "We hate spongers. Those are the worst, 'cause they're like little... I don't know, they are just in the way all the time. When they are riding the shore break, it's like 'Why do you want to get barreled into a bunch of sand? Get out of the way.'" She paused and hesitantly added with a smile. "You don't sponge do you?"

But being "The Queen" of the skimming world is a bittersweet title. The top male skimboarders are like any other professional athletes; they are paid to do what they love. They get their boards, their clothes, their suits, and

many other things for free as well as up to \$5,000 for winning competitions. And on top of that, some male professionals get full on salaries from their board sponsors. Female skimboarders are not even close, as they are still regulated to amateur status, meaning no salaries and zero prize money, even if they win.

"The competitions tend to not really care about the women and when their time is to go for their heat, I mean, they wait for the worst time of the day for the girls to go. Its like, we can't show people how good we are if the waves are bad." The smile that was usually on her face dissolved into a more serious expression. She leaned back and crossed her arms as she continued, showing a long harbored frustration. "It's just terrible. The pros, the other amateurs, even the little kids get to go before us. It's obnoxious. There's girls coming from all over the world to come do this shit, and really putting their heart out there and if the waves were good you could tell that we fucking kick ass. It's not fair at all, we should all get the same opportunity to show what we can do."



Though frustrated, Cobb just works even harder to be recognized in the skim community. Cobb and some of the other female skimboarders are putting together videos and Web sites, such as skimchicks.com, to get more people interested in women's skimboarding. But it's not easy. "I'm seeing a lot of younger girls getting into, like, more than I've ever seen. But there's not many girls that are my age doing it, I think, once you pass 19-26, you're not really going to start skimboarding as a girl. Unless you're one of those gang-bro girls that are like, 'Aaaaah', I wanna hit every wave, every jump, everything!"

There is no doubt that Cobb is one of those gang-bro type of girls. She is the leading edge of the blade that is female skimboarding. With her powerful style and her passionate, enthusiastic, and diverse personality, Shonna Cobb is a pioneer who has a lot of work to do, but she's just the one to do it.