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Chasing Tales: Part IV

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By Justin



Chasing Tales: Part IV

Freshman Orientation at the University of Oceanside

Text and Photography by Robby Myer

Eastern dawn peeks over the horizon while I struggle in the kitchen loading goodies into the ice chest. I'm not good at this hour; groggy and clumsy, and as a result, loud. I hear the baby indicate that she heard me and know that I'm getting mama's day off to a bad start. My "boys' weekend" is not helping the health of my marital bliss.

By 9am, I'm headed down the 5 freeway. I discover my delivery van-turned-ski hauler has a factory governor that cuts the ignition at 90. I hit the scan on my AM/FM radio. Hispanic radio...scan...Hispanic radio...scan...Hispanic radio. If I'm gonna make this trek again, I'm going to need a new radio. I ramble on down the barren stretch of interstate trying

POLLS

What's your idea of the perfect PWC getaway?

- A week exploring the Colorado River, camping out each night under the stars.
- I want to circumnavigate New Zealand on my own. Anything less is for wimps.
- Chasing glacial waves in the Arctic Circle. Got a dry suit and tow board?
- Cruising around a nice resort, like Golden Eye or Atlantis, taking breaks for the occasional massage.
- I already live this vacation: It's called the National Tour.
- It doesn't matter where I go, as long as I get to ride my ski and leave everything and everyone else in my wake.

Vote

Result

to shave minutes off the GPS-calculated ETA.

About four hours in, the phone rings. It's Victor "Slasher" Sheldon. "Myerfire!" he says with a genuine tone of excitement, "Where you at?"

I tell him I'm just north of the Grapevine. He gives me traffic info suggesting a detour to avoid So Cal's ever-present congestion.

Several hours later I'm pulling into Vista, Slasher's hometown. I find him fumbling with a new computer, watching something moto-related online. He's excited to finally have me back in Vista after all these years. Not that he's particularly happy to see me or anything; it's just that he takes a particular interest in beating on me for some reason, and he's been deprived of that entertainment for more than a decade.

We head out to lunch and catch up. He's got a late afternoon ride set up with a couple of his boys in Oceanside. I fill the time swapping out my stock steering with the sweet TBM parts I got from Tim Bushman. Of course, Victor bitched about it the whole time. It was just like old times; I would do something, Victor would tell me how I should have done it...and repeat. Then Victor hops into my van and backseat drives his way through afternoon traffic.

The first session out went pretty much as expected. I quickly remembered the added challenge swell adds to riding in the open ocean. It's a very unusual feeling when you're blasting along and the water simply drops out from under you. Getting reacquainted with the power of the breaking surf was another lesson. And today was kinda big, some sets 4- to 5-foot overhead.



Above: "Watch where you're aiming that thing, Slasher!"

By the time we get low on gas, I'm starting to get my sea legs back - if only a little bit - but I'm happy to be heading back to the ramp. I realize I have a very long way to go in both conditioning and surf familiarity. Victor knows it too. He thinks it's funny. On the way back he ran out of gas. I thought that was funny.

We cap off the night with sushi. I'm not as sore as I should be, probably because I spent most of my time outside the break fighting to rally my nerve. We plan to go back out in the morning and set up buoys. That ought to be good. I sack out on the couch with one lone thought ricocheting around in my head: "Is doing this race really a good idea?"

The next morning, we head back out to Oceanside for some buoy training and hit the ramp before 9 am. Apparently, we're the second shift as Randy Laine and Ross Champion were there already flushing. I had to get a shot with Randy; he's like the "Mayor of the Surf" for crying out loud. I go over and introduce myself and, to my surprise, he knows my name. We chat for a few minutes before Victor starts screaming at me to get my boat in the water, because, you know, he's ready. So I cut it short with Randy, never get to talk to Ross, and scurry down the ramp for more Slasher force-fed surf abuse.



Above: The Mayor of Surf, Randy Laine stops to say "Sup."

I toy around in the surf to get the timing back. I actually pull a very lofty floater that I land so cleanly that I quickly gain a very false sense of security. That became remedied when we pulled out the buoys. Then I was grossly reminded of the nowhere-near-ready-to-race-in-the-surf reality that I faced. We blasted around our track dodging the occasional tow-in surfer and recreational rider for about an hour.

I was feeling pretty good about the simple fact that I was getting the hang of the SX-R and getting a familiarity back with surf riding. I clearly need a ton more work, but that's OK, I have to start somewhere.

He let me ride his Kommander-built Limited back to the harbor. Just to get the feel for what I was building. I thought, "Alright, a Limited," and grabbed a handful of throttle only to see. Whoa! I was surprized by the pull. The Limiteds I remember weren't quite as, well, fast. Just another reminder that I have some catching up to do.

As the hours passed, I could feel my muscles locking up so I called Zora, my Czech massage goddess with the magic touch and booked a deep tissue for the following day. I spent a lot of the drive home thinking about that one single reoccurring thought, "Is this race really a good idea?"

-Robby

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