



SURFING
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boards

Remember hating the kid who showed up to school each day wearing a new pair of shoes? Well, if you happen to surf Oceanside, you've probably done a little hating on Sean "Mad-dog" Mattison. He's on it every morning. He catches too many waves. And to make it even worse, the dude rides a crisp, now-hooded every single session. How does the former Bud four stand it pull it off? Simple. By being the one person every shaper wants to impress. As Surf Ride Oceanside's surfboards buyer for almost a decade, Mattison might know more than anyone about what works, what doesn't and what you should be riding. So, be nice to Mad-dog. He might even give you a free test-drive.

LORD OF THE BOARDS

SURF RIDE'S SEAN MATTISON HAS THE POWER TO DECIDE YOUR NEXT RIDE

SURFING MAGAZINE: TELL US HOW YOU GOT INTO THE SURFBOARD-BUYING BUSINESS. SEAN MATTISON: About 10 years ago, I was working for Gary Ward at Trac Top. The owners at Surf Ride called me and asked if I wanted to manage their shop. I was clueless, just sort of learning from scratch. After a year or so, I ended up fighting my way into buying the surfboards.

HOW DID YOU CHANGE THINGS UP? When I first got there, they had about 12 to 15 lines at the time. The main thing I wanted to be able to do is become a destination store for surfboards. It's the foundation; you're not a surfer if you don't have a surfboard. So I eventually increased us from 15 to 45 brands. If we're not the largest supplier on the West Coast, we're definitely one of the largest.

HOW HAS THE SURFBOARD BUYING EXPERIENCE EVOLVED? Well, I've made it a focus to get out and ride the stuff. Actually try all the boards we offer so it makes it easier to sell. Otherwise, it's a million planks of foam and you have no clue.

THAT'S PLAYED INTO YOUR HANDS PRETTY WELL. WE SEE YOU ON A DIFFERENT BOARD EVERY DAY OUT AT OCEANSIDE. [laughs] Those are the fringe benefits. But the most satisfaction I get out of this job is working with the best shapers in the world and turning people on and putting them on the right board for them.

OF YOUR 45 LABELS — WHO ARE THE TOP FIVE SELLERS? With shortboards, Merrick's up there, always. JS has been up there. Arikawa's done real well even though Hawaii labels usually don't go that great in California. You've got novelty boards, like that Steve Boyesen supercharger, a fun small wave board that might cater to a certain local zone like Oceanside.

WHAT ARE MOST PEOPLE ASKING FOR? I've sold so many fish lately. People are just tripping out on it. Here's a perfect example. I was surfing in Carlsbad a few days ago, riding a Hynson Twizler. I let this kid Tyler Moyer ride it, and he was having so much fun. Three weeks later, I'm standing on the beach at the same spot, and [local pro] Sean Taylor comes running down with a Merrick fish. I'm

like, "Dude, you're riding fishes now?" And he said, "Well, I saw Tyler riding that board of yours and so I called Al and ordered one." It's contagious. I think back to the days of Joey Buran, and he would never, ever set foot on anything other than his shortboard. It's just the way it was. But when you move out of being just a tap dancer and you actually start trying all kinds of different dances, you kinda go, "Hey, this is cool, too."

IS THE AVERAGE CUSTOMER BECOMING MORE OR LESS EDUCATED WHEN IT COMES TO BUYING SURFBOARDS? More than anything, they come in with more questions. There's so many choices and technologies now, they're forced to ask more questions. People didn't know about epoxy boards, but now they have a

better understanding of them. Now fin setups and fin types, that's another big one. It's our job to be the test pilots, be the investigators, do all the field research and report it back to the buyer. Instead of car and driver, it's kind of like, board and rider. Then we can go back to them, spill out all this info, and they'll say, "Damn, I had no idea."

BEST BOARD YOU'VE TRIED IN LAST SIX MONTHS?

Check it out: In my garage there's 40 of the best boards I've ever had in my life. I have a 6'0" x 18 5/8" x 2 3/16" Glen Pang that's unbelievable, I got a Maurice Cole, an incredible JS. It's almost like I go in there each morning and have to play monte mené. Like, [closing his eyes] uh... this one. There's too good of a collection. Seriously, if the board sucks, it's not staying in my garage. I could be one of the happiest people in the world because you know what one magic board does for you? Trying having 40 of 'em.

WITH ALL THESE MAGIC BOARDS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS, DOES IT EVER GET BORING? No way — it'll always be fresh. I get hundreds and hundreds of new boards, and I'm still like a little kid. It's what's kept me working in the surf shop for 10 years and gets me out there every morning. I get those some butterfiles in my stomach, waking up a brand-new board, even to this day. That feeling never gets old. —Evan Slater

