



Shannon spends some free time taking his girlfriend's daughter, Alexis, to weekend soccer games.

The Most LOVED and HATED Man in Kiteboarding:

Shannon Best Interview

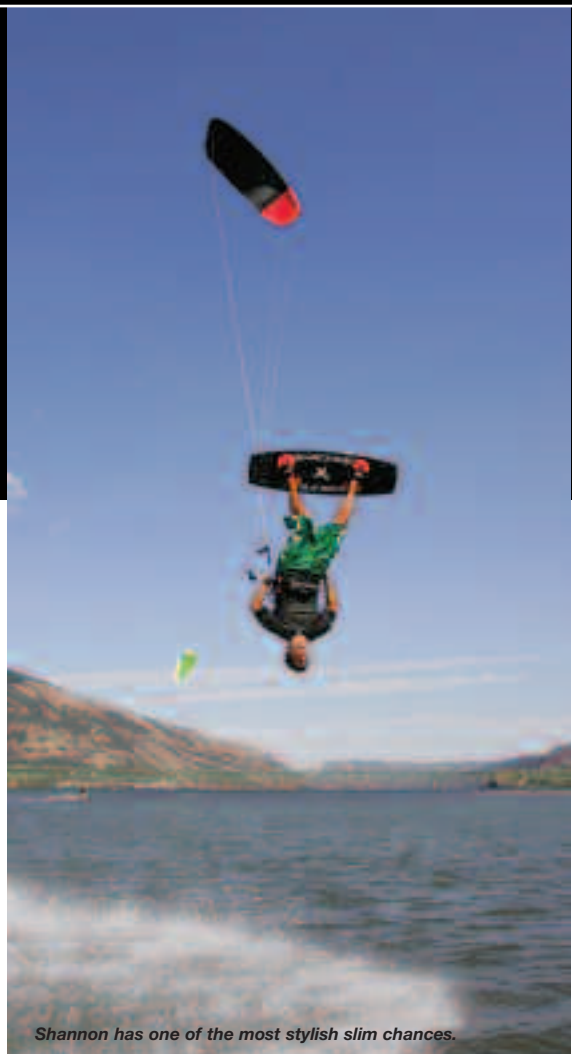
By Ryan Riccitelli Photos Gavin Butler



Shannon's other passion is pushing the speed barrier.



I met Shannon Best on June 20, 1997 at the X Games in San Diego, California when kiteboarding was in its infancy. Shannon was in the hey day of his professional wakeboarding and cable park career and placed in the top five. Winning a little prize money, Shannon was ready for a night on the town. Shannon was humble despite his professional career and wanted to hang out with the locals. Me and my friends ended up showing him some S.D. night life. Quite honestly, I never thought I would see the guy again until I opened my August 1999 Wakeboarding Magazine where one of the very first kiteboarding stories was printed. Shannon Best was learning to kite from Lou Wainman and Elliot Leboe, in Corpus Christi, Texas. A lot has happened since those early days of kiteboarding, and now is the time for Shannon to tell his story. Be sure to check out the online video. This transcript barely scratches the surface.



Shannon has one of the most stylish slim chances.



Shannon has led the unhooked movement for years.

Ryan Riccitelli: How many years have you been involved in board sports?

Shannon Best: I started January 1, 1991, at about 10 o'clock in the morning. I have been riding a skateboard since I was like 4 or 5. We have pictures of when I was younger on my brother's board. Ever since I can remember, I have been really into board sports. Ball sports or team sports never really interested me.

Ryan: How did this evolve into getting into wakeboarding and becoming a professional?

Shannon: I always wanted to be a pro skateboarder. I would get all the magazines when I was younger. It never happened due to the sheer fact that I wasn't really good at skateboarding, and I actually hurt myself. This is how the story goes. I hurt myself skateboarding on a vacation and one of my brother's friends handed me a "skurfer" or ski board or something like that, which was an early wakeboard. The minute I jumped on it at 10 o'clock in the morning that was it. Within three days, I clocked up to 26 hours on the water. I was rashed, chafed, blistered and couldn't walk. I was instantly in love with it.

Ryan: You had a notable wakeboarding career including your own signature boards. Who were some of your sponsors?

Shannon: I rode for almost every major wakeboard sponsor that was out there at one time or another—Hyperlite, Connelly(which later became CWB), Liquid Force and Iconn Sports.

Ryan: What were your biggest accomplishments in wakeboarding and Cable Park riding?

Shannon: My biggest accomplishments were developing a lot of innovation. From the very beginning of my career, I really liked working with shapers and developers on the R&D of new products. I like providing rider input to help progress product design. Innovating product that works better helps to progress the sport. Being part of the process of innovating and helping to develop a sport is my biggest accomplishment.

Ryan: I know you won some contests and you lost some. Tell us about that?

Shannon: I won cable titles and boat titles. I competed on the wakeboarding pro tour. I think the biggest accomplishment of my wakeboarding career was having fun for so long and meeting so many great people. I have a sleuth of titles—everything from 20th to first and every place in between. Some of the biggest accomplishments I would have to say were helping with the development of product and also inventing new tricks that are still being done today.

Ryan: Where do you see yourself in the history of wakeboarding—do you consider yourself a pioneer?

Shannon: [pause]...yea I suppose a pioneer. I wouldn't go as far as saying legend or anything like that. I helped innovate tricks and products as I said before. I was lucky enough to meet and ride with the best of the best. I watched young riders turn into the top riders. One day I was a poster on their walls when they were growing up and next thing you know they are on a poster on my wall. It is good to see what happens in time.

Ryan: The perception is that you came into kiteboarding and saw a niche. Do you think you used kiteboarding to scapegoat your wakeboarding career?

Shannon: No I didn't scapegoat! I went to one sponsor and they didn't pay me. After getting burned by bunch of companies, I had nothing to prove. I had a blast wakeboarding and met a lot of great people. I found kiteboarding and was like this is what I want to do. I found it very easy to transfer my wakeboarding skills over to kiteboarding. I was lucky enough to jump into kiteboarding when it was a young sport. Everyone is still trying to work out the possibilities. The only thing I vowed was not to make some of the same mistakes I did in wakeboarding.

Ryan: When it is all said and done with—five years, ten years, twenty years from now. What do you want people to remember about Shannon Best?

Shannon: [laughs] I don't even know if I even want to be remembered. Hopefully people will remember me for making a positive impact on not one but maybe a couple of sports. I would hope to be remembered as an innovator if I am going to be remembered.

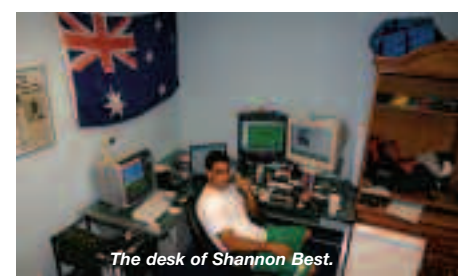
Editor's Note

I know I am going to take a lot of heat for running an interview with Shannon Best. The controversy surrounding Shannon Best unfortunately often detracts from Shannon Best the athlete. The goal of this interview is to give an impartial perspective into the career and mind of one of the top innovators in our sport. Due to the sensitive nature of this interview, we decided to do a 15-minute live video interview that is available in the video links section at www.kbmag.com.

The written interview has been significantly cut to fit this format.



3rd Place at the Gorge Games.



The desk of Shannon Best.

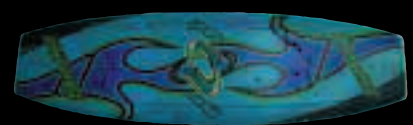
Memory Lane



Australian Wakeboard Team Worlds USA - 1997



Cover story - Why Shannon Best Left Australia. Summer 1996



Liquid Force Best Pro-Model Wakeboard



BOKS shoes advertisement featuring Shannon Best



2004 Gorge Games Medal



Mobius V Wakeboard boat advertisement featuring Shannon Best. 2000



Old School Shannon 1995 Wake King



Iconn Sports - Shannon Best Pro-Model Wakeboard