



## Victoria Skimboards Melaque 2010

Stories as told by Brandon Rothe, Matthieu Thibaud, and Morgan Just

### BRANDON ROTHE

Melaque - defined in Webster's dictionary as an "oober gooch" tropical skim paradise accented with lush foliage, deadly wildlife, and barrels so blue they inspired the likes of Duke Ellington and B.B. King.

The trip started with airport drinks as usual; a glass of whisky for myself, a beer for Mo, and a shot of 151 for Muchu. I don't even think he knew what it was. Drink, snack, sleep, and hope you don't drool on the fool next to you on the plane. I woke up in Guadalajara to an epic sunrise over a silhouetted plateau. Turns out the plateau is made of a red rock that they use to build the highways so they blast the rock with dynamite and haul it away all day (just a little fun filled fact for the kids). Guadalajara has a real homey feel to it, the same cozy vibe as say Culver City or the city of Commerce with so much graffiti you would think it was the national art style.

With Guadalajara behind us, we drove the mainland 500 in Diego's f-5000 toward Melaque. Diego drives like a disgruntled rally car driver, totally legit.... Got to his "pimperton" beach palace just after noon to unpack, grind, elevate, and activate. The late afternoon session was sick and we were all jonesin' for waves. But fret not; we were fortunate that Mexico has better waves than infrastructure so it was all turkey gravy. Tubos after tubos followed by more tubos.

We religiously ate at this joint called Red Lobster as it was run by a guy who used to be a chef at a real Red Lobster. The place is "bombeezy." Put down two or three meals a day there. Pescado ala plancha.....let's get one.

We got lucky this year and got firing skim right in front of Diego's beach palace. After that the trip begins to blur into one continuous skim, taco, and cerveza session. We got some insane shore break at Muertos but the river mouth decided to defecate on our parade so there was no siders to be had. Later in the trip we went south of Melaque to Playa de Coco. This place is really sick. You pull up and somehow don't see a lick of swell. But as you get closer to the slope you can feel the ground vibrating from the waves. Down the beach there is a perfect sider rock for back side goofy sider. It was not working that day but the potential was exponential. Back at Coco's Huesos from Cabo was getting so "shakleberried." He was way down the beach to the left and every time I looked that way he was on the clock, "shromping the gnar." Then you got the young locals like Guayaba, and Chopa. These kids stole just about every trick I got. They see.....they do. And they got sick style which is more than I can say about most people I see in the States. These guys will definitely be getting some exposure in the next year. But I must say that in my eyes Tule is top five in the world....and that is being modest. I saw this kid huck a front side 360 indy 2nd wave of his heat and stomp it in the tranny like nobody's business. And he is only 21.

Saturday night of the contest I partied all night because I figured I had no chance of beating Tule in a man-on-man heat Sunday morning. But somehow the not caring helped me out and I squeezed by only to lose to my nemesis.....Mo. Back to Saturday night though. That feces was out of control. Diego's friend Ocho was turning 21 and two of his friends bands were playing in a bar in Barra (the next town south). Let's recap: Pre-game tequila shots and Estrella's at Diego's, 18 people in three cars, a warm up lap around the entire town stopping at every liquor store for a beer (so not to pick

favorites). We made a rule that everyone entering or leaving the bar had to walk the spiral staircase backwards (safety precaution.) The first song the band did Drew Peace Was already on stage singing Pawn Shop by Sublime. Almost as entertaining as watching Bill Clinton describe his lack of sexual relations with Monica. Midway through their set Drew convinced us we were due for another lap around the town. This one really took a toll on my brain cells. We got back just in time for us to drag Muchu up on stage and make him sing the chorus of Manu Chao en Francais. He looked so bummed up there but the whole place was going "ape dookie" so he stuck it out. After that the other band got on stage. They were like MGMT meets Daft Punk. Pretty fresh even though that's about the time when my memory goes blank. I do however recall body surfing in front of the house at like 3 in the morning. Super fly night barrel vision. And also something about visiting a sacred temple with some of the locals and Cabo kids. It was magical to say the least.

Woke up against my will 20 min before my heat of doom. Took a jog down to the corner store for a banana and a can of Jumex. Did a little yoga and was actually feeling pretty good. Skimmed my toes off and scraped by with a 3-shuv to rap with 15 seconds on the clock. The final was a lot of fun. The waves held up for us and there were mad doubles coming in (double is when a wave breaks and you can take off on the incoming fast water and glide all the way to the next set wave.) Mo schooled me on the last double of the heat. I got a "mega rap" straight out in front and Mo went down the line. As surprised as I was to make the wave I thought the crowd's response was a little too uproarious for my rap. That's when I looked 30yds down the beach and saw Mo cruising up the sand after a fat liner. I hate you Mo! The awards were crazy. There were so many people asking for stuff while we were on the podium that I ended up throwing my whole prize bag into the crowd along with the shirt and hat I was wearing. After that it was grub, beer and sleep.

Monday we skimmed more....I think. Or maybe it was Tuesday. Either way we all took turns with the still camera in the water housing. I had no idea how much fun sprinting along the beach and belly flopping into barrels was. We all got some pretty sick shots and skimmed well past dark. Then it was off to the carnival. We missed the firework show which sucked the big one but the carnival was still tight. Drew and Mo and I went on some ride that spins like a Ferris wheel while flipping you forwards at an ungodly speed. I was convinced that if a human head could combust....mine would be the first. When I got off I was somewhere between puking and curling up in the fetal position. But Drew knew the ultimate remedy: some special drink with ten different tequila shots in it. That was about the end of my night. The last day was rather uneventful: our last meal at Red Lobster, last Jumex at the gas station, and last siesta in Mexico. We got into Guadalajara just in time to catch the sun setting over the city - quite suiting for the perfect trip. Arrive to the sunrise, jet to the sunset. Melaque!

## MATTHIEU THIBAUD

I like my job and life in Laguna Beach, CA, but I have to say that it felt good to get away for a week and see something different. I've been on a trip to Mexico in 2003 with my brother and a friend. We flew from Paris to Mexico City and took bus rides, ferry, visiting around to actually end up arriving in Cabo San Lucas for 2 weeks. But I have never been to the Melaque area before, so I was really excited to go check it out. Besides, I've heard only good things of that place for skimboarding from people who went there multiple times already, including Mo and Rothe who I was going on the trip with.

So before leaving I was pretty confident that it was going to be really fun and interesting. Leaving LAX with few shots of rum and couple of beers waiting for the flight, we finally take off. Right when I was getting ready to fall asleep lights turn back on and the plane started to go down to Guadalajara... I was confused with the flight time and time difference, so no sleep but oh well, we're almost there...

In Guadalajara it was sunrise and pretty chilly, Diego our host and contest organizer was there waiting for us to figure out how to go through custom... The drive from Guadalajara was amazing: jungle, mountain, rocks winding roads... While driving, Diego was telling us a lot of really interesting stuffs on his country: Random history facts, plants, birds etc...

It was kind of chilly in Guadalajara but the more we were getting close to the coast, the warmer it get. After about 5 hours, Diego parks, we unload the truck and enter. It was unreal, the air felt so warm, and the view of the bedrooms, the pool in the middle, the bar and the beach were amazing.

We dropped off the stuff in the room, walked by the pool got on the beach and Rothe and I threw the boards in for a little bit, the water was so warm... It was a little windy because it was the afternoon (it gets windy in the afternoon, but it's super glassy at sunrise and sunset) but definitely fun enough.

Mo stayed in the room getting some rest while Diego Rothe and I went checked some other spots. We left the house in Diego's house, and by the time we were driving on the pavement road (pretty slow) the back of the truck kept getting filled up with fellow skimboarders jumping in. We had to go through a really fancy hotel with a huge golf court, Diego had to tell the guards that he was driving me and Rothe to our room, and that we were famous surfers (Rothe actually has a little Rob Machado look)... It was a little windy and too high but we totally could tell that the spot had some really good potential.

The next morning we went to Muertos. The spot with the side waves and liners, and really good wrap waves on the same spot. We drove through palm trees fields and dirt roads to finally arrive at the spot. It was 10 am and little offshore wind with a decent swell size. It was really sunny water was warm, what else?

got some shots from the beach but I was definitely thinking of bringing the water housing down the next day.

So the following day I set up the water housing the car and I shot pics for a good 3 hours, the water was warm the shore break was heavy, little hard to handle sometimes. I feel more comfortable on a skimboard than stuck in the water waist high with a 10 pound camera tied to my wrist ;p

So usually we'd skim in the morning before the wind picks up for couple of hours then would head back in town eat some really good sevicehe, tacos or quesadillas, back to the house for pool and nap, and skim again in front of Diego's house at sunset... Perfect lifestyle!!!!

We met great people, all the skimboarders were so nice... I enjoyed using my Spanish there. I was really impressed by the level of locals. Tripas, Chopas, Fido, Tule and more were just killing it, fearless, air dropping back on the sand, front side wraps... Tule especially impressed me with his consistency, gnarly airs stuck back in the wave back to the sand. He's got some sick style too.

Lots of people from all over Mexico showed up for the contest and it was really interesting to meet them, hang out and skim with them.

The trip was just even better than expected, it was a blast and I m ready to go back down anytime. Big thanks to our wonderful hosts Diego and Jorge with X3M and to organize events and develop the skimboarding scene in Mexico.

## MORGAN JUST

It was 11:45 pm Monday night at LAX, Muchu is sitting on the bar stool next to mine in a hurry to get a drink before the bar closes. Brandon sits down on the other side of me, and begins eating a steaming Starbucks cup full of hot soup (he just made out of ramen noodles and hot water from Starbucks), when Muchu catches the eye of the bartender and orders a shot of Bacardi 151 straight. Brandon stops, then looks at the small Frenchmen and says..... "Travdad! Do you know what you just ordered!!?" Muchu looks over at Brandon, and laughingly says "Travdad is dead, I'm on vacation." I think to myself, this is going to be a good trip.

When we arrived in Guadalajara Tuesday morning, it was the start to a bright sunny day but the sun wasn't up yet and there was still nip in the air. We drove over steep green mountains and hills covered in all sorts of trees on our 4 hour drive to Melaque. Some of the trees were even bright canary yellow. I heard Brandon and Diego (Victoria Distributor in Mexico, tour guide, and friend) talking about all the different kinds of orchids that grow in the area as I fell in and out of sleep. Just hours after we arrived, Muchu and Brandon had already skimmed in front of the compound and were heading out of town to skim again at a beach called Coco (named for the miles and miles of dense coconut trees nearby). Not sleeping on the plane and getting only a couple hours sleep in the car ride, I was asleep before the sun went down.

With plenty of rest Melaque is truly a skimmers paradise. From Wednesday to Friday life couldn't be more perfect. All worries and problems from home are pushed out of your brain and replaced with memories of warm 6 foot glassy A frame raps, liners, and you can't get any more authentic than Melaque for Mexican food. Being a full vegetarian I enjoyed the rice, beans, and quesadillas made with thick, soft, steaming, corn tortillas. Brandon is a vegan that eats fish and loved the fresh fish tacos and Muchu.... who knows what French people eat in Mexico? But it didn't matter Diego knew the best places to take us.

By Friday morning you could smell the contest in the air and Coco was bustling with skimmers. Every wave was littered with boards and bodies and people getting shacked right and left. Getting a little frustrated I cruised down the beach to my own little peak where I found out you could sideslip and almost make some of the bigger sets. I was on a mission and had to get one! I failed a few times and then it came - the perfect setup. The wave was about 8 feet on the face and the wave out in front of it was almost gliding smooth as glass as it washed high up the steep beach making just enough backwash to throw you into that 8 ft perfection. Of course there were no speed bumps to throw me off course, the wave was close enough for the cameraman to get it but also away from the crowd. I slid out to it not sure if I could make it all the way there, but the backwash gave me plenty of speed. I made the wrap and started setting up for the tube when the backwash threw me back up and into the lip. I did a free fall head first toward the sand but hit another lip halfway down that flipped me to my feet before I hit the ground. The wave crashed and I was safe and very stoked it turned out to be a double up.

That night there was a Random Analog premiere at the local bar and the bar was packed. When the premiere was over everyone trailed off to get some rest for the contest the next day, but not me. Having had a few beers and meeting a few old locals who were more than happy to buy me drinks and swap stories (which I don't remember), I ended up way too drunk and paying for it the next day. At 8 am I woke up to a pounding sound that was more than my headache. **THE SURF WAS ON FIRE!** From Diego's second story compound overlooking the contest site, you could see close to 15 skimmers all getting barreled at once though the palm trees in Diego's front yard. It seemed like every one in Mexico Rips! And the top five guys in Melaque could easily be on the top ten UST if given the chance. The contest site was packed. Some people even drove 26 hours just to do the contest. Red Bull had a huge tent up and some cute girls handing out cold Red Bulls. With the sun out and music blasting it was the perfect contest scene.

**THE DEATH OF TRAVDAD.** Travdad is Muchu's alter ego on most skim trips. He is the travel dad or Travdad; the one who takes responsibility and keeps us out of trouble. Well he's dead. Not dead so much as on vacation. What we were left with was a Muchu (a friendly Frenchman that likes to party).

The small quiet town of Melaque does not have a lot of bars/clubs, but the next town over does! So it was settled, we would drive the 7 minutes and 53.8 seconds to Bara. Having met some new friends at the contest there was a gang of us heading out of town. The first bar we got to was on the second story and had a spiral staircase leading to it. For no reason at all I walked up it backwards. I laughingly stumbled and tripped my way to the top only to find Muchu had done the same thing right behind me and then Brandon and Diego and then the whole gang of close to 30 people going up the stairs backwards. Once at the top we ordered drinks and began dancing like it was the 80's. The band playing that night were friends of Diego and totally cool with our craziness. This crazy man with curly hair you may have heard of Droopy (Drew peace) grabbed the microphone and started screaming out a sublime song. Muchu was next, singing wild French songs while I danced with some hippies that were "in the moment." Later that night, Muchu ripped all of his clothes off and ran into the woods screaming - "Travadad is dead." Ok that never happened, but Muchu did disappear. We left the bar walked around looking for him but found nothing. Rumor had it he took a taxi back to Diego for some zz's.

A couple of us stumbled back to the same bar. as we started going up the spiral staircase, some old people were stumbling down it going backwards. The bar stayed packed most of the night and we had a great time. We got back to Diego's around 3 am and found Muchu curled up in a ball on his bed ☺. Droopy, Brandon, our friend Valerie, and I went night body surfing in the warm water.

Sunday for the contest, was sunny, glassy, and perfect all over again. It was like the day itself was the perfect hangover cure. The locals were ripping in full force. Local ripper and Victoria rider Tule could do no wrong doing air re entries on waves most people wouldn't want to rap and getting raps most people dream about. Tule could easily beat anybody on the UST. He's one of my favorite skimboarders. Credit goes to Brandon Rothe for beating him in a man on man to make it to the finals. Fido (or Jamie) is another stand out, doing huge front side raps and pulling on anything that came in (thanks Fido for teaching me how to do front side raps better). Chopa (Victoria rider) is the local super grom. Melaque was his first pro event at age 14 and he dominated heat after heat before getting taken out right before the final. No question he will be in the finals next year. Last but not least Tripas is another one who was ripping all week and we ended up getting some very sick photos of him as well. Surprisingly none of them made it to the finals. The finals were Huesos from (Cabo San Lucas), Muchu, Brandon, and I. Huesos was ripping all weekend but not finding the waves he needed in the finals and ended up in 4<sup>th</sup>. Still a great job. Muchu was getting some clean rap barrels and got 3<sup>rd</sup> place. I was doing some 3 shuvs to raps and other tech tricks but Brandon was doing that cleaner and better. It was between Brandon and me as the clock started winding down. Then Diego yelled 10 seconds left, it was just Brandon and I at the top of the slope and the last wave came. We had to side slip to make it. We both ran, Brandon went for the rap and got a pretty good score. I saw it kind of line down the beach so went set up and grabbed my rail and the wave just peeled me into one of the best rides I got on the whole trip. Brandon ended up in 2<sup>nd</sup> and I won it.

We stayed a couple more days there taking pictures and hanging with the locals. When it came time to leave we were bummed to say the least. Thanks go out to Diego, you are the man! Thanks again to Fido and the rest of the Melaque crew, it was a very memorable trip.