

ON THE SET WITH KENT JAMES

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People have been wakeboarding in the UK for about 10 years and over that period we've seen many wakeboard films with the top American riders, phat boats & pickup trucks, sick music and epic locations. But has anyone seen a decent British movie? ... Well, NO.

So, its winter and I wake from my hibernation as the phone rings... "Kent... blah blah blah... wakeboarding movie... blah blah... British riders... blah blah... Do you want to go to Florida and wakeboard for the film? Err... F@(# Yeah!

So when I received a call telling me that a British company was working with British riders to produce the first British wakeboard training DVD, and asking if I was interested in flying out to America to be a part of this Neil Armstrong style step for UK wakeboarding, It would have been rude to say No.

Before I knew it, there I was 4.30 in the morning, bags packed, plane tickets, passport, board - of course and toothbrush, cologne, deodorant, razor because you never know if you're going to meet a hottie or not!

The journey was relatively easy compared to some I've taken and I managed to get a few hours of rest before I landed in the sunny state where I was shipped straight to the hotel to meet the film crew.

I was at a loose end until the morning so I picked up the phone and gave a couple of old friends a call, one of which was Lancashire born and Speedo's very own Louise Moore who moved out here not so long ago. It was great to catch up and chew the crap but unfortunately it was cut short as I had an early start the next morning as I was heading over to Zane Schwenk's for my first day of filming.

If you could have seen with my eyes that morning, the sky, the water and the fully fatted X-Star, then only could you truly understand 'morning wood'. Even better still I was out first followed by Zane himself. I'd gone a month without riding and then suddenly in there I was in the warm with flat water and a huge wake. I was definitely like a kid in a candy shop with a blind owner; I went mad out there. When it came to Zane's turn he stuck a massive S-bend landing almost 25 feet into the flats!

Later on that day I met up with Louise again to go ride with Leslie Kent and wakeboarding photographer Josh Letchworth. We met up with Leslie at her place to pick up her X2 to take it down to the river and meet Josh. We had to get our skates on to make sure we caught the good light to get some awesome stills. With the boat in Leslie was up first. I seriously like this girls riding as she never limits her self and her tricks are always progressing. Unlike other girls her grabs are tweaked and usually her rotations are technical. Then Louise was up next. It's always good to see Lou riding as I knew her when she couldn't do wake jumps and now she's a multi-champ.

Time was flying by and it was already day four, and Dan Nott and I were both kitted up ready to ride with the infamous wakeboard photographer Thomas Gustafson. We cruised out to the middle of the lake, then Dan was up first with Thomas in the ringo to get those all important up close shots. Thomas had asked us to give him grabs and style and that's exactly what Dan did. He reeled off Nuclear FS Back rolls one after another while fitting in a Stalefish Batwing, which would make Necrasson try harder, and his slow grabbed spins. I myself, loving the Chicken Salad, Offaxis Half Cabs and HS Melon Off 3's. After our ride, Stew Mackie and Will Christien were back out again getting more footage.

In the meantime, Zane, the remaining crew and I got set up on the shoreline with the new '04 CWB wakeboard range in preparation to film. Zane started off by showing the equipment you need to wakeboard, moving on to beginner boards up through to Pro boards. This was where I got to make my first appearance and talk through my choice of ride the CWB Pure. Not a good start for me, as we had to take ten takes before I could get the words out without laughing. But nevertheless I came up trumps and managed to make a pretty good job of it. So after all that I definitely needed to take a night out and unwind! Roll on the Keg party!

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With plenty of beer, pretty looking girls and banging of hip hop music, I finally managed to retreat to my hotel at gone 4.30am. Not so clever when, as organized, Richie Fisher came knocking at my door at 5.50am to make sure I got my ass out of bed and ready to cruise over to Andrew Adkinson's house. On meeting up with Andrew it became obvious I wasn't the only that had to be dragged from my bed after a long night of 'fun'. Therefore Andrew and I both got the greatest in pleasure from making the crew feel bad.

Once we were ready and functioning, Andrew and I rode one after another. It soon became clear to me just how much other riders shadow him. He had spins, Mobes and a smooth nice style to boot, not to mention his suicide Raley! After riding and inevitably breakfast, all the other U.K riders, Stew, Will, Louise and Dan turned up all ready to shoot the on-land coaching and the profile sections. On top of the usual posse we also had European Champion, Caroline Jansson show up to join in.

I never realised before how long it takes to do a shoot. Beside the odds of retakes, you need the right light, sound checks, tape and battery change over etc. All in all it took 8 hours to get about 20 minutes of footage. Never the less we finished the day exhausted and we all needed a good meal and a fat comfy bed.

A good night's sleep was had by all and then it was my last day, but one I was thoroughly looking forward to, a day out at OWC Cable Park. Renowned as one of the most technical slider parks around, although it has nothing on Thorpe Park mind. OWC has a range of kickers and sliders for beginners to expert and even sliders for the wake skaters.

So we all rolled up in force, a crew of about 20 eager to rip and to our delight there wasn't many people riding, which meant we virtually had the whole place to ourselves. After getting our day passes, we were on the water faster than a woman to chocolate! The camera crew set up first by the reception to get a shot of the whole cable while water cameraman Pat Byrne suited up and positioned himself in the water by one of the sliders. We all followed him around, sessioning over the obstacles he filmed.

Everyone was riding well. Dan stuck a 720 over one of the sliders, whilst I was enjoying blind sliding across the picnic bench with the rope between my legs. We were there the whole day just riding when we felt like it. I must have been out on the water for 6 hours or more, but every second was worth it. As the sun drew out and our energy depleted it dawned on me that I needed to pack my stuff and prepare for the long flight home the next morning.

Although I was leaving in only a few hours for cold weather again, I sat in my hotel room and thought about the DVD, reviewing the past few days of unadulterated riding, knowing what footage we have. Then realizing how blown away people are going to be about British riding that has for so long been over shadowed by the Americans.

It has to be said though, that non of it would have been possible without the riders, the film company and the financial backers of the project who showed so much dedication for the sport I love.

So to all those people who made the trip possible, thanks for putting up with me and thanks for the awesome trip that I won't be forgetting any time soon.