



## Skyler Siljeg Is on a Roll

By Rachel Laskow

Skyler Siljeg was nervous the first time he rode a skateboard and jumped off before it hit the curb. He was only 5 at the time. Now 9 years old, Skyler doesn't think twice before doing a jump, twist, or a boneless tail tap.

"After you do the boneless, it feels like you are flying," Skyler said. "It feels really cool."

What's a boneless tail tap? It's Skyler's favorite skateboarding trick. As a sponsored skater, Skyler has performed in 18 competitions this year. He placed first in 15 of them. Skateboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in the country, and kids like Skyler are going at it full speed.

"Competing gives me a challenge and makes me a better skater," Skyler told Scholastic News Online.

Competitions are the way Skyler tests his abilities. For Skyler, practice really does make perfect. When he doesn't land a trick, he goes out and tries again and again—until he gets it right. Skyler practices for four hours every day on a ramp in his backyard and at local skate parks. Despite his hours on the board, he still finds time to do his homework. Luckily for Skyler, skateboarding competitions are almost always on weekends and over the summer, so he doesn't have to miss school.

Skyler may be a big name in skateboarding, but his friends treat him like one of the gang. He sometimes teaches them a trick or two when they're hanging out. And, like every kid, Skyler has his role models: skateboarders Tony Hawk and Bucky Lasek.

"[Hawk] is a good guy and cares about his family," Skyler said.

Skyler has met both Hawk and Lasek, and attended Tony Hawk's Boom Boom HuckJam twice. "They have done so much to bring skating where it is today, and I hope to do



### Skate for the Sky

By Skyler Siljeg, 9, Washington State

My excitement started when the Fed Ex man came to the door with my VIP passes to the Boom Boom HuckJam from my sponsor, Quiksilver Board Riders Club. So COOL! I was getting to go backstage at the biggest skate, motocross, and BMX show ever!

This year I would take my mom and my brother. It seemed right because they have stood by me during everything else.

The day came and I got out of school early to be sure we made the pre-show and to make stops at two of my local sponsors, Jones Soda and Quiksilver. We picked up my month's worth of soda and a new T-shirt, got extra stickers from Quiksilver, and we were off to Tacoma, Washington, for the event!

We stopped off for burgers. A guy asked where he could get a T-shirt like mine, a Jones team shirt. I told him, "You have to ride for them." He was so surprised. I gave him some stickers and we talked about skating.

When we got to the dome, we saw people we knew from 107.7 The End, a local rock station. I signed up for a contest, but didn't win. We found the VIP group and got ready to go inside.

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the same," Skyler said.

Skyler also had the opportunity to skate with boarder Andy Macdonald. "It felt like skating with a friend," Skyler said.

Skyler is sponsored by Jones Soda. In fact, a Jones Soda bottle, due out by the end of the year, will have his signature and a picture of him. Each month, Jones Soda sends Skyler more than 100 bottles of soda. Skyler gives some to his friends and hands some out at competitions.

Soda is just the start of what his sponsors give him. He gets clothes from Quiksilver, shoes from Savier, and much more.

"I want to promote the companies that promoted me and believed in me," Skyler said.

In the four years that he's been skating, Skyler's biggest accomplishment is making the finals at The Sound and The Fury competition, an all-age national competition. One day, Skyler hopes to become a professional skateboarder so he can tour around the world and skate different kinds of parks with other skate pros. He also thinks it would be fun to go on a tour bus. "I hope to be part of what keeps skateboarding going: fun."

For now, when Skyler is not skateboarding, he is swimming, rock climbing, snowboarding, and mountain biking. He even joined the cross-country team after his brother teased him that he didn't know how to get around without a skateboard.

Skyler continues to improve and overcome his challenges.

"The most difficult part is probably trying new tricks that are a little advanced," he said. But for kids who are just starting to skateboard, Skyler has one word of advice: "Never, ever say helmets are stupid. Helmets are cool."

Security was tight, but once we got in we got to watch warmups. The skaters were trying out the 14-foot loop—lots of falls into the huge foam matt. Then Bob Burnquist, Bucky Lasek, and Tony Hawk made it.

The best was when we got to talk with Tony. I had met him a few other times, but I was still very excited. He is really a nice guy and I respect him a lot for that. Before I knew it, we had to go back out and wait in line with everyone else to get into the show. We kept running into people we knew and giving out stickers, so it was fun.

Kids were asking me for my autograph, which still seems funny even if I've won a lot of competitions this year. There are just so many good riders out there. But it's cool to be able to encourage kids to skate and maybe someday compete, too.

Finally, we got into our seats!! The Jam band, Anarchy Orchestra, was playing, and they were showing videos. Then, Rick Thorne took the mike and the most amazing show started. They had all the skaters on the ramp at once, then the BMX, then the motocrossers started to do jumps over the ends of the 13-foot half pipe. Only a few guys in the world can do tricks like these, nevermind make a whole show of it.

They made it look so easy that I almost forgot how dangerous it really is until one of the motocross guys, Carey Hart, laid his bike into the second side of the half pipe. He had broken his leg, hand, and heel. It shook up everyone, but this is the risk these guys are willing to take to be great. (Something I just found out is that Brian Deegan is signed to replace Carey for the rest of the tour. Brian and I have the same airbrush artist! Mike Lavalle, of Killerpaint.com and West Coast Chopper, painted his bike and my helmet.)

After the accident, they tried to finish the show with the same energy. They did a good job, but as soon as it was over they cleared the building.

We talked outside with some Seattle guys in the skate world, Manik Board Co. owner, Lib Tech team manager, and the Bellevue skate-park manager. These are some of the people who have encouraged me to keep skating and to have fun. I hope to be able to keep the skating I love alive and to help other kids reach for their goals. Check out my Web site at [www.jonessoda.com](http://www.jonessoda.com).

Keep it real and have fun skating!