

How to Switch Feet While Pushing Board - Skogging

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Tuesday, 10 October 2006

Last Updated Wednesday, 13 December 2006

Recently we met Chris Yandall at ASR. We'd heard of this enigmatic skateboarding legend, a slalom, downhill and bowl skate star from the 1970's that remains a daily skater and a mellow, humble, friendly dude. We had spied him on the Mission Beach boardwalk practicing his craft, but we had never gotten a chance to learn firsthand of his latest love; the art of "skogging". A mixture of fitness, transport, freestyle and power-training, it's easier than it looks, but an intensive workout and skill-builder. While chilling with Yandall on the sidelines of the Encinitas Open, where he clearly demonstrated the benefits of strength and balance training on a skateboard, we asked and he offered: a beginners' guide to skogging.

In 1975, I wrote an article for Skateboarder Magazine titled, "Cut the Jive and Jog". What spawned this article was actually a bet made between my old skate buddies Neil Graham and Dan Trailer. The small wager was based on who could switch pump and push with opposite legs first. They gave up quickly and preferred to surf instead while I mastered the pushing motion. Switch pump is still in development. As even with most contemporary skateboarders, the "why bother" attitude prevails. Is it more blessed to "air" than "skog"? I say, do both! The long distance cross country skateboarders have to alternate legs but most do it out of necessity where skogging deems a personal love.

With running or jogging, there's no distinction between left or right legs to stay balanced. Rollerskating and blading fall in the same classification. You point straight ahead and swing from the hips. Likewise, with the skogging technique, you develop a similar movement. Except you have a flat surface you use to "rest" one leg while the other does the work. With most long distance skaters, it makes total sense to alternate legs out of necessity. It is also one way to get into funky sideways pushing habits that looks unhealthy and quite frankly... fugly. But for the short runs to enhance a sidewalk surfing experience, skogging it up can make a cardio experience very desirable if not .. addicting!

What separates skogging from alternating leggers is the one foot transition flair as the switch from one foot to the other takes place. The LA freestylers during the Del Mar contests incorporated short spurts of alternating legs adding to the degree of difficulty of their maneuvers. It seems like an obvious movement for those who have the desire to add an extra degree of difficulty to their skateboard session to round out a balanced body movement exercise.

Most kids wouldn't think twice that skateboarding is an aerobic exercise. But as the years go on, the gym may get old, the bike repetitious movement stale, in-lines/quad skates a yawn and you could be left staring at your skateboard wishing it could be an exercise you can roll with and this is where it originated with me. In 1975, I needed exercise like I needed a hole in the head to lose weight. I was one strong dude with very little body fat. With all the other sports I did, being one big lean samoan muscle machine left much to my imagination for alternative exercise. To use both legs to push just seemed like a natural selection kind of thing that was going to develop into something hopefully greater than I had ever imagined. 30 years later, still skating and using this pushing technique that seems to have originated from days of future passed.

1. Flatland. If you've never attempted to switch pushing legs, I strongly recommend flatland/no board preparation. Being able to stand on one leg and gently bending at the knee and waist while imagining rolling is a good place to start. Then switch legs and do the same. The better you imagine yourself rolling while on one leg, the easier the next step is.

2. Carpet and Board. Set your board on the carpet and make sure if you fall, the board doesn't shoot in an injurious direction. Set your board on the carpet and go through the same movements as in Step 1. No Rolling in this Step. Practice for hours and perhaps a whole week before going on to the next step. The idea is to feel your balance evenly and come to terms that if you can't get by this step, you might want to take up another exercise.

3. Restrictive Surface. Carpet, a golf green, or something that will prevent a full rolling experience that one has on cement or asphalt. Attempt to push with both legs for 10-20ft. Alternate and feel the required balance as if you were one a smooth surface. Do this for an entire week at least a few hours a day. Watch the animation above and view the videos at <http://tinyurl.com/felhs> for guidance.

4. Take it to the streets or boardwalk. After successful completion of the previous steps, you're on your way to being a skogger. It is more than just alternating your legs. It is the ability to glide on either leg while alternating pushing legs.

Every beginner should at least be able to stand stationary on one leg while making twisting motions and gently bending at the knee.

A skateboard length at least 3 times the length of one foot. Size varies per age. Most longboards will work but the longer the length the easier for some to catch on. Most adults around 180-200 lbs can get away with a 40" x 9"ish. At times, the longer boards make it more difficult to maneuver.

Safety First! Equipment. Elbow, Knee, Wrist and Helmet strongly recommended Be ready to fall! Tumbling classes are recommended.

Most skogging experts prefer boardwalks with the least amount of cracks. Cracks in both sidewalk and pavement can make miserable moments come alive. When going over cracks, attempt to shift weight up to "hop" over while you hit the cracks at an angle.

On boardwalks, for some reason, many bikers think they own the road. Avoid them by giving them plenty of room. Some bikers think it takes a lot of talent to ride a bike.

giggle

Keep a wary eye for youngsters that like to make unannounced turns.

Watch out for bottle caps, rocks, and pieces of wood. These may teach you about unwanted skate breaking. I have many scars from such outings.

Many public sidewalks have an 8mph speed limit. You might want to keep your speeds down for a number of reasons. Water and sand!

For more information on skogging watch this informational interview and demonstration video with Chris Yandall For a quick Oceanside lesson check out this Skogging How To Video

Also check out the Skogging Website and The Google Skogging Videos for more info. Visit the Skogging store for all you Skogging Needs and Pool King my sponsor!