

Chicagolongboards, an Obituary

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The longboarding world has been host to some board makers and designers that burn ever so brightly and then, for various reasons, are done. Jeff Bozi's boards are legendary for cutting edge design and an intense infusion of stoke, and then --poof!-- Jeff was done and moved on to other things. Alex Luxat pushed materials and design to new heights, creating a virtually mythological status in the pantheon of longboard and slalom deck construction, and then --wham!-- he's off to much greener pastures. Of course, there's also a certain longboard company out of New Jersey that rocked the world with wild designs, a Ben Schroeder sponsorship and then a train wreck of a demise that still has longtime 'fish readers shudder --and we still aren't using the name. Now comes what appears to be the latest flameout, described here:

The Rise and Fall of Chicago Longboards

After a long, drawn-out wait and much speculation, it has come time to acknowledge the fact that, save a miracle, Chicagolongboards.com has gone the way of the dodo. The speedboard giant of the Midwest has unceremoniously disappeared off the face of the earth. Although the end of CLB has sparked a great deal of hostility and harsh words regarding questionable business practices, there can be little argument that Julian Nicks's work will be missed by riders in the US and around the globe.

Julian Nicks made his entrance onto the longboard scene just a few years ago. As he himself stated, he was introduced to longboarding by a friend who brought over his new longboard to show off. Julian, already a skilled carpenter and craftsman, took to longboarding instantly and began work on deck construction shortly thereafter. He began with a line of hardwood decks with no real specialized purpose and the opportunity for customers to work with Julian to design a customized board. Starting slowly and building momentum, Chicagolongboards built up notoriety rapidly. As the company grew, Julian added a number of new boards including a line of speedboards that eventually gained him the most recognition.

Chicagolongboards.com set up on Silverfish in December 2006 with a fairly slow start. In late February 2007, Chicagolongboards began work on a number of new speedboard decks and carbon models of decks already in production. With this addition to the CLB lineup, orders took off and Chicagolongboards began its climb to the peak of its prestige and acclaim.

At the beginning of the summer, Julian announced that he had begun work on a foam-core speedboard which was

introduced a few weeks later. The introduction of the "foamie" sent CLB's popularity through the roof. Over the summer, sales went up exponentially and CLB began to branch out with a line of decks being sold at MileHighSkates.com. Along with the increased sales came the inclusion of Dane Carder and Brent Dubendorf as CLB team riders.

The start of the Fall marked the high point of CLB…and what many would consider the beginning of the end. Sales were so high that turn-around time had gone from the week or two that it was in the summer to more than a month. Brent was pushing 70mph (and pushed the foamie above and beyond 70mph soon after) and Julian was beginning work on what would be his final deck design, the Scorpion. With the introduction of the Scorpion came CLB apparel, orders from international customers, and vague references from Julian of big things happening in 2008.

The first real indication of the downturn of CLB was the run of Scorpions that were having problems with delaminating. Customer service wasn't quite what it once was and turn around for decks was stretching well beyond a month's time. There was no real warning when Julian disappeared Mid-November. Conversations, promises, and deals were all left open and no one had any idea that CLB was effectively kaput. Original speculation surmised that Julian was on vacation in South America and that he'd be back soon. As days wore into weeks though, concern began to mount and people began to express worry that something had happened to him.

Concern turned to frustration and resentment after a month went by with not so much as a peep out of CLB. Orders were left unfilled and it seemed as though Julian had simply walked away from everyone. Finally, after weeks and weeks of waiting, some small shred of news was heard from Julian's wife confirming that he was in fact healthy and planned to make a statement regarding some "procedural changes" regarding CLB after the New Year. That small glimmer of hope quickly faded though after another few weeks of waiting. Which leaves us where we are now with no more knowledge of what happened to Julian than we had 2 months ago.

Many of you may remember Bozi longboards. Bozi produced what was arguably the best GS board available at the time. Then, without all too much warning, Bozi disappeared. It seems as though CLB has followed the same path. No word has been heard from Julian Nicks for over 2 months now despite countless efforts to contact him via phone, email, snail mail, and personal relations. Thanks to a connection set up with his wife, refunds have begun to trickle down but none of the promised boards have arrived.

Despite questionable business practices towards the end of its short life, CLB will be missed. CLB filled the void in the market for a high end, affordable speedboard company in the US. That void now seems to have opened up again. With any luck, we will see Julian and CLB return, but as of now that doesn't seem likely. Until news is heard (if any ever is) it seems as though we are forced to say R.I.P to Chicagolongboards.com. Julian, you and your work will be sorely missed.

For all the morbid details, and more, read the "Where's Julian?" thread, in the Forums.