

Professional skateboarder Chris Livingston's lifelong passion for skateboarding keeps him young, active and loving life

# LIVE TO SKATE, *Skate to Live*

How much can the love of an athletic pursuit affect your life? Chris Livingston has been skateboarding since he was an 11-year-old kid, and will tell you that the art and challenge of the sport are a virtual fountain of youth. Back to skateboarding at age 38 after being sidelined for five years by his second ACL injury and resulting nerve pain, he is happier and healthier than ever.

Livingston remembers two specific influences that sparked his love of skateboarding when he was just an active kid growing up in Phoenix. A moment, a flash of inspiration as his buddy attempted to jump down a few stairs on a cheap Kmart skateboard on the way home from school, and the style and expression he saw in a photo of skateboarding legend Christian Hosoi, who still remains a hero to Livingston. Those two small moments made an indelible imprint on Livingston, who quit his team sports and started dedicating his time and considerable energy to skateboarding. First came local shop sponsors and then skating for the Bare Cover Trick Team back in the mid-1980s, working his way up through the ranks of amateur, national and sponsored competitions. He earned a sponsorship from H Street Skateboards, one of the first skateboard companies owned by skateboarders, who Livingston says changed the face of skateboarding in the late '80s and early '90s.



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If H Street influenced the world of skateboarding back then, Livingston was certainly a part of that. H Street is known for its legendary skateboarding videos, and featured Livingston in his own series sold worldwide. After graduating high school in 1989, H Street sent him on a tour through Europe to promote the videos. The one month tour turned into a four month stay in Europe for the 18-year-old, as he made friends and stayed on, making the life-affirming decision to go professional.

When he returned, he moved to the H Street team house in San Diego, where he immersed himself in a life of skateboarding and the camaraderie that is exemplified by the sport. “It’s a huge global community,” he explains. “We have

a camaraderie because we’ve all shed blood together. We’ve all seen each other slam and keep going. We’ve all seen each other do stuff that’s amazing and beautiful.”

Livingston’s first ACL injury brought him back to Arizona, where he attended ASU and underwent surgery and rehab on his knee. When he made a summer trip to San Diego after his recovery, he once again returned to skateboarding for an eight-year stint of traveling with the Vans’ Warped Tour, “Got Milk?” tours, doing demonstrations for everyone from Disney to Red Bull and entering various competitions.

Although he’d been ranked fourth in the world at one point, Livingston realized that competition was not the draw for him. He finds competitive skating to be too structured and compulsory for his taste, and prefers skating empty swimming pools and sessions with friends that allow for endless personal challenges and more freedom of expression. In comparing skateboarding on ramps to taking on an empty pool, he explains that ramps are consistent, which allows for harder tricks and more air space, but pools require a certain creativity and skill to accomplish even the most basic trick. “At first you might think you’re not going to be able to do anything in the pool, and then by the end of the session you’ve figured out lines and tricks and things you never could have imagined you’d be able to do.” Every pool is different, and the reality is that those 7-foot verticals weren’t meant to be skated, so if you accomplish something in one particular spot, you’ve done something no one else has ever done.

Livingston is never happier than when he is skating, and aside from the intrinsic reward and self-fulfillment of skating, he thrives on the positive



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energy that emanates from sessions with friends.

“I skate with other people and even now I get pushed. They’re pushing themselves, and even if it’s a different trick or a different level, you throw that energy into the pot and you’ve got to push yourself at your level. It’s competitive within ourselves—no one wins, no one loses.” This mindset is the torch he hopes to pass on to daughter Ella, age 6, and to the kids he teaches to skateboard. Lessons with this pro are one-on-one and tailored to the individual.

Livingston’s goal is to build a solid foundation and confidence that will serve his students throughout their lives. “I like each kid to walk away from every lesson having made progress, but more importantly, having had fun and feeling empowered. Even if they quit skateboarding, if they can take those principles into the next thing that’s a creative outlet for them, then it’s still working for them.”

He acknowledges that skateboarding involves calculated risk and encourages students to embrace taking the sport one step at a time, building up skills, working hard, and being willing to fall. He says that even the greats like Tony Hawk fall repeatedly, and insists that you’ve got to be humble to be a skateboarder. “Everyone falls all the time, but that’s life, too. It’s a good metaphor

for life, to teach you perseverance and setting goals for yourself and sticking with it amidst hardships.”

Livingston works side by side with his students, explaining the mechanics of skateboarding in layman’s terms and offering support. He points out, “A little bit of support from someone they respect goes a long way.”

For Livingston, injuries are just a part of life. He describes skating as the barometer for his art and his discipline. “If you haven’t been skating a lot it’s sketchy, it’s scarier, you’re going to fall a lot more,” he admits. “If you’ve been disciplined, been skating and been doing your thing, then it gets easier and is more natural.”

Livingston’s connections to the skateboarding world endure as he continues with his “lifelong art.” He looks to his longtime friends for inspiration, explaining, “I have friends in their 50s who skate, and they are all so healthy and exuberant and engaged in life because they have an art that keeps pushing them.” He clearly sees skateboarding as an essential and extremely positive force in his life, and plans to be skating for a long time to come.

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# CHRIS

## *Livingston*

**AGE:** 38

**STATUS:** Married

**TYPICAL DAY OF FOOD:** A lot! 10-20 hours of skating a week burns a lot of calories. Can typically eat whatever he wants, with an eye toward nutrition and knowing what his body needs. "I eat a little bit of everything, not too much of anything."

Starts the day with oatmeal in cool weather, a fruit smoothie when it's hot out. Eats organic whenever possible, and supplements with herbs and super-food natural supplements. "I drink a lot of green tea—anyone who knows me knows that."

**FOOD WEAKNESS:** A couple of beers now and then, and dark chocolate.

**TYPICAL WORKOUT:** Has developed a daily "quick and dirty" routine of what works for him, including a core workout and various Pilates and stretching moves, and basics like pushups. Hits the gym for full body workouts emphasizing hips and legs once or twice a week.

Skating is the best workout. "It's so much fun that we don't count the minutes. I can skate for about four to five hours and it's like interval training—skate for 20-30 seconds, then take a break for a minute and just keep repeating intervals."

**CURRENT SKATEBOARD:** Skating on a Creature Board with Independent trucks and Bones wheels. Wears shoes from his longtime friends at Vans.

**WHERE HE SKATES:** Had a hand in designing some of the Scottsdale skate parks, points to the Pacific Northwest as a "hotbed of really creative skate parks," loves the challenge of an empty swimming pool, and has a ramp in his air-conditioned garage where he skates with his daughter Ella and friends.

*For information on skateboard lessons, email [livi-lotus@cox.net](mailto:livi-lotus@cox.net).*