

Speaks Out About Kiteboarding

By Ryan Riccitelli

into the facility and ushered to former we pulled up to a stoplight and saw For a guy who could have the biggest owner Santiago Aguerre's offices the typical California homeless person attitude and ego, he was about as where I find him packing his belong- holding a sign reading "Homeless humble as they come. Santi's pe ings into boxes. Santiago's warm per- Veteran, Needs Help." I then watch tive on kiteboarding also showed sonality and sense of humor quickly Santi's window role down and a bill of that he is just as addicted as any of us. show as we make our introductions. I some sort is given to the man. After The guy loves to ride. The following guess I would be in a really good mood spending a day getting skunked for is a shortened transcript of our hour too if I had just sold my company for wind, we roll back to Santi's place long conversation.

Diego as I am pulling into the the wind report on the computer and over a few Heinekens. Driving home, parking lot of Reef's corporate both agreed to bail on the interview. I started thinking. I really wish more quarters. I am quickly buzzed and go kiting. On the way to the beach people had Santiago's positive energy.

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t's a sunny, June afternoon in San over 100 million dollars. We checked in La Jolla and finish the interview

{ Vitals

ame: Santiago Aguerre ickname: Santi etown: Mar del Plata, Argentina Current Home: La Jolla, CA (lived in the US for 25 years) rts background: Surfing since 10 ears kiteboarding: Two years ocal spot: Tourmaline, Silver Strand, and Stinkies



Reef sandals, Reef girls, you've created a legend with Reef. What is they key to your success?

STATES STOL

Let's set the record straight. The whole Reef thing was never a decision to make money or to be successful in a business. We started Reef, so I could hang out with my brother, have fun with the girls, surf and you know, do what we like. The company was successful, crazy and creative because we had a lot of free time. We could cover for each other. That's the magic of this business. When I can take four months off a year, go anywhere in the world, have fun, do crazy things, meet people and come back and things are done. That's a partner. We were lucky enough to surround ourselves with a lot of cool guys that had the same feeling and the same dream that we had.

How did you get turned onto kiteboarding?

Six years ago in Tahiti, a friend of mine, who is very forward thinking and a hot surfer, told me that he had bought a kite. He pumped the kite up, launched the kite into the sky, put me in a harness, hooked me in and wished me good luck. He followed me as I was getting my ass kicked. After that experience I said to myself, I don't know if this is really fun but it sure has a lot of power. So I let it go for about two or three years. This was in 1998 or 1999. I was back surfing the same place and saw this French guy. I heard he taught lessons, so I told him I would like to take a class. The guy put me on a 16m two-line kite. Same story! I body dragged for about 10-15 minutes. I then asked the guy to hand me over the board. He said, "no, no, no..." I insisted that he hand me over the board! At first I fell on my face and lost the board. I then put the board back on my feet and went for about 100 yards. I came out of the water and said, 'Hey I like this! This has got potential.'

What was your perception when you first saw kiting for the first time?

Kiteboarding's biggest challenge in going mainstream is showing people that it isn't just a stunt sport. I'm sorry to the guys that do this. I respect

them very much, but a lot of tricks are like trapeze tricks-like in a circus. You know jumping high and then starting to do boards offs and tricks; grabbing the rail this way and the other way, and handle passes. Do any of these things really have anything to do with kiteboarding? I mean you can do any of these things with anything that flies or is hanging from a tree or bungee cord. I give them a lot of praise, because they are not easy to do, but for the public it's only exciting for about three minutes. The first time I saw a kiteboarding video. No wait. I keep on mixing things up. Let me clarify. To me, kiteboarding and kitesurfing are two different sports. It's almost like downhill skiing and telemarking or half pipe and slalom in snowboarding. They are very different, requiring different skills, different states of mind and different places to do it.

I saw Martin Vari riding one time. You know we are both from Argentina. I invited him to Tahiti last year. I needed a lot of help kiteboarding and Martin needed some help to improve his surfing.

from being an advanced beginner to a good intermediate kiter. It's the right We traded skills. One day the wind was wrong for surfing, but the wind was perfect side shore for kiting. I saw Martin riding six foot, perfect peeling place to be. Then I got back to San Diego and I went to the ocean right barrels, for about an hour. I moved the boat to the east side of the reef to get away. I was doing off-the-tops, switch foots and was able to have a lot fun. a better look. Martin was parking the kite up high, killing the power and My next vacation, I booked a holiday to Brazil for 40 days. I'm going to surfing like you surf on a regular surfboard. He had no straps, nothing; just come back a lot different than I kite today! ripping the shit out of the waves. Off the tops, cut backs, fades, aerialseverything! That day my mind changed on the difference between kite-What kind of boards and kites do you ride? boarding and kitesurfing. I said to myself; I'm now witnessing something I have a lot of good friends in the industry! I think there are three compathat is very different. I felt like I was watching Jake Burton when he was riding the first goofy snowboards down a slope.

nies that impress me that I've been in touch with. One is Slingshot. I think their approach is different than everybody. It's solid. I think they have a great marketing machine and great riders and really good products. The next one How long did it take you to get going on a board? is probably Pete Cabrinha. I think those guys are always pushing the enve-I was getting up and going in Tahiti in a few days. Then, well, you know San lope with technology. Another company that always impresses me as core is Diego. It's hard here. There is not a really good place that you can go on a Naish. I think Robbie is a great guy at the helm of the company. He's got a downwinder and be followed by a boat or a jet ski. I decided to book four great reputation that can really push the sport out to a lot of places. He is days at Real Kiteboarding with a friend. We got two days out of four with the Tony Hawk of windsurfing. I enjoy criss crossing samples from the three wind. Matt took me out one day and improved my upwind skills from like guys. I try to be a neutral person. I'm not aligned with any one company. I 10 degrees to 35. And then the next day, was the first time I kited on flat talk to all of them and try to help them. I would like to see them get togethwater at the slick. It was 30 knots and Matt pumped up a 7m Slingshot kite er and create a kite association. You know, to spend their money to bring for me.We trained in the water for a little bit and then I rode by myself for people into the sport and keeping beaches open, instead of fighting and trylike two hours. It was the first time that I could really ride and practice with ing to get market share from each other. I think eventually the industry will steady wind. It was so great. Those two days of kiteboarding at Real, I went mature and there will be something like that. - continued on page 62

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Being from a surfing background, what do you think of the crossover of Does kiting cut into your surfing time or just balance it? surfers getting into kiteboarding?

What surfers still see is kiteboarding, not kitesurfing. Maybe a handle pass choppy stuff here in San Diego anymore! I think it's a great complement. or a kite loop or just guys riding into the horizon. That doesn't have a lot of Listen...off-shore winds...no good. On shore wind...hey, you can always go appeal to a surfer. Now when a guy sees a guy kitesurfing on a perfect left, around the corner and get it side shore. I hope that people can find out that

getting barreled or turning a choppy, side shore day into a fun park, we got something here! The best place in the world to light the fire is the East coast of the United States. They've got 2000 miles of beach break, mostly unsurfable with side shore wind, warm water and open space.

You interact with many key players in surfing and other action sports industries. Do you talk about kiting or is it your best kept secret?

You know, Martin and I did a little DVD, and I sent it out to some powerful guys to see if they would answer. A couple people got back to me and said well I don't really know... I just don't see it yet. I think the sport shows a little

bit of the right thing, but the guys don't see it yet. Let me give you an analogy. When you were 10 years old and you saw a couple French kissing you probably thought it was disgusting. Five years later, you wished you could kiss that girl everywhere. So, it's just an issue of maturity. I think the hormones are there, you're just too young! It's around the corner. I hope the ingredients come together the right way to explode it.



Santi boasts his proudest acc his beautiful family. Photo courtesy Santiago Aguerre

the exact numbers, but one is too many already!

I am sure this is a question many guys are wondering. Have you ever hooked up with a Reef girl?

I would say that it has cut into my surfing time in that I don't surf, shitty,

ing two girlfriends.

the sport?

you can just throw a couple of kites in your

board bag, and your fun doubles. It's like hav-

What tips do you have for anyone getting into

Take lessons. Don't buy a kite off the internet

and pump it and launch it. Don't ride next to a

road with cars going by you at 50 mph. Let's

rewind. Why is it that the manufacturer's don't

have a video? Nobody wants to read a manual.

Nobody reads that shit. How many one-hour

DVD's showing how to correctly rig and be

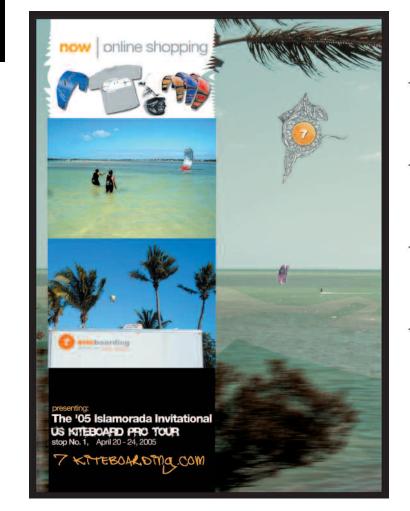
careful with the equipment are there? We are

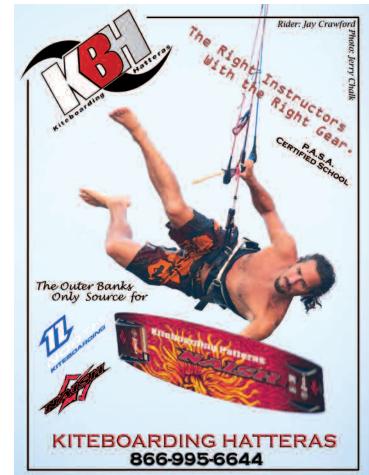
getting people killed every year. I don't know

Yes. I haven't told that many people this, but I'll tell you. I'm still married for 13 years and have four kids with the very first Reef girl.









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