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meet berea's bodyboarding champs

We caught up with Berea's bodyboarding greats who recently made history by becoming the first husband and wife combination to win their respective sections at the Wimpy Rossi Competition at Margate. Their ripping manoeuvres are often related to poetry in H2O. Kirk Newton finds out more about these water babies.

Alistair Taylor, also known as Al or A.T., is a bodyboarding legend not only in South Africa but the world over.

He's been bodyboarding since the day he was able to swim and has ridden professionally for more than 12 years. A quiet and humble sole, Al lets his riding do the talking and wows young ripping boardriders and pros alike with his smooth style and sweet execution of manoeuvres that can only be described

as poetry in H2O.

Al's better half is also not your regular water baby. Karla hails from Brazil and at the age of 26 was the Women's World Bodyboarding champion and also won the World Surfing Games in Brazil in 2002. The couple met on the World Bodyboarding Tour and have been married for almost eight years. They've been back in South Africa for two years and are settled in a cosy home on the Berea where they live with their three-year-old son, Joshua.

karla

When Al's not in the water? I nurture my business, ATD Bodyboards, into becoming a successful international company. I'm getting orders from around the world and distribution will be my next major step. I also help run the SA Bodyboarding Association and brainstorm new ideas on how to make better bodyboards. Any spare moment I get, I try to spend it playing with Joshua so we have a really good bond.

Goals for the year? Keeping the company moving and doing well in some more contests - those are marketing opportunities for me to cement the performance values of my product, so it's still important for Karla and I to do well. Karla and I would both love to go and compete in some international events again, especially in Hawaii, but there are more pressing things to take care of in the here and now, so we'll see.

Who have you modelled yourself on? In my formative years Mike Stewart had an impact on me because of his way of riding, his competitiveness, his charging in big surf and his discipline in training. Now more than anything my life is modelled on Jesus Christ and the Bible - that is the basis for all my morality and how to live.

Achievements so far in your career, personally and professionally? In bodyboarding - Eight times and current SA champ, four times finalist in the world champs at Pipeline in Hawaii, 1996 US champ, top five on the world tour twice. As for personally, you'd better ask my wife that one.

Your most memorable moment? I suppose I have lots, but one good one was during the world champs at Pipe in Hawaii in '97. It was the only year they had ever used man-on-man heats as opposed to four-man-heats. Coincidentally we had the most epic 10ft to 15ft surf you'd ever get in Hawaii and the heats were 30 minutes long so I had a pretty epic day. I came third in the event, but I scored a few 10-point rides with a thousand people on the beach watching the spectacle and hundreds of cameras and TV documenting it all. It was pretty awesome.

Joshua's attitude towards water and your dreams for him? The problem is to get him out of it. I don't have any premeditated dreams for him - he can be what he wants to be. I might buy him some golf clubs or a tennis racket soon, there's more money to be made there than in bodyboarding.

What's a usual weekend? Saturday is usually a family beach day, although the ones I personally like are when the waves are big and going off and I go out really early

and surf for a couple of hours before Karla gets out of bed. Then it's her turn to surf and I play with Joshua on the beach or take him swimming. If it's a real good day, we'll surf again, but by Saturday night we're both just a couple of vegetables after a long hard week of work and exercise, so it's just dinner and relaxation time. On Sunday morning we go to church and if we have the energy maybe have one more surf each - pretty simple really, but we're just a simple family and we enjoy each other's company.

Al's favourites....

Surf break?

Pipeline or Puerto Escondido in Mexico.

Grom bodyboarder?

Gosh there are lots in this country, which is a good sign - I won't mention names because I'll be leaving out too many - but a couple of them are on my team, so that's good.

Pro rider to watch?

In this country I suppose Wesley Fischer - internationally, Jeff Hubbard.

TV show?

Not much of a TV guy hey, no time....

Restaurant?

Kauai Juice Co.
Holiday destination?
Tahiti or Mexico.

How do you find the South African way of life compared to Brazil? In some ways South Africa is very similar to Brasil. It has the same nature and climate and has similar problems with violence and poverty. South Africans like to braai, watch games and enjoy an outdoor life, much like the Brazilians, but on the cultural side it's a lot different. I still can't figure out a country with so many different cultures, religions and languages all living together. It's still a cultural shock to me. In Brasil we are raised to believe that women can do it all, men are the big supporters of the household and life is short so we enjoy it - live in the present, plan for the future and don't waste time regretting the past.

Are there any TV shows that you two fight about watching? Not really. Alistair is not much of a TV fan so I have it all to myself. Usually we like to watch movies more than TV, but one show he loves is "Who's line is it anyway".

Who is the night owl and the early bird?

That's easy, since I met him Alistair loves to wake up at 5am. I am definitely the night owl even though I don't last that late at night.

Who wears the pants?

Ha, ha...I do!...nah I think he does since I've given up my country and family to be here with him, but we share and support each other's decisions.



'Saturday we normally go the beach'

Karla's favourites...

Shops:

Accessorize, Woolworths and "o Boticario" in La Lucia.

Past times:

Exploring down the coast (to surf) and going out to a good movie and dinner with AL and my son.

Ideal getaway?

Brasil - Rio de Janeiro ... I don't get to go that often. In South Africa I love Plet and Jay Bay.