

Intro

While Brandon hails from Salem, Oregon, and lives in hoodies, one might still be intimidated by his massive social media following and celebrity status in the skate world. By “one,” I mean me, who asked him nervously if he would agree to an interview. To my surprise, he said yes, and he could have been standoffish and haughty, but instead was warm, friendly, and super chill.

With a skating style all his own, I’ve admired Brandon for a while now, and he definitely deserves a spotlight in The Rad People Project.

Photos

Who is Brandon DesJarlais?

The first time I came across Brandon DesJarlais on Instagram, he demonstrated the “cross-step,” a quintessential yet insanely difficult longboarding dance move. He did it with such ease and confidence that it motivated *me* to step outside and attempt the trick myself. Unsurprisingly, I sustained two ginormous bruises to my left hip, a bloodied knee, and a blow to my ego as a few teenagers pointed and sneered at me from across the street. But, I got up and tried it again...and again...and again. Brandon inspired me to pick up a board and try something new and somewhat terrifying.

Brandon is whip-smart and laid-back, and he knows what he wants from life. More importantly, he’s *real*. It’s rare to find authenticity on the internet and social media these days, but Brandon is the refreshing exception.

For those following his ascent and rapid descent down asphalt slopes, you’ll know Brandon’s recent explosion on Instagram and TikTok can largely be attributed to the fun and interactive content he produces daily—his videos attracting aspiring longboarders, professional cruisers, and adventure chasers from all over the world. Brandon’s riding resume is also impressive, and his 600,000 fans and followers are a testament to his skill. However, what strikes me as particularly unique and “rad” about 26-year-old Brandon Desjarlais is not the flawless execution of his freestyle dance steps or his shred-worthy tricks, but his humility, sincerity, and genuine passion for sharing his love for the sport with anyone and everyone.

Shredding Stereotypes

“I don’t want to be that guy using social media to show off or trying to convince people I’m the best of the best. I’ve seen plenty of dudes out there trying to do that, but it doesn’t impact people in the same way. For me, I know that exhilarating and euphoric feeling of learning and mastering a new trick and I want to be a part of that person’s journey. That’s why I do this.”

During quarantine, the self-proclaimed “CEO of Longboarding” shared his phone number publicly with his fan base, welcoming texts from both experienced and emerging skaters to ask their burning boarding questions. From inquiries about what board to buy for the first-time rider to suggested feedback for mastering tiger claws, pivots, and shuvits, Brandon quickly became the go-to guru for all things longboarding. This simple yet powerful move to go mobile solidifies

Brandon's ongoing mission to create a sense of community amongst skaters and offer encouragement to those who may be struggling. However, it is not without its challenges. Risking spam calls, an occasional diss from a "real skateboarder", and unsolicited flirting (the most common occurrence) all come with the gig, not to mention a high volume of messages that stream in every day.

"It's a full-time job," he says, smiling with a sigh. "But, I love it and it's very rewarding to enable someone to try something new or provide valuable advice that will help them progress."

In addition to providing tips and tricks via text or DM, Brandon is also trying to build a real community amongst his fans and followers.

"With longboarding, there isn't a resort you can go to or a compound; it's basically just open roads or maybe a park here and there. And there's no curriculum, so it can be hard to stay motivated. Like any sport or hobby, it's always easier to get better and enjoy what you're doing if you have others around to support and encourage you."

And that's why Brandon works hard to make skating accessible to anyone and everyone eager to learn. With his wildly popular "Trip Trick Tuesday" videos that include a breakdown of the idiosyncrasies of basic and more difficult tricks and his lowkey "Sunday School" live videos where he spends an hour answering questions and connecting with his fan-base, demonstrating that longboarding really is for everyone is something that keeps his fans and followers coming back for more. No matter how old you are, if you're male or female, athletic or uncoordinated, Brandon is on a mission to enable and empower people all around the world to take up the sport, learn from others, and make friends and forge strong bonds along the way.

When asked what advice he would give to someone hesitant about learning to longboard, he said, "I think the only reason someone would *not* take up something they're interested in is fear of judgement. If you're interested in something, just go do it, taste it, try it. If you're waiting for shit to come in your life, you're going to be disappointed."

Basically, if you're like me and feel intimidated by boarding because you're not a teenager anymore *and* you're a woman in a male-dominated sport, take Brandon's advice, say goodbye to fear, and just grab life by the balls. It's a surefire way to get what you want out of life and discover new things about yourself you may not have found otherwise.

Between engaging with fans and teaching/making content, the recent college grad has a lot on his plate. Brandon regularly travels for competitions and prestigious media opportunities. When he's not teaching, texting, and creating content, he also serves as a brand manager for Moonshine Mfg., a high-end specialty longboard company, where he utilizes his marketing degree to strategize and execute various social media campaigns.

This past summer, Brandon received a BA from Portland State University, and it's clear the social media-savvy influencer/athlete has a knack for business and a keen eye for aesthetics.

He shares that his love for photography and content creation began early, but wasn't always quite as sophisticated. What started out as innocent videos he would create with his friends for the school news stream became a lifelong passion that coincides with his longboarding. Brandon also used video to further understand and fine-tune his skill on the board. He began documenting his progress while learning to skate downhill to improve his form and technique. And the rest is history. Brandon now connects with over 1,000 people a month from countries all over the globe, including Turkey, India, Morocco, and places you would least expect to find aspiring skaters, using Google Translate to communicate with them.

In terms of future goals and where he's headed next, Brandon pauses and then answers matter-of-factly, "I want to be present in the moment and just focus on the shit in front of me. A lot of people see life as one continuous upward motion, but I think it's more like Chutes and Ladders. Life isn't a straight path—you meet interesting people along the way. You try, you fail, and you're presented with unique opportunities that change the course of your direction."

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In It for the Long-Haul

The future is bright for Brandon, and he's excited to see what new adventures await him. He definitely wants to continue growing his platform, meet new people, and share his love for longboarding with the world. For now, he's living his best life in California, offering lessons in Venice and shooting content and online tutorials for his followers. Not a fan of sticking in one place for too long, Brandon is always on the lookout for opportunities to go abroad and experience new places, people, and cultures. He's travelled to 25 countries in life and plans to continue trekking the globe once we're no longer facing a global pandemic. One statement he ends with that seems to paint a clear picture of the longboarder's outlook on life stands out to me.

He says, "One thing I've noticed through traveling is that people are so much more similar than we think. You can go to any city in any country, and you'll always find four dudes in some mom's basement getting high and talking about chicks. And what I've noticed about longboarding is that there are definitely some really eccentric folks in the community, but we still all share this common thread. And it's because of our shared love for longboarding that I've been able to meet and connect with so many cool people. Traveling really has opened my eyes to see that, as much as people like to put themselves in boxes, we are all so similar and the world is so much more united than one may think. I think that's especially important to keep in mind these days in the crazy world we live in."

Photos

Rapid-Fire Fun Facts

1. **Longboarder by Day, Stunt Double by Night**—In 2016, Brandon took his boarding to the silver screen as Vin Diesel's stunt double during the intense skateboarding scenes in the film "xXx 3: The Return of Xander Cage."
2. **Freaky Fast**—Before beginning his professional skate career, Brandon delivered Jimmy John's by skateboard, challenging himself to be faster than the other guys with cars and bikes.
3. **Sofa Sk8ter**—In 2011, Brandon took couch surfing to the next level when he competed in the "Capital City Couch Race," a downhill race on a full-size couch. He raced again in 2012.
4. **Boards and Brews**—When he's not skating, Brandon likes to get creative in the kitchen. He's into brewing beer and enjoys cooking. *"I make a pretty epic burrito."*
5. **Globe Trotter**—Brandon loves to travel and has been to almost every country in Europe. Brandon also once served as a head longboarding coach at Camp Woodward, a skate training camp in the Alps of France. Can I go??
6. **Have It Your Way**—Brandon's first run-in with social media began on Facebook in which he created close to 20 accounts to score free Whoppers from Burger King. Yep, you heard that right. For every account created, Burger King promised to serve up a free patty, so teenage Brandon hacked the system for extra grub.

Photos

"I seek to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to feel the power of longboard skateboarding. It's a sport that is as hard as one wants to make it. It's a sport that depends solely on an inner drive to do better and be better than anyone else except yourself. It is a sport that lets you be creatively free and utterly technical at the same time. It teaches patience and perseverance like no traditional team sport can. My goal is to share this feeling with the world – the freedom and community skating has provided me."

— Brandon DesJarlais