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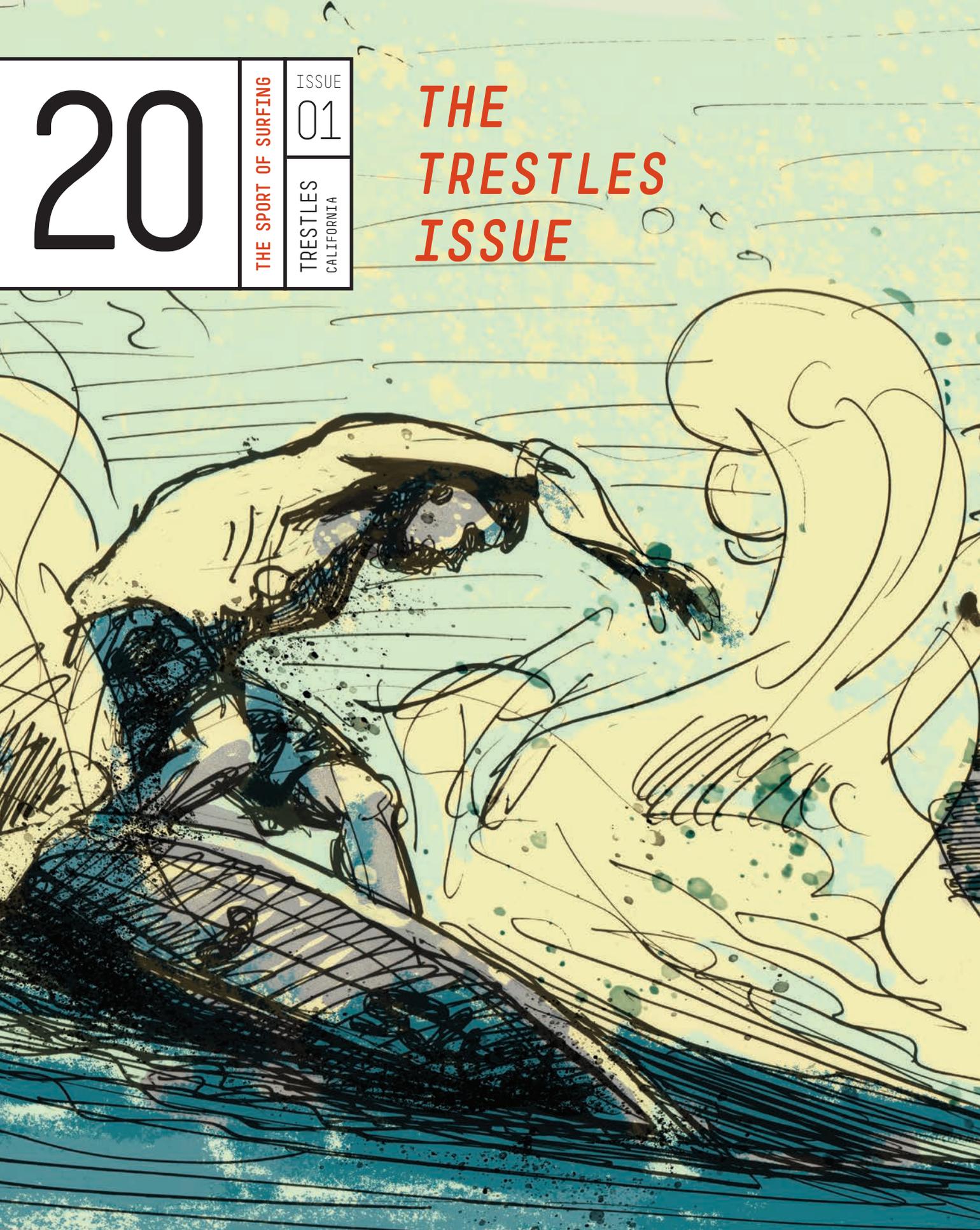
THE SPORT OF SURFING

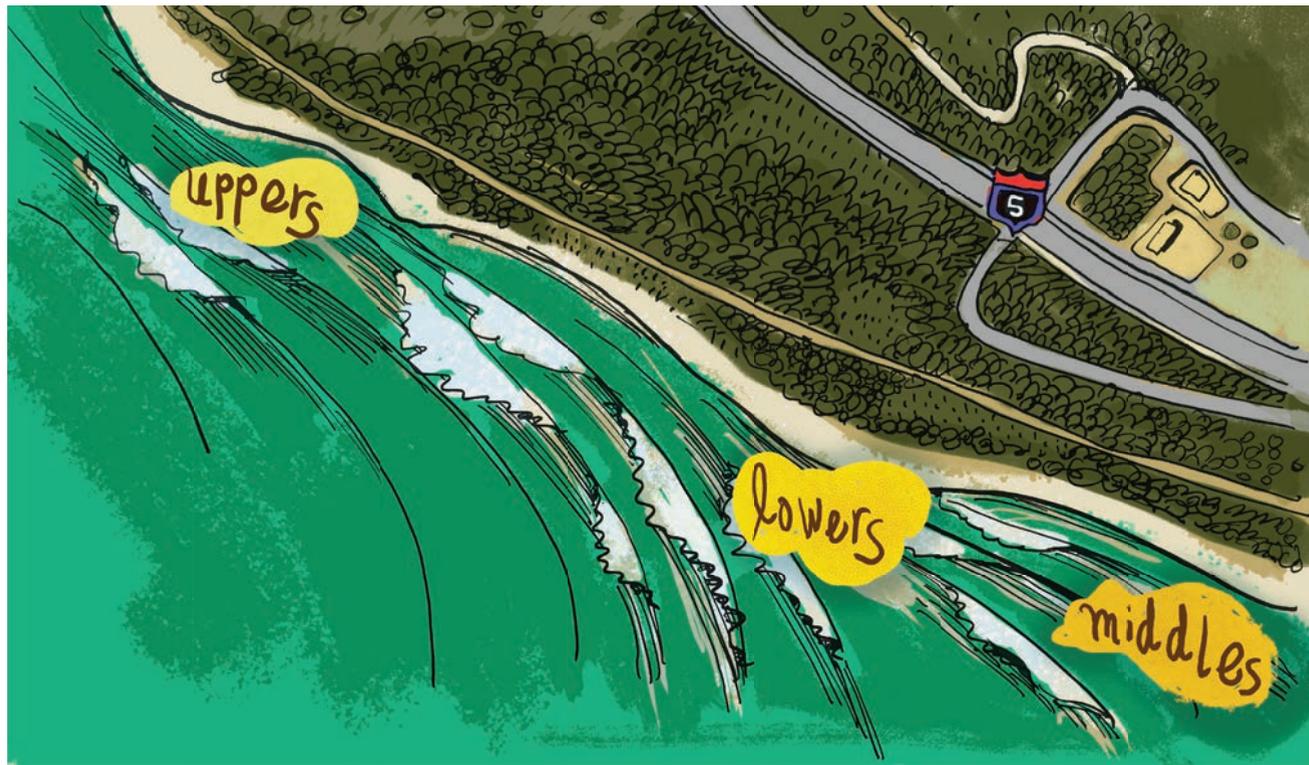
ISSUE

01

TRESTLES  
CALIFORNIA

*THE  
TRESTLES  
ISSUE*





COVER AND MAP ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALVAR SIRLIN

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Roughly 50 miles north of San Diego is an expanse of ocean front, sand and cobblestones named after a railroad bridge. How did this spot, called “Trestles,” become the most important place to surf in the continental United States? We thought it would be fun to explore that question in this debut of *Twenty*, a magazine for anyone curious about the sport of surfing.

It begins with the 37th President of the United States, Richard Nixon, who owned a compound just steps from Trestles while he was in the White House. One “beautiful sunny day,” as Nixon’s aide John Ehrlichman remembered it, the President walked along a stretch of sand controlled by the U.S. military and suggested the “clean ocean water” should be open to the public. Exactly why remains a bit of a mystery, as writer Alex Roth explains: “Like many stories involving the only U.S. president to resign from office, this one involves political calculations, feelings of betrayal and possible ulterior motives.”

Nixon’s decision had a significant impact on surfing around the world. Trestles’ clean, consistent waves provided a canvas for athletes to test what was possible on a surfboard and broaden the sport’s appeal in the coming decades. Illustrator Alvar Sirlin captures some of those moments

in his distinctive style. Perhaps the most notable is the first pro victory for an 18-year-old Kelly Slater. We compiled an oral history of Slater’s 1990 Trestles win with help from the 11-time world champion.

Trestles today stands as a rare example of what the California coast looked like in the early part of the 20th century, when surfing was a new import from Hawaii and not yet a widespread part of American culture. Photographer Chris Ortiz offers a visual guide to this iconic place, and oceanographer Falk Feddersen explains why Trestles’ waves got so good in the first place. Dr. Feddersen, who has surfed Trestles roughly 10 times, can confirm the site lives up to its reputation.

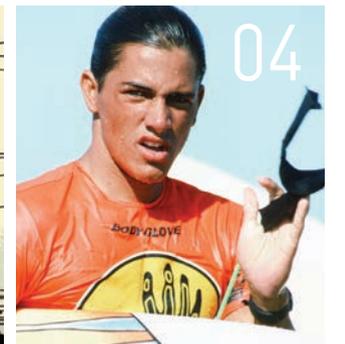
We hope this issue gets you excited for the start of Trestles’ Hurley Pro and Swatch Women’s Pro, which start on September 7th and offer a chance to see how the best surfers attack one of the world’s best waves. You can watch the heats live at [worldsurfleague.com](http://worldsurfleague.com). We started *Twenty*, which stands for the highest score one can achieve in a round of competitive surfing, because we believe all surfers deserve a publication to call their own. The pursuit of excellence belongs to everyone as we enter the water for the first time and embrace the power of trying something new.

**Dan Fitzpatrick**, editor

# THE TRESTLES ISSUE

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RECOUNTED BY:  
SURFERS KELLY SLATER,  
BUD LLAMAS AND PAT  
O'CONNELL, FORMER LOS  
ANGELES TIMES WRITER  
MIKE REILLEY, FILM  
DIRECTOR AND VOLCOM  
FOUNDER RICHARD  
WOOLCOTT, TOUR ANNOUNCER  
ROCKIN' FIG, BODY  
GLOVE CO-OWNER AND  
TOUR DIRECTOR RONNIE  
MEISTRELL, AND PRIME  
TICKET TV COMMENTATORS  
PT TOWNEND AND MIKE  
CHAMBERLIN.

\*We also used a Prime Ticket broadcast of the event to recreate the words of TV commentator Mike Chamberlin, who said he could not remember specifics, and dialogue from Woolcott's 1991 film 'Kelly Slater In Black And White.' Interviews conducted by Dan Fitzpatrick. (Hint: the voices are color coded.)



# A NEW BEGINNING

**KELLY SLATER IS THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL SURFER IN THE WORLD, AN 11-TIME WORLD CHAMPION. IT IS DIFFICULT NOW TO IMAGINE HIM AS AN UNPROVEN 18-YEAR-OLD IN SEARCH OF HIS FIRST PRO VICTORY. BUT THAT'S WHO SLATER WAS IN SEPTEMBER 1990 AS THE COCOA BEACH, FLA., HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR TRAVELED TO CALIFORNIA'S LOWER TRESTLES TO COMPETE FOR WHAT WAS THEN THE RICHEST FIRST PLACE PRIZE AT THE BODY GLOVE SURF BOUT III. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT FOREVER ALTERED THE SPORT OF SURFING.**

PHOTOS: BODY GLOVE/  
MIKE BALZER

## THE NEW KID

**BUD:** Slater was the new kid.

**KELLY:** I had turned pro that summer. I had been surfing pro contests for eight years since I was 12. I had the experience. I felt like I was looking at the wave a little differently than the standard surfing of the time. My confidence was getting bigger and bigger.<sup>1</sup>

**PAT:** I knew he was going to be a world champion the first time I saw him.

**MIKE R.:** There was all this mystique about him, this kid from Florida. It was an interesting time for surfing. The Aussies were very dominant and Tom Curren was about to take a year off from surfing and was getting a little long in the tooth.<sup>2</sup> They needed a bright young star to come in and carry the torch for the sport.

**RICHARD:** Quiksilver was going after Kelly. They wanted him to be the next face of their brand. I was in the marketing department at that time and I remember all of the negotiations. He is supposed to be the next guy that takes surfing into the future and to break down barriers and win multiple world titles. So he has a lot of pressure on him to live up to those expectations.

**KELLY:** Quiksilver had reservations about signing me I only found out later on, because I had not won a world amateur event in three times trying. I felt like they were spending a lot of money and time and effort to promote who I was. I felt like it was really important for me to deliver. That puts a lot of pressure on a young guy.

**PAT:** Everyone was making a bid at him. I remember him having a little bit of fun with it. Never being stressed out. You kind of felt like things would work out for him. He doesn't do any drugs; he doesn't have the demons that some other people who are in that situation do. I felt like he had it under control. Maybe he felt different. It's always easy to look at someone else's life and feel like they have it figured out.

**RICHARD:** They ended up successfully signing Kelly. I was right in the middle of all the action. I had certain duties to help with here and there, go on photo shoots and travel with him. At the time I was thinking well gosh it would be fun to have a little video project with Kelly. A college friend of mine from Pepperdine, Jon Freeman, was making little surf movies during college and I thought well gosh Jon could help me work on this film. It was really a small side project. What was interesting is that one of the first big shoots was the contest.

**KELLY:** I just narrowly made it into the outline for the number of guys to surf at the Trestles contest. I want to say I was in 90th place on the tour and 100 guys could surf.<sup>3</sup>

**FIG:** We already knew he was pretty much red hot. He had done well on events throughout the season. But heading down to Trestles you are looking at one of the best waves on the coast. If anybody is going to show their stuff that is where they need to be ready to go off.

## 30 GRAND

**RONNIE:** I ran the contest. I set it up and I hired all the people, did all the sponsorships. Body Glove wanted to have the richest first place prize money ever given to any surfer anywhere on tour.<sup>4</sup>

**BUD:** It was 30 grand for first place which then was a lot of money. I knew I was coming to the end of my career and winning that 30 grand would have been a way to go out.

**RICHARD:** That prize purse was huge back then.

**KELLY:** I grew up in a small town in a relatively poor family. Just that money right there would have been more than enough to pay off the house we lost when I was younger.

**RONNIE:** I was expecting a high caliber of surfing. Lower Trestles is such a high quality wave and they were forecasting six to eight foot surf for first three days and then bigger sets on fourth, fifth and sixth day. I was going "are you kidding?"

**FIG:** When that place is on there is no better wave in California.

**PAT:** Trestles back then that was the Holy Grail. Most of the events happened in parking lots with bad waves. If you were to look across what professional surfing was at the time it was big city beach, bikini show. It had nothing to do with actually trying to find better conditions and create an actual sporting event. Trestles was the one event where when you did actually lose you stayed and watched all day. For that reason I am sure Kelly wanted to win there super bad.

## WHY IS HE SLEEPING ON THE FLOOR?

**RICHARD:** I was living in Newport Beach<sup>5</sup> and I had some roommates. Kelly was coming to town and we're making this movie so let's all hang out together and we will shoot some footage. Every morning the objective was to get up early and get Kelly down to the contest so he had plenty of time to warm up and get comfortable. I was probably the most nervous because deep down I thought he could win this event but I didn't want to put pressure on him.

**KELLY:** It was hard to disregard that. Richard's whole program was to make a movie on me. I guess they are making this movie on me in the first place because they trust I surf well and can do my job but at the same time I literally signed my contract on the beach at that contest and they wanted me to have a big coming out. It is hard to shut all those things out and focus on the goal in the moment. We're filming every single session.

**RICHARD:** We filmed everything. We filmed at my house when I woke him up in the morning. We tried to document everything we could. I know lots of people are still "why is he sleeping on the floor?" Back then it wasn't a big issue. I had roommates and he was my guest at my house and so that is where he slept.<sup>6</sup>

**KELLY:** The camera part wasn't normal. Sleeping on the floor was. For years after that there were still plenty of floors I slept on and couches I slept on.

**RICHARD:** Kelly likes to sleep in. He is not going to be the first one up. You have to wake him up and make sure you got everything and get him there. For me that was the big responsibility. It's interesting what he says when I go 'it's the morning of the finals.' He goes 'no, it's the morning of the quarterfinals.'

**KELLY:** My mom raised me to be very humble. Saying the "morning of the final" I am thinking it sounds pretty silly for me to say that if I don't make the final.

## THE BIGGEST THREAT: A GOOD FRIEND

**MIKE R.:** I always remember parking the car and climbing over a little wedge there and it was nothing but hard core surf fans. You didn't have 50,000 people on the beach. It was people who really loved and cared about surfing who were there mainly to watch Kelly. But also you had all these great story lines. You had Chris

Brown, an up and coming surfer from Santa Barbara. You had Bud Llamas who was the local favorite and kind of the old guy in the crowd.

**FIG:** Bud was winding down on his career. Still surfed really well. His turns were already really solid and when he hit the lip he definitely threw a lot of water. He was kind of a power guy. Chris Brown was the new phenomenon. Just a beautiful style, super quick. I say he was the man to beat from that time era. [Charlie] Kuhn was a veteran for a long, long time. He had to do what he had to do to get through heats.<sup>7</sup>

**BUD:** You want to beat the young guys and the young guys want to beat the older guys who have been doing it for a long time.

**KELLY:** Chris and I were on the same side of the draw. To me Chris was the guy who was the biggest threat even though Charlie and Bud probably had more experience than either of us. He and I were really good friends. I used to stay with him in Santa Barbara, surf with him a lot. He and I shaped one of our first if not our first surfboard together in his backyard. He shaped one rail and

I shaped the other rail and they came out completely different. We used to make these ice plant boards, almost like a sand dune board. They had these huge dunes at his house in Santa Barbara and they were covered by ice plants. So we would make these wooden boards with straps on them and try to ride them down these ice plant hills in the summer when we were bored. Chris and I had a lot of fun together.

**PAT:** Chris Brown was probably the guy that at that time was closest to Kelly as far as ability level. You tend to be closest with the person who is the tightest competition. I used to think Chris would be the favorite to win every event; I just thought he was that good.

## A DREAMY DAY

**RONNIE:** We had fog delays. This little girl worked for us; her dad lived on a golf course. She brought us bags of golf balls and we were hitting drivers out into the bushes. Kelly Slater came up and he couldn't hit the ball. He whiffed it. Then he would hit one and it would be a shank. I still have the club in my garage.<sup>8</sup>

**KELLY:** I think I whiffed like 10 times in a row. Not even exaggerating. Really funny. Embarrassing actually.

**FIG:** It wasn't like [Slater] was all stressed out. They were hitting golf balls out into the marsh.

**RICHARD:** Oh gosh I probably was a little nervous with that, like come on Kelly don't use your energy. I'm sure I was running around going "hey man let's make sure you stay warm." Anytime those conditions are changing like that, that can be a distraction and throw you off. Maybe that is why he was hitting golf balls. Just to keep his mind off it. Not to get nervous.

**PT:** The fog rolled in. We had to put the event on hold for awhile until it burned off. But it was a bonus when it's like that. When you get that fog bank that sits around all day it keeps everything calm. That is why conditions were so good going into the finals. The conditions were magic.

**MIKE R.:** The offshore breeze came from behind us and blew all those clouds out and the waves just went completely glassy. Some of the nicest waves I have ever seen in southern California.

**PAT:** We sat there until noon or 1 o'clock until we started surfing. I lost in the quarterfinal. The heat before the quarterfinal, I finally got a good wave and I remember hearing the crowd screaming. I want to throw my hands up, like "look I did it." Luckily I didn't because I turned around and there was Kelly on the wave behind me and I realized everybody was screaming for what he was doing. It had nothing to do with me. It was a pretty sobering moment.

**BUD:** The water was warm, the weather was great. It was just a dreamy day. When we all went out together for the finals we were all laughing and smiling and having a good time. We were going out there to beat each other but we were just saying how cool it was, how good the waves were. Everybody in that heat was a great surfer. I felt I could win but it's all about who gets the right waves.

**PAT:** I was really interested to watch the final because I thought Chris actually had a chance. It was an uphill chance but I thought he had a chance. He had won one of the heats over Kelly earlier in the day.

**PT:** I was expecting Kelly to win it.

## OH, VEEERTICAL STRAIGHT UP!

**RICHARD:** In the final he really had to be careful because he had to make all those waves. He didn't really have the luxury of just doing one big giant air. He had to

surf them with a radical approach but he also had to finish the waves the right way and had to utilize the whole wave from start to finish.

**FIG:** [Slater] wasn't holding back; he was going for maneuvers right off the bat. For a kid you wouldn't expect that. Just all style, big, giant fan of water, and throwing a lot of power. His lip bashes were more vertical than what we had been seeing. He was super quick, style was great, super tight little cutbacks.<sup>9</sup>

**RICHARD:** Kelly was riding different boards. They were narrower and they had more rocker.<sup>10</sup> You can see it in his surfing, how quick he is coming off the bottom and going straight up into the pocket and how sharp those turns are in the pocket to come back and rebound off the whitewash. It was allowing him to slide that tail and blow those fins out.<sup>11</sup> So you have this really talented surfer on a very futuristic or forward thinking surfboard that allowed him to surf in different parts of the wave that guys weren't really approaching before.

**KELLY:** I had been riding that board for awhile. I believe that board already had a buckle and crease across the top. That was a board Al Merrick and I had come up with.<sup>12</sup> It was narrower and had more rocker than what most guys were riding at the time and probably a bit thinner as well. We were trying to get the volumes of the boards down and get the rocker up and the idea was to trade maneuverability. That was the first step in the evolution of where we were going with boards at the time and boards tended to all go in that direction for a few years.

**PAT:** At that point he was just a lot faster, he was sharper.

**RICHARD:** We were on pins and needles the entire heat. Everybody is getting good waves and Chris was surfing really good. Kelly would get a good wave and then we would feel really good and then Chris would get a good wave and oh my gosh Chris got a good one. Back then you didn't know what the scores were. We're going "who had the better wave?"

It came down to the wire of Kelly needed one really good wave to cement a win. Going into the last minutes of that final it was close. Everybody was standing, everybody was screaming. We were out of our minds.

**PAT:** Kelly had to get a couple waves to come back in the heat.

**MIKE C.:** You are looking at the biggest set of the afternoon here at Lower Trestles. This could be as big as an 8 foot wave set pulling through right now. Out the back let's see who is going to pick it off. It's Bud Llamas. He'll go backside, look at the size of this wave! Well over his head. Big slash! He has still got a lot of open ocean to work with. A big wave, it is still forming up nicely for him. So he has had two big slashes. The backsider is just ripping this wave to shreds. Whitewater flying everywhere. He ends it all with an elevator floater. That's a high scoring wave.<sup>13</sup>

**BUD:** Wow, yeah, I remember that. Just so dreamy you know? That ride of mine, that was one of my more memorable ones.

**MIKE R.:** Bud Llamas I thought has the best wave of the day and just surfed out of his mind and, boom, Kelly comes in right behind.

**PT:** Slater has gone back out there. Here he is. He got away from the other guys. Oh, veeertical, straight up! Drops down to the bottom, squares it off again, an open faced snap! He sets up again, drives down the line, comes off the top. Sets up for the inside, goes off the bottom, floats over that whitewater and a big snap on the inside.<sup>13</sup>

**MIKE R.:** Rockin' Fig did the play by play from loudspeakers and he was just screaming bloody murder.

**FIG:** Everybody was screaming because the level of surfing was so incredible.

**MIKE R.:** What he was doing and where he was doing it on the wave really elevated surfing. He would go vertical right at top of the wave. It was unbelievable how quickly he could turn that board around. At Trestles I saw it that day.



Kelly exits the water at the Body Glove Surf Bout III in September 1990.

**KELLY:** There was one wave I had that was the best wave of the final. I rode it the right way and that really was the point of difference between Chris and I. We didn't have live scoring at the time so nobody knew where they stood in relation to each other. It truly wasn't going to be anyone knowing until we got on stage and they read the results. I thought Chris and I were close but I thought I won.<sup>14</sup>

**RICHARD:** You can see he is pretty nervous standing on stage. He has got his head down and he is just going 'man please did I win this.'

## I'LL KEEP IT

**PT:** Slater's first big win, boy is he happy about it. I would be too, \$30,000. He is a happy young man.<sup>13</sup>

**MIKE C.:** You get the feeling this is the first of many checks to come for this young man out of Florida.<sup>13</sup>

**KELLY:** I was overcome with emotion. I felt like I delivered what I had to. I always had this belief in myself from the time I was a little kid. I was always really good with sports and I had this real belief that I was going to be great at something

and to me that event signified all of that coming together and on a public stage. It was exciting for me. I realized at that moment that I had a full fledged career where I would be able to make a living and do what I love.<sup>15</sup>

**MIKE R.:** He walked up to us afterwards and he is carrying the check and I pointed down and said "what are you going to do with it?" He says "I'll keep it."<sup>16</sup> He said it with a wink in his eye. He smiled. It was just a lot of money to an 18 year old kid in early 1990s. Kelly didn't grow up poor but he didn't grow up rich either. That money really meant something to him and his family. That was when I felt he really grew up. And I think that is why he was so excited about the check, he was realizing "damn I really am a professional now."

**KELLY:** It was between half and a third of what I would make a whole year on my [Quiksilver] contract. I think I was making 75 to 100 grand on my contract. In the matter of a couple of days, seven rounds of surfing I make half that much money, pretty cool. It was actually \$30,600. The reason that was significant was because if you won a heat you would get an extra 100 bucks and there were seven rounds

and I won six of my rounds going into the final. In some weird, bizarre way I almost like that \$600 more than the \$30,000. That showed how much work I put into each round.

**FIG:** He had to have been the happiest guy in the world.

**RICHARD:** I was with him and we were all so stoked for him because years and years of work went into that win. From there that opened the door of ok, you can do it, and now let's go after that world tour and potential world titles. It was a big deal.

**KELLY:** I think that single event I can probably look back and argue that was the most significant event for me maybe in my life. Because Chris Brown was the next guy really. He was a little older than me. A little more refined; he had already won more events. I think had he won that contest it would have elevated his game quicker.<sup>17</sup>

**RICHARD:** After the contest we said wow we have to build on this. Let's schedule some trips and start making a surfing movie. Like really get serious about it.<sup>18</sup> Sometime in late December or early January the guys at Quiksilver came to me and said how is that project going with Kelly? Can you give us a finished product for an upcoming trade show in a couple weeks? I haven't done any of the interviews. Kelly is in Hawaii so I had to fly him to California. He came back to the same house he stayed at for the contest and we did all the interviews in one take. I did that all in the kitchen and the backyard.

**RICHARD:** What do you do when you are not surfing?

**KELLY:** Homework.

**RICHARD:** Do you like school?

**KELLY:** Sometimes.

Slater is second from left, broadcaster Mike Chamberlin in middle and broadcaster PT Townend on far right. "You get the feeling this is the first of many checks for this young man out of Florida."

**RICHARD:** What do you like about school?

**KELLY:** Teachers.

**RICHARD:** What is your dog's name?

**KELLY:** Buddy.

**RICHARD:** Do you have a favorite board?

**KELLY:** I broke it. The other got stolen.

**RICHARD:** Do you like drugs?

**KELLY:** No.<sup>19</sup>

**KELLY:** When I see that, I see myself unaffected by a history of things in my life. I am aware of the camera being on

me only in the sense that I was a little bit sort of shy and nervous. I wasn't trying to send a message. I wasn't trying to promote something else. I wasn't trying to sell a pair of trunks. There is an innocence about that time for me that felt really nice and refreshing and pure. I mean, shit, I would love to go back and live that again right now. I would love to go back to that time and those moments and experience those again, completely.

**PAT:** It was a moment in time that something for the sport of surfing happened. People went wait a second we have been

holding events in crappy beach towns, erecting scaffolding up in these parking lots, we get little to no media but some butts on the beach and that's what we thought professional surfing was. But all of a sudden it's like we can hold these things in decent waves. People will record it, they will film it, it will get out into the world. It's way more enjoyable. Put the best guys out in water and it's 4 to 5 foot at Trestles and you see all sorts of great stuff.

**FIG:** It was the start of a new beginning. ■



Kelly Slater surfing Lower Trestles during the 1990 Body Glove Surf Bout III. "It is a real user friendly wave. It has got a nice shape and speed to it. The right amount of speed and curvature to do pretty much any kind of maneuver."

## BELOW THE SURFACE: FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO GO DEEPER ON KELLY'S FIRST WIN AS PRO

1. Kelly attributed some of his optimism to a recent third-place finish against his surfing idol Tom Curren in France.

2. Tom, from Santa Barbara, Calif., was the dominant surfer of the 1980s. He won the world tour three times.

3. A strange chain of events that landed Kelly in the contest began earlier that summer when his friend Pat O'Connell kicked Kelly and a group of other kids out of his parents' house in Laguna. Kelly ended up at a pool party where he and a surf photographer collided in midair as they both jumped in the water. Kelly stayed with another friend in San Clemente and discovered the next morning that a contest was scheduled to start a few blocks away. "I borrowed a board and...I ended up getting fifth in that event," Kelly said. That one result boosted his rank high enough to make the cut for the Body Glove Surf Bout III.

4. Body Glove, a surf apparel company controlled by the Meistrell family, created the U.S. Bud Surf Tour out of the Professional Surfing Association of America. Ronnie said he and his brother convinced Prime Ticket, which is now part of Fox Sports, to broadcast their 10 annual contests. Ronnie said he convinced the state of California to allow Body Glove to stage one of their contests at Lower Trestles.

5. Richard, a former amateur surfer, lived near a popular surf spot known as River Jetties and a surf shop called the Frog House. The house was "a pretty far drive" from where the contest would be held.

6. Kelly once told an interviewer that he remembered "cat poop everywhere" on the floor. Woolcott does not recall it being that bad. "I had a little cat and maybe the cat pooped on the floor and there was a little bit of dried cat poop. But I don't know about all over the floor. I am a pretty clean guy."

7. The surfers who survived enough heats to take on Slater in the final were Chris Brown, Charlie Kuhn and Bud Llamas. Chris was from Santa Barbara, Bud was from Huntington Beach, Calif., and Charlie was from Slater's hometown of Cocoa Beach, Fla.

8. Ronnie had a long history with Kelly. He said the first time he saw Kelly surf was in 1987 where Kelly "got pummeled in the water" by other top amateurs in Texas. In 1989 he said he watched Kelly miss a heat during a fog delay in San Francisco and get eliminated from the contest as a result. "Kelly's mother called me and was very upset," he said. "She threatened me with 'maybe I will just send him to you so he has to be at the contest all day' and I laughed about that."

9. Watch footage of the final here: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=zGbWrbn2Bml>.

10. Rocker is a reference to the bottom curve of the surfboard.

11. "The tail slide became my thing during that period of time," Kelly said. "It wasn't a maneuver that was really seen a lot before then. When you release a fin like that you are not in control but you are getting the board to a certain place in order to maintain control again. That was something I had been working on for four years at the time."

12. The board had blue, yellow and orange striping. Its dimensions were 6'0 x 11 3/8 x 17 3/4 x 14 3/8, with a thickness of about 2 1/4, according to a post of Channel Island's web site. Al Merrick was the founder of Channel Islands Surfboards.

13. From Prime Ticket broadcast of the 1990 Body Glove Surf Bout III

14. Richard said when Kelly exited the water that day he asked: "How does it feel buddy to win 30 grand?" Kelly's response: "sshhhh." That exchange became part of Richard's film.

15. "The funny thing when I watch that back Chris or Charlie on stage is trying to give me a high five and shake my hand after I won," Kelly said. "I am so caught in the moment and handing me the check that I completely disregard them."

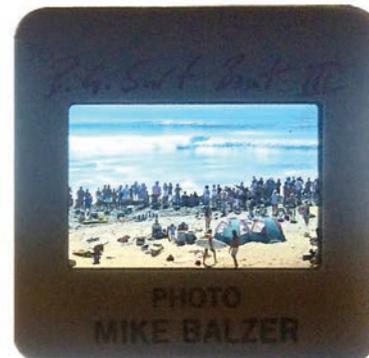
16. Mike knew immediately how he would start his story for the Los Angeles Times. He wrote it while sitting in his car and sent it to the paper via a nearby pay phone: "Later this week, Kelly Slater will finish a day of classes at Cocoa Beach (Fla.) High School, stop by his bank and deposit a check for \$30,600. Not bad for a

week of surfing in Southern California... When asked what he would do with his prize money, Slater said: "Keep It."

17. Kelly, referring to his friend Chris, also had this to say: "I think that event was maybe a little bit of a heartbreaker for him and a huge propellant for my career and I have wondered over the years what would have happened had Chris won that contest and I got second? Would that have changed our lives or our careers in any way?" Chris Brown could not be reached but had this to say to the Los Angeles Times after Slater's win in 1990: "I think he's a future world champion."

18. Kelly and the film crew traveled to Fiji and Hawaii in late 1990 so Kelly could prove to the rest of the surfing world that he could surf bigger waves.

19. From the 1991 film "Kelly Slater In Black And White." Richard said the film succeeded on many fronts. Young surfers still quote lines from the movie, he said, and at one time it sold at least 100,000 VHS units. "It really helped launch my career. I went on after that to start Volcom and my first big successful project was *Kelly Slater In Black And White*."



# HOW TRESTLES WORKS

According to Dr. Falk Feddersen, professor of oceanography at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego.

WE ASKED DR. FEDDERSEN TO EXPLAIN WHY LOWER TRESTLES IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT WAVES. HERE ARE 8 REASONS WHY.

## THE CALIFORNIA COASTLINE

This portion of coastline in southern California bends to the east, creating a geological point that is ideal for surfing. Lower Trestles, as a result, breaks both in left and right directions.

## COBBLESTONES

The waves break evenly over a rocky seabed of cobblestones. Rains wash these stones, which can be six or eight inches long, down from the San Mateo Creek. This flow of stones keeps the geological point intact.

## KELP

A kelp bed can be found offshore at Lower Trestles. When choppy waves move through kelp "it cleans them up a bit and removes the chop, which is also better for surfing."

## CONSISTENCY

This time of year Lowers is rarely without rideable waves. It "is just automatic in the summer time or early fall. You don't even have to question. You just go."

## WINDS

The winds at Trestles are typically much lighter than they are just 20 miles to the south, Dr. Feddersen said. "It has some sort of a blessing." Conditions are best for surfing when any winds arrive from the northeast.

## STORMS

Trestles is best this time of year because it's winter in the Southern Hemisphere and storms are pushing up from Antarctica, New Zealand and Tahiti. "They send waves all the way across the equator."

## THE OCEAN FLOOR

Beneath the surface of the water lies an underwater point that is 200 feet deep. This concentrates the wave energy as a magnifying glass does with the sun. A smaller underwater point that extends just a few hundred yards out "concentrates the wave energy again," he said, and "that is the reason the waves get so good there."

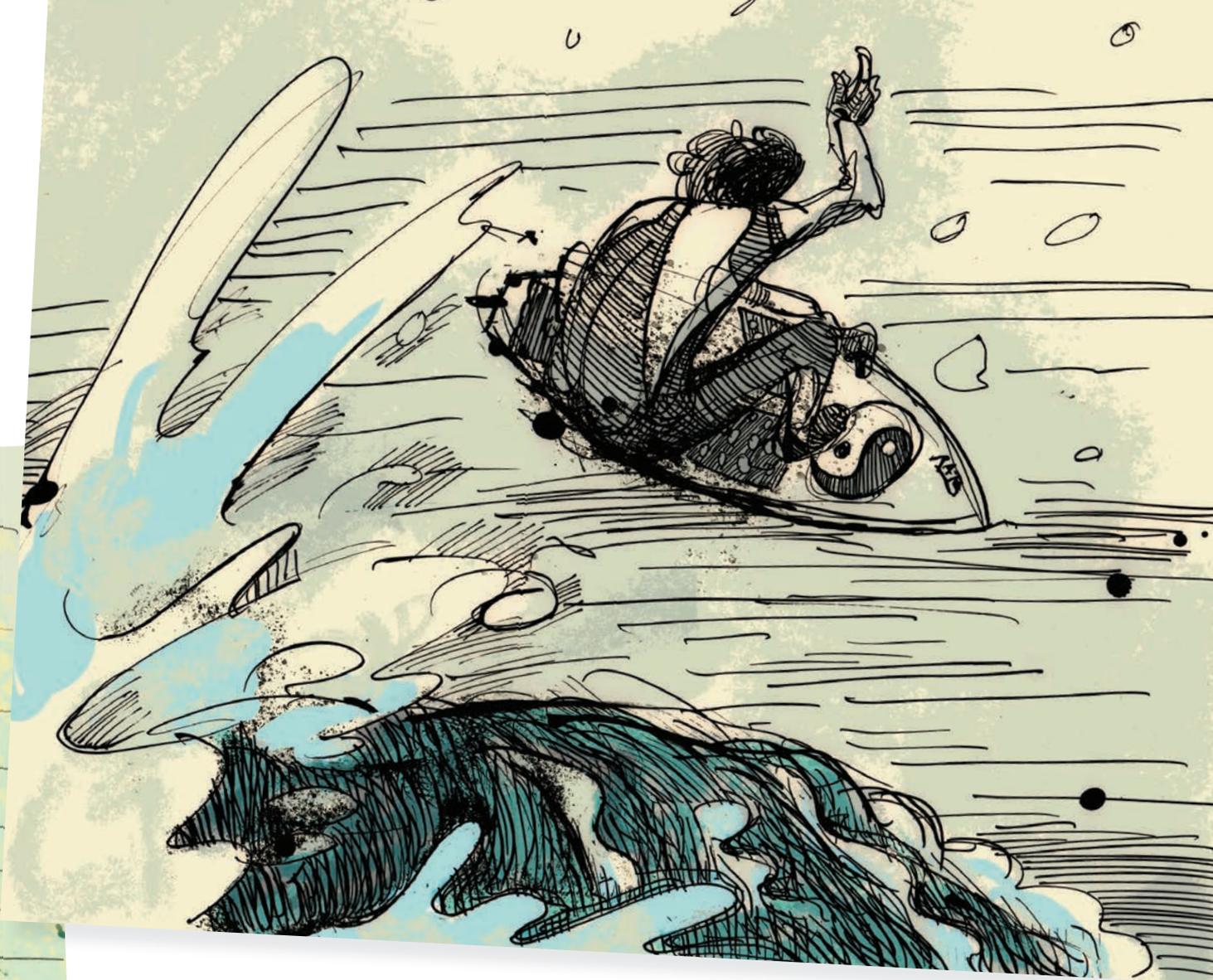
## LEVEL OF COMPETITION

On any given weekend "you are literally surfing with the best people, the highest percentile of surfing expertise in the world. The people who are out there, even the little kids, are really good. If you are a weekend tennis or golf player you can't go play with Roger Federer or Tiger Woods. But for surfing, at Trestles, one can."

"THE BREAK ALLOWS YOU TO SURF YOUR BEST."

# GREAT MOMENTS AT TRESTLES

Many of pro surfing's greatest moments occurred at Trestles. **Illustrator Alvar Siclin** brings four to life.

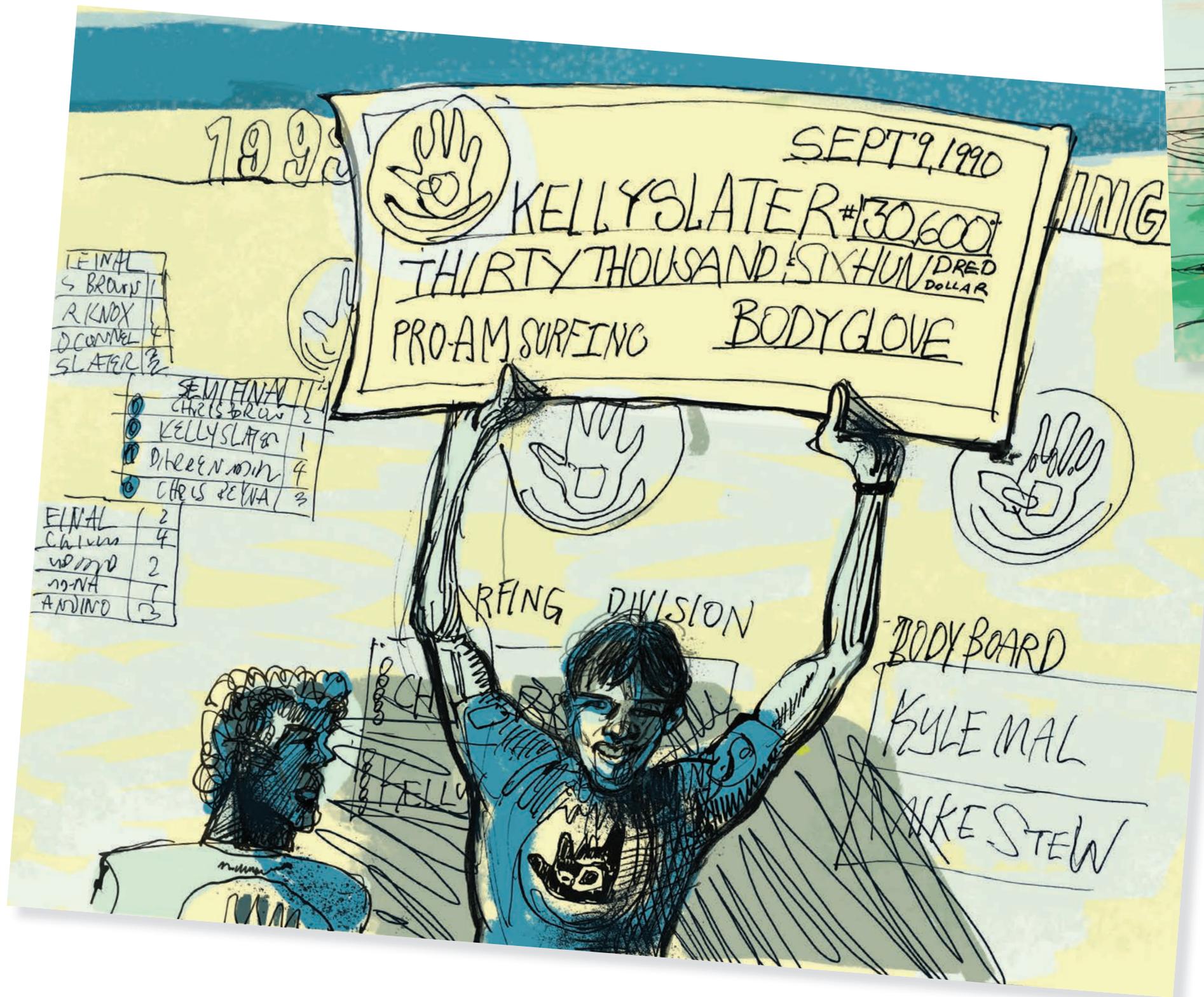


## 1982 TOM CURREN CALIFORNIA STUBBIES TRIALS

Before this Santa Barbara surfer launched his pro career in 1982, Australians dominated the world tour. His win at Trestles provided a glimpse of what was possible for the future 3-time world champion and preeminent surfer of the 1980s. Another former world champion, PT Townend, said: "That was the springboard and launch for his professional career, just like it was for Slater at the end of that decade in 1990."

## 1989 CHRISTIAN FLETCHER BODY GLOVE SURF BOUT

An aerial display from this San Clemente surfer marked a critical transition in pro surfing as competitors began tossing their boards above the lip of a wave. Play-by-play announcer Rockin' Fig, who was on the beach that day, said "I remember three airs on one wave, just like 'oh my god.'"



**2012 GABRIEL MEDINA**  
**NIKE LOWERS PRO**

Medina was not the first Brazilian to win a major event at Trestles (Miguel Pupo in 2011) but his performance at this event in 2012 served as his introduction to the wider surfing world. Two years later he would become the first-ever Brazilian world champion and leading representative of a new wave of talented South American surfers dubbed "the Brazilian storm."

**1990 KELLY SLATER**  
**BODY GLOVE SURF BOUT**

An 18-year-old Kelly Slater was exuberant as he hoisted the winner's check on Sept. 9, 1990. It was Slater's first pro victory, and the beginning of the greatest professional career in the history of the sport. "I can probably look back and argue that was the most significant event for me maybe in my life," Slater said.



# A TREK THROUGH TRESTLES

THOUSANDS TRAVEL TO TRESTLES EACH YEAR TO SURF ITS WORLD-CLASS WAVES AND EXPERIENCE ONE OF THE LAST UNTOUCHED SECTIONS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COASTLINE. WE ASKED PHOTOGRAPHER CHRIS ORTIZ TO TAKE A VISUAL TOUR OF THIS ICONIC AMERICAN PLACE.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ORTIZ



Trestles occupies a piece of the California coastline between Los Angeles and San Diego. Everyday surfers typically park along Cristianitos Road after exiting Interstate 5 and prepare for a walk to the sand that can take 30 minutes or more. Some hop on a bike or

skateboard as a way of accelerating a journey that offers reminders of when the U.S. military once occupied this land and signs that urban life is never that far away. One greeting scrawled into the path appears to be both a compliment and a complaint: "The Surf Is Good But The Crowd Isn't."



The railroad bridge that gives Trestles its name went up in 2012, replacing a timber structure that had been there since the early part of the 20th century. Surfers pass underneath the bridge to get to the water. The bridge's concrete pillars spell out TRESTLES as a welcome sign for arriving surfers.



EVEN AT TRESTLES, URBAN LIFE IS NEVER THAT FAR AWAY.

There are days when hundreds of surfers are in the water at Trestles. As they backtrack to their cars they can see a set of train tracks receding into the distance. Some choose to leave their mark on the back of a sign or an underpass serving as a graffiti canvas. Back at the parking lot a man and his cigarette survey the scene.

20 REASONS TO BE

# FIRED UP

ABOUT THE 2016 HURLEY PRO

## LEADERS

fighting for a world title



## HOMETOWN HEROES

all live near San Clemente, California



	Country	World ranking
Matt Wilkinson	Australia	#2
Gabriel Medina	Brazil	#3
John John Florence	USA	#1

	Country	World ranking
Felipe Toledo	Brazil	#17
Kolohe Andino	USA	#11
Jordy Smith	S. Africa	#5
Adriano de Souza	Brazil	#7

## SOMETHING TO PROVE

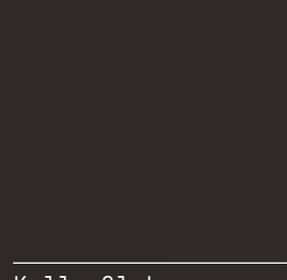
rookies and those trying to make their mark



	Country	World ranking
Jack Freestone	Australia	#29
Conner Coffin	USA	#24
Italo Ferreira	Brazil	#9
Caio Ibelli	Brazil	#16
Kanoa Igarashi	USA	#21
Michel Bouceaz	Fr. Polynesia	#13
Sebastian Zietz	USA	#12

## DON'T COUNT THEM OUT

veterans with the skill and experience to win



	Country	World ranking
Kelly Slater	USA	#8
Julian Wilson	Australia	#5
Mick Fanning	Australia	#10
Joel Parkinson	Australia	#14
Joel Kerr	Australia	#14
Taj Burrow	Australia	#35

# ONSHORE WORKOUT

By Kevyn Dean of DSC Performance Physical Therapy and Fitness in San Clemente, Calif. Demonstrated by surfer Alexa Ross.

Kevyn Dean trains some of the best surfers on the professional world tour and serves as medical director for the USA Surf Team. We asked him to offer advice to beginners or casual surfers who are entering the water for the first time. He advises establishing proper movement and stability first. Dean says you can do the following exercises at home or as a warm up routine at the beach. Each step is meant to approximate different elements of the surfing experience.

Right before surfing, do the entire circuit as one set. If it's more of a midweek workout routine run through the circuit three times every other day. No weights or special equipment are necessary.



1

## PADDLING OUT AND CATCHING A WAVE



**Basic Pushups**  
Keep your arms in while doing these because while paddling on a board you

want to keep your arms as close to the board as possible. Do 10.



### Mountain climbers

While in a pushup position slowly bring each of your legs up and touch your knee to your elbow, contracting

your stomach muscles as you go. Do 10 of each leg, or 20 in total.



### Frog Thrust

While in a pushup position shoot your legs forward so they land outside your arms. Keep your back flat. Do 10.



### Pop Up

Draw a line in the sand or place a strip of tape along the floor, which will approximate the "stringer"

that runs down the middle of a surfboard. Then pop up into a surf stance, with your feet aligned over the makeshift stringer. Keep your back flat. Do 10 of these.

2

## ESTABLISHING CORRECT POSTURE ON A SURFBOARD

**Squats** Take a broomstick, golf club or dowel and using either your right or left arm hold it against your back. Make sure it touches your glutes, the mid point of your back and your head simultaneously. Get into a surf stance, your feet over the stringer, and perform a squat while keeping the stick or dowel connected to those three points on the body. The lower you can get on a board the more stability you will have. Do 10 squats.

3

## ROTATING YOUR BODY WHILE MANEUVERING YOUR SURFBOARD



**Windshield wipers**  
While lying flat on your back with your arms outstretched, raise your legs

as high as they can go. While holding them together, slowly rotate your legs from side to side in a controlled fashion. Use your core to control your legs and keep your back connected to the ground. If they are too difficult you can go side to side with your knees bent. Do 10.



### Russian twists

Sit up and put feet on ground. Grab a heavy book or bring your hands together in front of you.

Touch the ground on one side with the book or your hands and then do the same on either side as you rotate back and forth. If that's too easy lift your feet in the air slightly as you rotate back and forth. Do 10.



### Mountain climber with rotation

Get back in a pushup position. Lift your right foot off the ground and rotate your hips

and twist your stomach muscles so that your right knee touches your left elbow. Repeat with your other leg. Do five on each side, or 10 total.

4

## BALANCING ON YOUR BOARD



**Single Leg Stance** In a single leg stance, stand upright for 30 seconds. Next stand on one leg with your eyes closed for 30 seconds. Then stand on one leg with eyes closed and nodding your head. If you can do that for 30 seconds stand on a pillow or soft sand and repeat. Only progress to the next step if you can do the prior for 30 seconds.

5

## VISUALIZE PERFECT SURFING

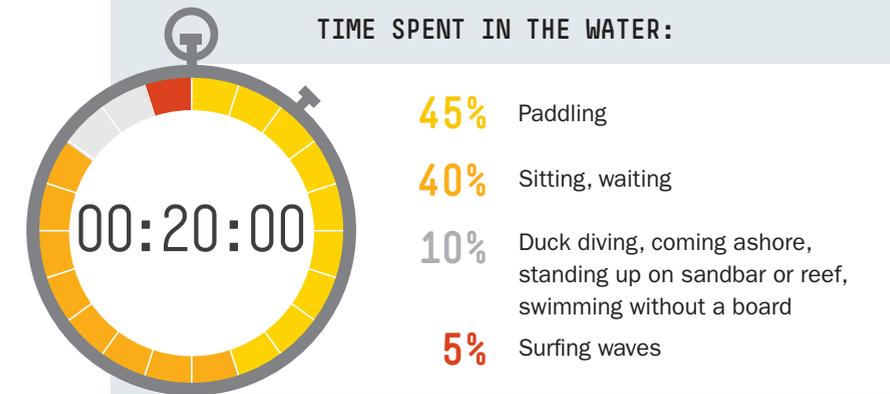
**Imagine** For 45 seconds to 2 minutes imagine what you will be doing out in the water and how it should look. Dean says "If you tell your body this is how I surf and this is perfect your body will attempt to do that."

"The biggest mistake beginners can make is to focus on building strength, power, speed or quickness without establishing proper movement and stability first. Stability allows you to move from position to position with control."

## the physical demands of surfing trestles

Surfers have a laid back reputation. But exercise physiologist Oliver Farley, who has a PhD in the science of surfing, has documented the extreme physical demands of the sport by studying what surfers do when they are out in the water.

## 20 MINUTES OF COMPETITIVE SURFING:



DISTANCE TRAVELED: **800M TO 1KM**  
(roughly half a mile)

CALORIES BURNED: **240-270**

MAXIMUM SPEED WHEN RIDING A WAVE: **15.5 - 21.7 MPH**

TOP HEART RATE: **180 BEATS / MIN**

Surfers need lots of arm strength and aerobic endurance to perform repeated short powerful bouts of paddling as they position themselves in the water and catch waves at a crucial take off point. They also need leg strength and power to perform turns or land on their board if they perform an aerial maneuver. When they do hitch a ride, watch out. Expect to see surfers travel more than 20 miles per hour on the fastest waves at Trestles.

Dr. Oliver Farley, Auckland Pathway to Podium strength and conditioning provider for Aktive-Auckland Sport & Recreation in New Zealand

PHOTO CREDIT: TAYLOR CASEY



# SURFER IN CHIEF

Why Richard Nixon  
Is Responsible for  
One of The World's  
Greatest Waves

BY ALEX ROTH

Back when Southern California's best surf break was off limits to everyone but the military, teenager Bob Mardian and a friend were surfing the spot when his buddy wiped out and lost his board.

Marines waiting on the beach seized the board when it washed up on shore, put it on a military vehicle and whisked it away.

A few days later, Mardian, his friend and his friend's mother went to the Camp Pendleton Marine base to retrieve the 10-foot Hobie, which was being held captive in a giant warehouse along with dozens of other boards that had been confiscated over the years. Both the kid and his mother were commanded to sign various official documents.

"He had to promise, 'I'll never surf here again, I'll sign away my future

children, blah blah blah,' Mardian, 69, recalls. "They told him he wouldn't get the board back if it happened a second time. It was all very solemn and serious."

One man ultimately ended these standoffs: Richard Nixon.

The 37th President of the United States has many legacies, of course. A particularly obscure one is his decision to turn a small coastal section of Camp Pendleton roughly 50 miles north of San Diego into a state park. As a result of his decision, the break known as Lower Trestles—with its consistent, peeling waves and occasional perfect barrel—has become one of the world's iconic surf spots.

No more need for surfers to sneak to the ocean through head-high reeds while eluding military patrols. No more confiscated boards. In 2013,

CNN, working with a group of Surfing Magazine editors, named Trestles the 12th-best surf spot on the planet. Every September, the site plays host to the Hurley Pro, one of the world's most prestigious pro surfing competitions.

What motivated Nixon to create San Onofre State Beach, opening up Trestles to the world? Like many stories involving the only U.S. president to resign from office, this one involves political calculations, feelings of betrayal and possible ulterior motives.

If the military wasn't happy about Nixon's decision—and they weren't—there was another group of people even less happy: The San Onofre Surfing Club, a private group that had been granted exclusive access by the Marines to a section of the beach 1.5 miles south of Lower Trestles.



(left) The Nixons at the “Western White House.” Photo provided by the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum; (facing) President Nixon receiving an honorary membership from the San Onofre Surfing Club on Aug. 25, 1970. Photo provided by Bob Mardian Jr.

To this day, some members of the club speak in wistful tones about Nixon’s decision.

“Were we all upset that we had exclusive access to our beach and then suddenly we didn’t?” said Brian Ephraim, the club’s current president, who was a kid during Nixon’s first term. “Well, yeah. Wouldn’t you be?”

San Onofre State Beach runs along a 3.5-mile stretch of sand and ocean on the northern border of San Diego County, from a spot now known as Upper Trestles to a section just south of the San Onofre nuclear power plant.

In 1942, during World War II, the Marines acquired 123,000 acres of land in that area—including that stretch of beach—and created Camp Pendleton, which remains the largest Marine base on the West Coast.

From then until Nixon’s presidency, which began in 1969, the Upper and Lower Trestles surf breaks were a forbidden zone for surfers. Nonetheless, plenty of locals found it impossible to resist the lure of Trestles’ glorious waves. And so began a quarter century of cat-and-mouse battles between surfers and Marines.

Back then, surfboards had no leashes, so every bad wipe-out carried with it the potential that

your board could float off into captivity. Sometimes surfers would try to retrieve their property from the base, sometimes they wouldn’t bother. Exactly what happened to all the abandoned boards lining the walls of that cavernous military warehouse remains something of a mystery.

For a few dozen lucky families, however, membership in the private San Onofre Surfing Club meant they could still surf along a prime section of beach just south of Trestles. In the early 1950s, the Marines granted the club exclusive access to that section of the beach in exchange for the club’s promise to maintain it. The surfing in that area is good, but not Trestles-level good.

To get to Trestles, surfers who weren’t members of the club would often sneak to the beach via a series of well-worn makeshift paths concealed by tall reeds at the northern end of the base. Once you reached the sand, you’d scan for any military patrols, then make a dash for the ocean with your board under your arm.

If you were a member of the club, however, you could paddle the 1.5 miles from your private beach to Trestles—still an illegal act but sometimes an easier mission.

Then Nixon became president. Upon taking office, he bought an oceanfront estate in San Clemente, 40 miles from his birthplace of Yorba Linda. He stayed at his new place frequently during his presidency and it became known as the Western White House.

His new home was a short stroll along the beach from Trestles.

From the beginning, members of the San Onofre Surfing Club found Nixon’s presence an inconvenience. His visits to the Western White House meant extra security on the base along with Coast Guard cutters off shore, making it even more challenging for surfers to sneak to Trestles via land or sea, according to Mardian, who lives in Dana Point and owns several restaurants.

And then Nixon, or someone close to him, came up with an idea that changed everything.

As recounted by John Ehrlichman, one of Nixon’s closest advisors, he and Nixon were taking a leisurely walk along that stretch of sand one day when Nixon, entranced by the beauty of the location, first floated the idea of converting large swaths of federal land into state parks.

“As we walked, he turned from other subjects to the beauty of the beach,” Ehrlichman said in a 1971 speech. “The clean ocean water and the fact that it was so close to a dense population center. So accessible to millions of people. He talked about other government-owned property he knew of that was under-utilized, and of the growing need for skillful and common-sense management of land as America’s population increases.”

Maybe that particular conversation happened exactly as Ehrlichman describes, maybe it didn’t. Either way, what’s clear is that Nixon, even at this early stage of his presidency, was looking to create a lasting domestic legacy.

In a Jan. 14, 1971 memo on file at Nixon’s presidential library in Yorba Linda, Ehrlichman declares that “the expansion of park and recreation areas” will be “one of the major objectives of (Nixon’s) first term.” In the memo, Ehrlichman envisions a Nixon legacy comparable to “the legacy of highways that President Eisenhower left by initiating the Highway Trust Fund.”

At the time, this endeavor also made political sense, according to Boyd Gibbons, who served on Nixon’s Council on Environmental Quality.

Gibbons, 78, who now lives in Spring Green, Wisconsin, noted that large numbers of voters in both major parties had become alarmed about the environment. In 1969, Ohio’s Cuyahoga River caught fire because it was so polluted. That same year, one of the largest oil spills in the nation’s history, off the coast of Santa Barbara, had a cataclysmic impact on marine life.

Given the nation’s mood on this topic, Nixon recognized that becoming a champion of open public space,

*Few people realize how much Nixon accomplished in this area, Nichter noted, partly because of “political fault lines both during Nixon’s time and today.”*

and environmental issues in general, could have distinct electoral benefits. Gibbons wound up serving on a task force whose mission, according to a memo on file at the Nixon library, was to “break loose excess federal lands for parks.”

“Nixon saw the politics of it,” Gibbons recalled. “And I think that Ehrlichman helped him see that.”

The administration eventually compiled a list of several dozen properties around the nation, many of them on military land, that should be converted to parks and open space.

The Trestles beach was on the list from the very beginning—in part, perhaps because of local political considerations as well. A 1971 issue of *Surfer Magazine* contends that Nixon was trying to help the re-election prospects of U.S. Senator George Murphy of California, a fellow Republican, who could publicly champion the proposal and use it as “an ideal vote-getting

issue” by positioning himself as a “conservationist and beach lover.”

It wasn’t long before Nixon’s plan came to the attention of the San Onofre Surfing Club. As it so happened, one of the club’s original members, Robert Mardian Sr., was also a lawyer in the Nixon administration, eventually serving as assistant attorney general. (His son, Bob Jr., was the one fond of sneaking into Trestles.)

Mardian arranged a meeting between Nixon and some members of the club. That meeting took place on Aug. 25, 1970 at the Western White House, on a lawn with a spectacular ocean view. Photographs were taken. The event lasted only a few minutes, during which Nixon was presented with an honorary membership to the San Onofre club.

Today, members of the club who met Nixon that day have differing recollections of what they hoped to accomplish by making Nixon an honorary member. (The senior Mardian died in 2006.)

Denise Tkach, who was 17 at the time, is now a 63-year-old retired healthcare professional who still lives in Dana Point.

“They gave him an honorary membership in hopes that he wouldn’t make it public—that was the whole premise,” she recalled. “And then he did it anyway. And we were all very disappointed.”

Tom Turner remembers things differently. He says the club recognized at the time that its days of exclusive beach access were numbered. Even before Nixon devised his plan, the club faced pressure from the local community and some members of Congress to open up the beach.



Turner, now an 85-year-old Palos Verdes real-estate investor, says the club simply hoped to maintain a good relationship with the president so they might have some input on some of the specifics of his proposal.

"I suspect that those of us who were realists thought it was inevitable" that the beach would become public, he said.

And they were right. Seven months later, Nixon issued a press release: six miles of beach on Camp Pendleton, including Trestles and the San Onofre Surfing Club's private spot, would be transferred to the State of California for "public recreational use."

Even after that public announcement, however, Nixon faced resistance from the military, who disdained the notion of surrendering any of its land. The Nixon administration eventually turned numerous military parcels from Oregon to Michigan to New Jersey into public parks—and "it was a bloody fight for every single one," Gibbons recalled.

The famous Nixon tapes on file at his presidential library include a brief discussion of this thorny topic during a May 20, 1971 Oval Office meeting that included Nixon, Ehrlichman and George

Shultz, then the director of his Office of Management and Budget.

"We're having problems with the Armed Services Committee in shaking some of this military land loose," Ehrlichman says on the tape. "(Committee chair U.S. Rep. F. Edward) Hebert's giving us an unmitigated hard time on Camp Pendleton."

Ehrlichman goes on to mention that Herbert sternly told a member of the Nixon administration, "Don't do it."

But Nixon went ahead and did it anyway. Under prodding from his administration, the Marines soon leased the land to the State of California for 50 years.

Today, Nixon's work to create more public recreation space—much of it in or near urban areas—remains an admirable if little-remembered part of his legacy, as does his work on behalf of other environmental issues. It was Nixon who created the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It was Nixon who successfully supported passage of the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Texas A&M Prof. Luke Nichter, co-author of the New York Times

bestseller *The Nixon Tapes: 1971-72*, said Nixon was motivated by a combination of shrewd political instincts and a genuine concern for environmental issues, a concern that predated his presidency.

Few people realize how much Nixon accomplished in this area, Nichter noted, partly because of "political fault lines both during Nixon's time and today."

On Aug. 9, 1974, Nixon became the first U.S. president to resign from office. Ehrlichman spent a year and a half in prison for his role in the Watergate scandal.

Last year, an author named Anthony Clark wrote a book claiming Nixon's entire parks program was simply a cover for an illegal, if ultimately unsuccessful, plot to build an ocean-view presidential library in San Clemente. Prying that land loose from Camp Pendleton would help Nixon accomplish this task, Clark's book argues. Several prominent Nixon historians have dismissed Clark's thesis, one labeling it "totally implausible."

The San Onofre Surfing Club still exists. Its mission includes making "responsible recommendations to the Department of Parks and Recreation pertaining to the operation and development of the San Onofre Surfing Beach, and to seek to retain the beach in its natural state."

The club has been remarkably successful in its efforts. The parking lot remains unpaved. Still standing is an old shack built decades ago, its thatched roof made of woven palm fronds.

You can get to the beach, still leased by the State of California, by paying a \$15 entrance fee at the guard shack at the top of a small road that winds down to surf breaks named The Point, Old Man's, and Dogpatch. No private club membership badge required. ■

(left) Nixon at San Clemente. Photo provided by the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum



ILLUSTRATIONS BY NEIL FITZPATRICK

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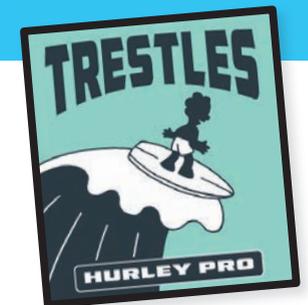
**Photos:**

Chris Ortiz

**Thanks:**

Body Glove  
Colin Carlos  
Taylor Casey  
George Crosland  
Dr. Oliver Farley  
Dr. Falk Feddersen  
Rockin' Fig  
Hurley  
Chad LaBass  
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*Don't miss:*

**Hurley Pro:**  
September 7-8

**Swatch Women's Pro:**  
September 7-18

Watch all the heats live at:  
[worldsurfleague.com](http://worldsurfleague.com)



Photo provided by the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum

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ISSUE 01  
SEPTEMBER 2016



*NIXON'S WHITE HOUSE DOGS LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT ISSUE.*