

No Limits

LUCIA GRIGGI TALKS TO IRISH CHARGER EASKEY BRITTON ABOUT HER LOVE OF BIG-WAVE RIDING.

SurfGirl: WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU WANTED TO START PUSHING YOURSELF INTO BIGGER WAVES?

Easkey: It was never something that I decided all of a sudden I wanted to do, it was more that I grew into it... My influence comes from my parents and my uncle Willie. My dad and his brother were the first surf pioneers in Ireland and are big-wave legends. I grew up hearing stories of their travels and of them charging places like Madeira and Todos Santos.

WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO SURF HEAVY WAVES?

Dad had me out at reef breaks from an early age and we'd all go on family surf trips to the Canaries every winter to escape the cold. From the age of ten I was paddling out with Dad at heavy, volcanic reef breaks. I surfed Lobos for the first time when I was 12 and loved it even after I got tangled round the jagged rocks with a local!

"THERE ARE NO LIMITS BUT THOSE YOU CREATE YOURSELF. SOMEONE ONCE SAID IF YOU ARE TO DOUBT ANYTHING, DOUBT YOUR LIMITS, BECAUSE THERE ARE NO LIMITS."

DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE IN LARGE SURF?

I've always been comfortable in more powerful, bigger surf because it's just progressed naturally for me. A lot of the time where my Dad went, I'd follow. My complete faith and trust in him allowed me to overcome any fears I had.

WHERE ARE THE BIGGEST SPOTS YOU'VE SURFED?

I've surfed some pretty big spots in the Canaries and at home. The biggest spot without a doubt is Aileen's at the Cliffs of Moher, Sunset in Hawaii, and the heaviest and scariest has to be Teahupoo when I was 16!

WORST EXPERIENCE?

Every time I come to the North Shore I usually get a good thrashing my very first session, it's like the ocean's way of telling me who's boss and to make sure I don't forget to give her some respect. I would say my first time surfing Sunset — it was a solid eight- to 12-foot and I was totally undergunned. I didn't watch for long enough on the beach, I charged straight out there and sat too deep. Sunset's such a tricky wave with so much water moving around and shifty peaks. All of a sudden a big set loomed up on the horizon out of nowhere, I was too far inside to dodge it so took it all on the head. My leash snapped after the first one and I lost my board. I got so worked but stuck to the whitewater and let it wash me to shore and then chased after my board which was getting sucked back out in the rip.

AND BEST?

My best big-wave experience was my first tow-in session at the Cliffs last spring — so amazing!

WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO BIG, WHAT DRIVES YOU?

I think the draw of riding bigger waves is that it pushes me out of my comfort zone, the challenge and

excitement. Everything is stripped away to its essence, it's probably surfing in its purest form.

WHAT TRAINING, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL, IS INVOLVED IN PREPARATION FOR BIG WAVES?

State of mind is so important and trusting your gut instinct. If it feels good in your soul go for it, if not then maybe it's best to respect your limits that day. You have to be very in tune with your state of mind and body. Each day it can feel a little different depending on your mood and the mood of the ocean.

WHEN DOES IT WORK BEST FOR YOU?

It works best for me when I know I've done my preparation, I'm as ready as I can be, and trust and have faith but don't think or analyse too much — just put my head down, paddle hard and go for it!

WHAT DIRECTION DO YOU SEE YOUR CAREER TAKING?

I'm just going with the flow, I take it surf by surf and see what the ocean throws at me and go for it. I still love to compete but want to focus on big-wave surfing and travelling and exploring places and new breaks. I'd also love to incorporate my environmentalism and the study and research I'm doing (Environmental Science at University of Ulster) into my surfing world and life more actively.

ANY LAST WORDS?

It's all still pretty new to me and exciting but I know it's going to take time, this is for life. I'll never stop learning and trying to improve.

