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THE SPIRIT OF SUMBA:

IX PIVEC SCORES THE LAST EMPTY CORNER OF INDO

HELLS GATE:

THE BELOW SEA LEVEL BEAST ON IRELAND'S WEST COAST

2008 MEGA TEST:

VEN BLISTERING HOT KITES AND TEN BANGING BOARDS INCLUDING: NORTH VEGAS 08; CABRINHA REVOLVER

in!!: BEST WAROO 08 9M; SANTA CRUZ EPOXY SURFBOARD TENERIFE SPOT GUIDE; BKSA ROUND UP; TAMING THE ONE EYED BEAST



**VISITING
EX-DOUBLE
WORLDCHAMP
MARK SHINN AT HOME**

PHOTOS: Flo Ducate
WORDS: Gabriele Steindl



During a sunny, very windy event day at the last PKRA World Cup in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, I bumped into ex-double world champion Mark Shinn and his girlfriend Flo. I had not seen them in ages and obviously there was loads to catch up on (if it wasn't for that freestyle event with just a few more heats before mine) "We're only here for today, going back home tonight" said Flo. "Why not come to Tenerife for a visit and to catch up with us there?". I didn't give Flo's offer much though at the time as my concentration was set on the mission ,to ride a strong heat'. finished 3rd in hangtime, and chilled out up north in Corralejo for a couple of days, riding at Flagbeach when I remembered Mark and Flo's invite. An email and a few calls later, I was sat in the plane, destination Tenerife. Not only was Tenerife a new place for me, being invited by Mark Shinn, one of my biggest Heroes of all kite-times, to hang out and kite his home-island Tenerife, was a great honour!

ARRIVALS

Flo met me at the airport. We struggled a bit fitting my monster-quiver into Flo's small car, and set off towards the south of the island. We rode on three lane highways; that's more than I'm used to from my home country, Austria. Yeah, the first 'feel' was definitely completely different to Fuerte, much bigger, more built up, big cities, so much concrete...No surprise, though, considering Tenerife is the biggest of all the Canaries, with 800,000 inhabitants. The island is served by two airports: Los Rodeos or Tenerife Norte TFN next to La Laguna close to Santa Cruz, capital of Tenerife, with more than 200,000 inhabitants the second largest town of the Canaries. Reina Sofia Airport or Tenerife Sur TFS in the south of the island is the other, and a way better choice if you're coming here for the wind! So, we dashed in Flo's small white car towards El Médano in the south, home to all wind & wave-addicts. El Médano has approximately 5660 inhabitants and is a town in the municipality of Granadilla de Abona and Mark's adoptive homegrounds. Born in the UK, Mark grew up in Lymington and began as a child in the rough, chilly waves of England's coast with windsurfing. He got to know and fell in love with Tenerife during his trips and competitions as a windsurf pro. More than eight years ago he settled down in Médano. He chose to live on Tenerife, as this island offers him pretty much everything he needs: pleasant temperatures all year round, cities with European standards, and close to the UK. However, the main reason for Mark to settle down here, was just simply the mind-blowing conditions - wind & waves - practically all year round! When I started competing in the World Cup in 2002, Mark Shinn was just at the absolute climax of his career. He was the figurehead of the international Naish team and without a doubt amongst THE



absolute top riders world-wide. Fellow competitors dreaded him for his unique style and technical skill; super stylish, incredibly high technical board-off variations were his trade mark. At the end of the season 2002, Mark had made kite history when he succeeded as the first (and still only) competitor to win both the Professional Kite Riders Association World Title (PKRA) and the Kiteboard Pro World Tour World Title (KPWT), making him the first Undisputed Dual World Champion since the sport's inception.

Life at the dune
Today Mark and his girlfriend Flo are living more 'tranquilo' without the big whirl around him, without competition stress and traveling all year, in a really cozy house right at Mark's favorite spot in town, El Cabezo. As brand manager for Nobile Kiteboards, Mark is deeply involved in the R&D of their boards as well as his own line Shinn Kiteboards. Another project that keeps Mark busy is the TSC - The Shinn Centre. TSC is above all a test centre, based on the idea that (as we all know) kite gear costs a lot of money. One can test a car before purchase, why not also kite equipment? Interested kites can do e x a c t l y that at TSC. TSC also offers equipment storage right at the main spot in El Médano as well lessons and tuition,

and in time, pro clinics (with Mark and other pros). At the house, Mark showed me my room and even before I started unpacking or tormenting him with insignificant small talk, I directly spat out the one question that had been floating around in my head for quite some time... "Mark, are you actually still kiting regularly?" because ever since Mark stopped competing in the World Cup, I had been confronted with rumours like 'Mark Shinn is fed up with kiting, he went back to windsurfing' "Of course I do, almost every day!" was the answer, straight out like a bullet from a gun, and further "only that I now kite whenever I want, with the equipment that I fancy and the style that I feel for". Mark rides today only for kiting itself. Kitebrands still value Mark's opinion on their products highly

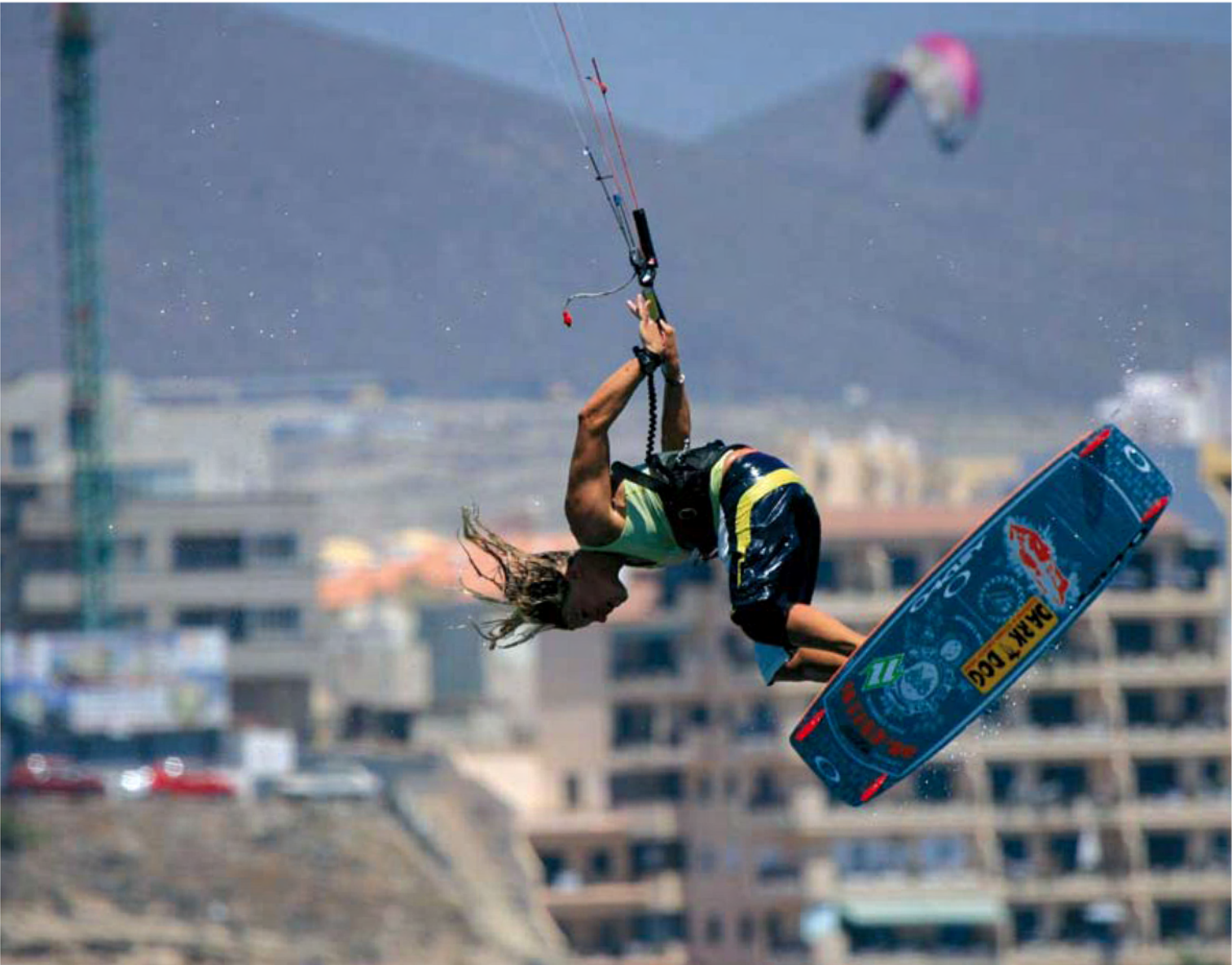
and regularly send him the most recent, new 'toys' for testing. Of course, I was very curious and poked around (naturally with Mark's permission) his quiver. Amongst his favorite toys I found an interesting mix of C-Kites (logically one of those a North Vegas 9 m2, the best kite of the century!) but of course also models of other brands as well as some bows which Flo mostly uses, and Mark when pushing the limits at the wave playground in front of his house. El Médano lies on the southeast coast of the island. Originally a small, sleepy fishing village, El Médano grew significantly during the last decade, unfortunately, not only in width but also in hieght. A number of bigger constructions disturb the certainly very picturesque townscape of former days. El Médano in Spanish signifies sand dune, and little sand dunes can be found in Médano in every corner. This coastal segment of Tenerife is blessed by the wind gods and it is therefore no surprise that El Médano mutated in the 90s into a windsurfers paradise. The sickle-shaped long, light sandy beach stretches several kilometers from town up to the Montaña Roja, The Red Mountain, a volcanic cone that is a protected natural preserve and rises magnificently at the end of the bay. From up the mountain one has a breathtaking view of the surroundings, and watching the sunset from up here is a memorable experience! Cozy bars line up at El Médanos seafront along the roaring Atlantic as well as a choice of cafés and restaurants and bars in town.

THE WIND

The high pressure which forms in summer over the Azores is responsible for the north-east trade wind on the Canaries. Mount Teide additionally accelerates the trades, and the beaches around Médano are the best ones on the island. With more than 250 days a year with 4 Bft or more, El Médano certainly counts amongst the windiest places of Europe. The most ideal wind direction is NE, however, any wind with north in it is generally kiteable. Already in the morning it becomes pretty clear what the day will bring. Quite often it blows itself in with some good 4-5 Bft and builds into full force 6-7 Bft from midday until sunset. 7m to 9m is the average kite size. In summer the trade winds (Los Alisios) blow extremely reliably with good 28 knots on average with July the best month. In winter kites can still count on 50% wind probability at the least. Though our beloved NE trade winds do pay El Médano visits now and then in wintertime as well, it can get rather wild and 35-40 knots are no exception.

THE SPOTS

The two adjacent bays which border directly onto El Médano, cater for every kitesurfing ability and preference, there's a spot for everyone easily reached within a few minutes by foot or board. **South Bay:** Immediately outside Mark's test centre, the main spot in Tenerife for wind and kitesurf. Divided into 2 zones: windsurf upwind, kitesurf downwind, right at the end of the bay of Médano. A wide, sandy, slightly sloping beach, safe for launching and landing. Standing area approx. up to 20 meters from the water line with moderate shorebreak which, depending on swell and wind direction, can be nicely surfed at times. Wind is predominantly sideshore to slightly onshore from the left. The bay is gently sheltered downwind (at some places sharp reef and rocks) with a small, sweet wave spot. No dangerous currents within the bay with relatively choppy waters. Further out the sea-swell often brings considerable water mountains and simply cruising around out there in the deep blue, can be a memorable experience. It can get rather busy in the shorebreak, though, with beginners learning to body drag on extremely small kites as well as



swimmers who have not really figured yet the dangers of swimming right t h e r e in the middle of the kite-action. **El Muelle (The Harbour Wall):** Easily accessible from either South Bay or Cabezo, the Harbour Wall is located between the two, and offers a clean punchy wave at the right tide state. A good introduction to wave riding for the uninitiated, it is also capable of challenging the world's best sailors on its day. The reef here forms nice, distinctive waves which run cleanly towards Medano. Best at low tide. This wave playground can only be reached on the waterway by kiteboard, as there is no possibility for a safe launch or landing in the harbour. Watch out for the rather strong backwash to the harbour wall at high tide! Those with a lot of wave experience should go play in the bay upwind, infamous El Cabezo. Hosting World Tour windsurf events in the past, the sailing standard (mainly windsurfers, Mark is one of the few sporadic kites here) in the bay is awe-inspiring. El Cabezo has faster, more powerful waves than El Muelle that break onto reef, best at high tide with side onshore wind. Situated in the northern most bay of El Medano, the launching and landing at Cabezo is, just as the conditions themselves, only something for experts. Who would be surprised to find Mark's house right here, only a few steps from the spot? All three spots in El Médano work best with wind from the northeast to southeast. **La Tejita:** La Tejita compliments the other sailing areas beautifully, offering flat-water conditions and clean cross-offshore winds (with the usual NE trade wind). The sandy bay is a two-minute drive or ten-minute walk south of the TSC, and has the stunning Montaña Roja as its backdrop. Perfect grounds hardcore-freestyler along an incredibly long, wide sandy beach with almost no bathers or other 'traffic', hence, perfect launch and landing grounds. La Tejita also works with southeast to west wind, however, then the water is no more the same flat playground as with wind from the northeast, but still offers interesting kiting conditions with widely spaced chopp with nice flats in between. No matter from what direction, the wind here is always extremely steady. Only at days when south swell hits the island, La Tejita can show its nasty face with the 'shorebreak from hell', reaching up to 3-4 meters in hight and fiercely breaking right onto the beach. A small kiteschool is located in the bay with a boat at anchor. **Guimar (also Puertito de Guimar):** Rather unfrequented spot, approx. 20 kilometers to the north of El Medano, in the direction of Santa Cruz. The locals think of this spot only when the wind comes straight from the north, and rather as a spot of desperation, when there has not been any wind in a couple of days. Guimar has a reatively shelly sand beach with very limited space to set up your gear. Right beside a harbour, there are artificially made rock walls in the water that stick out about 1-2 meters with only one single gap. Thus, one must enter and exit right through there in order to then be rewarded for all the efforts (journey, etc.) with very choppy, unspectacular conditions... Tenerife offers a few additional spots when the wind is blowing from the west and northwest respectively (mostly during the winter months): **Las Americas:** Las Americas together with Los Christianos is a purpose-built holiday resort, in the south of Tenerife, with the spot Bahia del Duque in the southwest. The wind comes side to side-onshore, nevertheless this spot can get rather uncomfortable for kites with loads of monster hotels, bathers, sunshades etc. plus it's usually a nightmare finding parking. Also the launch area, small and inside an artificial harbour, is certainly far from being perfect for kiting. Kites should ride outside the harbour walls or the police get upset. The spot is ok for intermediate riders who do not want waves.

HEADER

La Fitenia (The Desert): Right at Los Christianos, yet another spot, which is especially amongst windsurfers extremely popular due to the incredible wave in the harbour in between the 'bedcastles' (highrise hotels). The wind comes cross offshore from the right. Launching and landing a kite here, however, really pushes the envelope and should only be attempted by experts: straight downwind of some appartments, hence, with terribly gusty wind and to make things even better, all that standing directly on sharp rocks. For the ones who dare and are capable of doing so, according to the locals, the wave is definitely worth the effort: steep, hollow and glassy, supposedly resembling Hooikipa during good days. La Fitenia is also rideable with SE wind. On days with no wind and swell from the south, it's an awesome surfing spot, unfortunately there are some locals with a bad attitude, you have been warned!

Alcalá: The westcoast of Tenerife is the big unknown on the spot-map. Alcalá works in SE and N wind and boasts the worst launch you possibly can imagine. Definitely suicidal riders with full depower kites only as after launching whilst standing on the reef, one still has to cross 50m of lava before even getting into the water. Only ride here if the thought of swimming in without your gear does not worry you! The wave is called Punta Blanca and is an extremely heavy, fast and shallow left (only in SE winds). In North wind the wave on the other side of the bay breaks. This one, however, is a right, also heavy with big sets that come out of nowhere and close out the bay! When it's good it is perfect though. Alcalá does not work with South swell only North swell.

THE CLIMATE

Due to the immense water masses all around very mild and balanced all year round. In Tenerife it never gets really cold and only very seldomly unpleasantly warm (only when the wind comes directly from the Sahara – however, even then, it never last longer than three days). It really seems like Tenerife was made for water-freaks. The water temperature never drops below 19 °C, but also not warmer than 23 °, the air keeps steady between 18 and 28 °C during the day, and between 15 and 23 °C at night. Thanks to the dryness in the south the island is spared of mosquitoes, rarely flies or other multilegged troublemaker, no sandflies, scorpions, toxic spiders or snakes. In the woods no dangerous animals, in short: Tenerife is tailor-made to make you feel good, presuming one likes the wind!

Neoprene: Recommended all year. During the summer a shorty will be sufficient, in winter a long leg/short arm should do.

No wind days

Nature-lovers will be highly stoked about the extremely diverse terrain, from the lush vegetation and rocky coastline of the north to the lunar landscape and sandy beaches of the south. Best explored by rental car, in 45 minutes the landscape can totally change. From the green Mercedeswald with views over Puerto de la Cruz in the north of the island to the 2,300m high plateau at Las Cañadas, feeling like the set of a space movie in a very unreal lunar landscape, with the highest mountain of Spain in the background. Countless footpaths lead to places whose unique vistas cannot be reached by.

With regards to nightlife, there's a fair amount of small-scale action happening in El Médano: the 'in' places keep changing, thus, just follow the crowd. Those who want night-excitement on a bigger scale should cruise over to Las Americas/Los Christianos. There you will easily find a nightclub where you can swing the tired kites-dance legs.

Alternative sport number 1 is biking! Bikefreaks here torment themselves with the grind up to Vilaflor (1500m) or even up to the foot of the Teide. There's top surfing on the island, in El Médano unfortunately only rather rarely, but almost always in Las Americas

USEFUL FACTS & INFO:

Visa - EU passport holders can come and go as they please. US, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and Israeli citizens may enter the Canary Islands as tourists without a visa and stay up to 90 days.

Currency - Euro

Language - Spanish

Electricity - 220V, 50 Hz; round two-pin plugs are standard.

Time Zone - GMT (GMT + 1 between Apr-Oct)

Health Risks - At worst a hangover or digestive problems if you're not used to olive oil in cooking. No vaccinations required unless you have come from a yellow fever infected area - check with the Spanish embassy in your home country.



with brilliant conditions (localism can be pretty harsh, though...). Apart from Las Americas, the island still holds many other world class surfing spots. There's a small fitness studio close to El Cabezo beach with weights and all the basic tools one needs in order to keep the fitness level up.

ACCOMMODATION

El Médano offers pretty much ever kind of lodging from a hostel, to simple guestrooms, up to a four star hotel. For most kite-visitors, the best choice usually is to rent one of the hundred holiday apartments and holiday houses that are being offered in weekly/ monthly rates.

The absolute highlights of the island / of the year: The whales which can bee sighted in big numbers in the up to 3,000 meter deep strait between Tenerife and Gomera. At no other place in the world so many whales are resident in such a close distance to shore. Another attraction of quite different nature: the carnival in February! The carnival of Tenerife is not only the most famous of the Canaries and in fact all of Spain, the festivities also are indisputably the European counterpart to the carnival in Rio, a mindblowing colourful party of joy and senses!

My trip to Tenerife certainly will keep a very special, permanent place in my heart. I met so many lovely new people, the unbelievable hospitality of Mark and Flo - thanx amigos!! - my wild rides in the strong wind and incredibly deep-blue crystal clear water, nice evenings, the diversity of mother nature on this island and so much more. I liked it so much, I changed my return ticket three times. I'm actually writing these lines still from Brazil, another crazy trip but that's another story.... What I know for sure, though, Tenerife will see me certainly very soon again!

