



# TAO BERMAN IS SUPER HUMAN

BY CHRISTIAN KNIGHT

WHEN HE WAS JUST 10 YEARS OLD, LITTLE TAO BERMAN WALKED through his mom's door in Washington State with a rock imbedded in his head and a chunk of flesh ripped from his side. "That's the price to pay for falling off a bike while careening down a mountain-side," Berman said. That mountain bike accident is one of the first memories Berman recounts when he first realized he was different from a lot of people. "For awhile," Berman says, "I just thought everyone was like me, and then I realized maybe I was different. I'm still trying to figure out whether that's good or bad."

Tao Berman doesn't ride down mountainsides anymore, but that same mentality that pushed him at 10 is making him push the envelope in the extreme kayaking world now. Within the last two years, Berman has emerged in the extreme kayaking circle as one of the

premier extremists through an exhausting succession of remarkable feats, like two world record claims to the highest vertical waterfall ever kayaked and several first and only descents of what is usually considered "unrunnable whitewater."

In 1997, Berman added to the increasing debate as to who out of three possible contenders really owned the world record for the highest vertical waterfall ever kayaked when he dropped an 83-foot waterfall on the hurricane-swollen El Tomata River near Vera Cruz, Mexico. The waterfall was nestled deep in a treacherous canyon, farther away from civilization than most people would prefer to go. The only measurement consisted of a 75 foot throw rope dangling about 10 feet from the bottom. As a result, Guinness scoffed at the claim, which failed nearly all of their stringent technicalities for documentation. The video footage did appear, Erik Link's debut film, "Twitch," but exposure was ultimately overwhelmed by Shannon Carroll's more exposed world record claim on Oregon's 78-foot Sahalie Falls in the heavily trafficked Sahalie State Park.

While Berman was never officially crowned as the world record holder, his run on that Mexican waterfall hatched him into notoriety ▶



PHOTOS: BRANDON KNAPP

