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## Skateboarder "Joey Jett" Hornish

Local Towson, Md., skateboarder is a prodigy

By Sarah Evans



Ten-year-old Joey "Jett" Hornish rolls back and forth across one of the many wooden hills and valleys inside the Baltimore Skate Park in Rosedale, his feet seemingly glued to his skateboard as he performs a "boneless," a stunt that involves stepping off the board with his front foot and [jumping](#) while holding the board with his back hand— all while doing a 180-degree turn in the air.

It's a difficult trick for skaters twice Joey's age and size. But besting older skaters has become something of a regular thing for a boy who started skating four years ago, when his mother bought him a SpongeBob Square Pants skateboard for a dime at a yard sale.

After getting that first skateboard, it didn't take Joey (who is known in the skating world as Joey Jett) long to surpass the skill of the best friend who taught him the basics. Within a year Joey, then 7, was competing against 20-year-olds. "I was completely shocked at how quickly he picked it up," says Isabel Cumming, Joey's mom and coach— although coach is a relative term, since Joey, like most skateboarders, learns from watching videos and other skaters, not through formalized training. While

their family is athletic (mom is a former gymnast, [dad](#) was an All-American lacrosse player at Towson University, and brother Stephen is an expert marksman and competitive tennis player), skateboarding was a completely new endeavor.

Joey's first competition was the PlayStation Big Hookup Tournament, where, at age 7, he placed first in the under-14 category. Soon after, he scored top finishes at the National Mini Ramp Contest in New Hampshire and the Black Diamond Vert contest in New Jersey. He had been competing on the Baltimore Skate Park team, but since it closed in May and reopened in Harford County as Migration, he will now skate under the Migration name. "When I first met Joey, he had only been skating a couple months," says skate park owner Beau Barlow. "But I had never seen a kid come through here wanting it so much."

Since there is no vert ramp in the Baltimore area, Joey and his mom travel once or twice monthly to practice on ramps in Philadelphia, New Jersey or at Ocean Bowl in Ocean City, Md. (one of the oldest skate parks in the nation).

Even though Joey is scared of heights, he's fearless when it comes to the vert. At age 7, he became the youngest skater ever to land a "540" in competition—to complete 1 ½ rotations in midair on a 14-foot vert ramp—and is now known for a variation on that trick, a "540 rodeo," which is inverted, making it appear like he is doing a back-flip in the middle of the trick. As if this isn't enough of a crowd pleaser, Joey has his sights set on doing a 720— or two full rotations—a trick that he has landed a couple times, but hasn't yet perfected. This shouldn't take long, Barlow says. "Joey's one of the quickest learners I've ever seen," says Barlow. "He learns tricks in five minutes that take people months to learn. He's an obvious prodigy."

The highlight of Joey's skating career so far is participating in the Dew Tour, an action sports tour in which [athletes](#) from six disciplines, from BMX to skateboarding, compete to win the Dew Cup. For the past three years, Joey has performed at each stop of the tour before the competition begins. At one tour stop, Joey was lucky enough to meet his hero, fellow vert skater from Dundalk, Bucky Lasek.

So, what is a kid who's known across the country and has the potential to become one of skateboarding's biggest stars like outside of the skate park? "He's actually very shy," says Cumming, chief of economic crimes for the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office. "He loves animals, loves his dogs."

The soon-to-be sixth-grader at Ridgely Middle School also loves football and is an avid Ravens fan. (Joey shares an agent, Ira Rainess, with Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis, but he hasn't gotten to meet Lewis yet.) And while Joey does want to be a pro skateboarder when he grows up, he is [practical](#) enough to have a backup plan: becoming a wide receivers coach for a Division II school. Ask him, "Why not a Division I school?" and he says, "Because if you mess up, they'll be like, 'You're fired!'"

At the Baltimore Skate Park, Joey finishes a stunt and jogs over to where his mother is watching. "How was it?" he asks as he scrambles up the edge of a mini-ramp, stopping beside the coach who has been taught everything she knows about skateboarding by her son.

"It was great!" she says.

Joey Jett will be competing in the Ocean Bowl State Contest on July 15 and Aug. 12, <http://www.oceanbowl.com> Learn more at

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