



Jen Schroeder, a former softball player for UCLA, throws baseballs at a Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk game Thursday during the videotaping of a new show for the Travel Channel, 'Ace the Game.'

DAN COYRO/SENTINEL PHOTOS

# Name of the Game

Boardwalk

1-17-14

Travel Channel show 'Ace the Game' features games at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk

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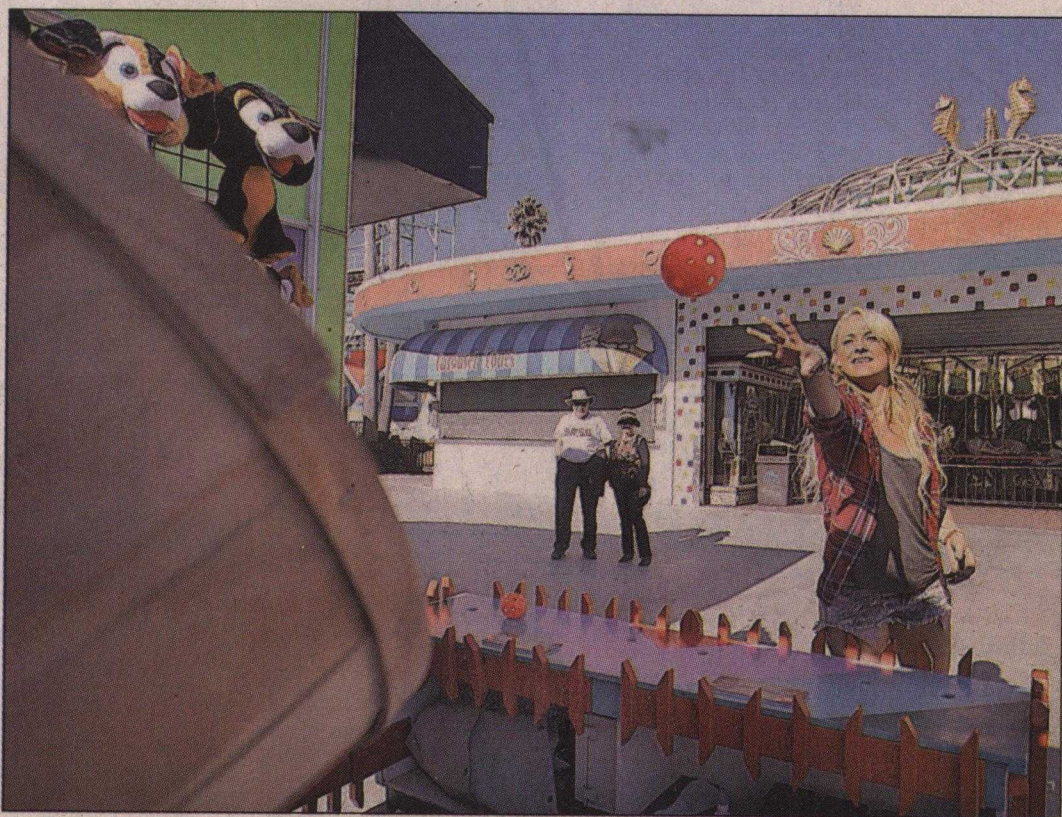
SANTA CRUZ — With a little practice, anyone can grip a baseball and improve their chances of hitting those stacked milk bottles at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

That was the theme of a TV shoot at the Boardwalk on Thursday with a crew from the Travel Channel's forthcoming "Ace the Game." The show, set to debut April 29, visits amusement parks across the country and gets experts to teach tips.

"The whole premise of the show is teaching them to win games," said Hugh Hansen, line producer for the show. He and about 20 crew members and 20 extras worked at the Milk Bottle game at the Boardwalk, enjoying the clear, 71-degree weather.

Most of the crew came from New York, and the weather was "beyond our wildest dreams," said Hansen. "Filming the whole winter presented some challenges."

For Jen Schroeder, a 27-year-old former UCLA softball player, her challenge on Thursday was to toss



Former UCLA softball catcher Jen Schroeder pitches a ball at a Boardwalk game during the Travel Channel videotaping of a new show, 'Ace the Game,' on Thursday.

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whiffle balls in to the Bushel Baskets.

Schroeder played catcher for the Bruins from 2005 to 2008, and she now coaches young softball players at her family's Softball Performance Workshop in Orange County.

She also showed the crew a few tips on the Milk Bottle game.

"Can I warm up a little first?" she asked before her first pitch. "Grip the ball across the seams. Spin the ball straight," she said.

It took her two pitches, but the

five silver milk bottles went clanging down.

"I'm really competitive," she said, adding that she's won a few stuffed animals for her husband at games like these in the past.

Gabe Kapler, a former major league center fielder, also contributed to the show along with Peter Magic — a carnival games expert.

The film crew for "Ace the Game" is expected to film at the Boardwalk through Sunday, said spokeswoman Brigid Fuller.

Fuller said the Boardwalk has had no shortage of film crews in recent months. A Lexus commercial is expected to be shot there on Friday, and a BMW advertisement shot at

the Boardwalk in the fall recently appeared in GQ magazine.

"Chasing Mavericks," "The Lost Boys" and the Clint Eastwood movie "Sudden Impact" are among many movies that have used the Boardwalk as a backdrop.

Fuller said the Travel Channel folks called because they were looking for amusement park games.

Is she worried that more patrons of the park would "ace" the Milk Bottle game and take home big prizes?

"Hopefully more people will play the games," she said. "I think a lot of it is practice."

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