



Bethany Hamilton

Reclaiming her story: thriving as one of the most well-rounded and technically proficient surfers on the planet

Most professional athletes are defined by the best days of their lives—the times when all the training and determination paid off and they clinched a world title. For Bethany Hamilton, though, just the opposite has been true. While the fame of her shark bite and survival story allowed her to transcend surf culture and inspire millions with both book and movie deals, it has also meant being publicly and endlessly defined by the worst day of her life. But that day hardly sums up Bethany, considering that she's gone on to be one of the most well-rounded and progressive female surfers, ever.

Bethany was always a natural. From a young age, her smooth and powerful surfing stood out. Born and raised on the small island of Kauai, Bethany regularly competed in the boys division of local surf contests, and regularly won. Even more impressive than her skill, Bethany's early surf and swim coaches recall her uncanny drive and dedication to exceeding athletic expectations. By all accounts, she was a world champion in the making.

At 14, after losing her left arm to a shark, Bethany was back in the water within a month. She shocked the surfers in her cohort—including Hawaiians Carissa Moore and Coco Ho—by showing up to compete in the NSSA Nationals just two years after the incident. She won the 18 and under division, a proving ground for up-and-coming professionals.

Bethany's remarkable story has tended to outshine her exceptional surfing talent, a narrative she is now actively reclaiming. Her most recent film, a documentary called *Unstoppable*, chronicles a raw and personal account of her rise to fame, the challenges of balancing career and motherhood, and an unwavering commitment to evolving her surfing. "I've learned that from awful times beauty can come," she