

Sports Stars: Bethany Hamilton

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks on 08.12.16

Word Count **700**



Bethany Hamilton pictured on March 11, 2007 Photo: John Shearer/Invision/AP

Synopsis: Born in Hawaii, in 1990, Bethany Hamilton began competitive surfing at age 8. Her promising career was seemingly derailed at age 13 when a shark bit off her left arm, but she resumed surfing shortly afterward and won a national title in 2005. A successful author and public speaker, Hamilton has shared her experiences in documentary films and appeared on several popular reality TV programs.

Early Years

Bethany Meilani Hamilton was born on February 8, 1990, in Lihue, Kauai, Hawaii, to parents Tom and Cheri. Raised in a surfing family, along with older brothers Noah and Tim, Hamilton learned to handle the waves at an early age. She began competitive surfing at age 8, and by age 9 she had earned her first sponsorship.

A member of the Hanalei Surf Co. team, the home-schooled Hamilton proved capable of beating more experienced surfers in competition. In May 2003, she won both her age group and the open division of Hawaii's Local Motion/Ezekiel Surf Into Summer event. Shortly afterward, she finished second in the open women's division of the National Scholastic Surfing Association (NSSA) National Championships at San Clemente, California.

Shark Attack

On the morning of October 31, 2003, Hamilton went out to surf at Tunnels Beach in Ha'ena with her best friend, Alana Blanchard, and Blanchard's father and brother. While lying on her board, Hamilton suddenly felt intense pressure on her left arm and was pulled back and forth for a few seconds before the flurry passed. Initially feeling no pain, she noticed the water around her had turned red, and her shocked friends realized that her left arm had been severed nearly to the shoulder.

Blanchard's father fashioned a quick tourniquet from his surfboard leash and led everyone to shore. Hamilton was rushed to Wilcox Memorial Hospital, bumping her father from the operating room where he was about to have knee surgery. Although she lost approximately 60 percent of her blood following the attack and underwent several surgeries, she was stabilized and released after a few days.

As the story drew national attention, it was determined that Hamilton had been attacked by a 14-foot tiger shark. Seemingly level-headed about the incident and the radical change to her body, she vowed to return to surfing as soon as possible.

Recovery And Celebrity

Hamilton resumed surfing just one month after the attack, her determination helping to keep the story alive in the news cycle. Her 2004 autobiography, "Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board," became a bestseller, and she was honored for her courage by MTV, ESPN and the United States Sports Academy.

Even more important, Hamilton demonstrated that the loss of an arm was no obstacle to fulfilling her surfing goals. She won the Explorer Women's division at the 2005 NSSA National Championships, and began competing on the pro circuit in 2007.

That year also brought the release of "Heart of a Soul Surfer," a documentary that chronicled Hamilton's return to the water after the life-altering attack. The documentary helped inspire the creation of "Soul Surfer," a 2011 movie about the event starring AnnaSophia Robb as Hamilton.

In 2012, Hamilton began dating youth pastor Adam Dirks, and they were married in August 2013. In 2014, they were named to the cast of Season 25 of "The Amazing Race," delivering a strong showing before finishing in third place. Hamilton has also appeared on such shows as "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and "The Biggest Loser."

Hamilton has sought to encourage a healthy lifestyle and share stories of her personal faith through speaking engagements, the nonprofit Friends of Bethany and a large social media following. Her second book, "Body and Soul: A Girls Guide to a Fit, Fun and Fabulous Life" was published in 2014, and she became involved in the creation of another documentary, "Surfs Like a Girl." She also managed to retain her competitive edge in the water, snagging first place at the Surf n Sea Pipeline Women's Pro event in March 2014.

In early 2015, Hamilton announced she was pregnant and would soon be scaling back her busy schedule. She and her husband welcomed a son, Tobias, on June 1, 2015.

Quiz

- 1 Which of the following sentences from the article BEST develops one of the article's central ideas?
 - (A) In May 2003, she won both her age group and the open division of Hawaii's Local Motion/Ezekiel Surf Into Summer event.
 - (B) On the morning of October 31, 2003, Hamilton went out to surf at Tunnels Beach in Ha'ena with her best friend, Alana Blanchard, and Blanchard's father and brother.
 - (C) Hamilton has sought to encourage a healthy lifestyle and share stories of her personal faith through speaking engagements, the nonprofit Friends of Bethany and a large social media following.
 - (D) In early 2015, Hamilton announced she was pregnant and would soon be scaling back her busy schedule.

- 2 Which paragraph in the section "Recovery And Celebrity" BEST supports the central idea that Hamilton did not let losing her arm diminish her accomplishments?

- 3 Which option BEST describes how the shark attack has affected Hamilton?
 - (A) The attack inspired Hamilton to seek out fame and to be an inspiring figure for other young surfers.
 - (B) The attack compelled Hamilton to continue to achieve her surfing goals and to share inspiration with others.
 - (C) The attack caused Hamilton to temporarily question her abilities, but ultimately motivated her to prove she could still surf.
 - (D) The attack made Hamilton reconsider her goals in surfing and in life, and pushed her to accomplish those new goals.

- 4 The author develops the impression of Hamilton's character in each of the following ways EXCEPT:
 - (A) through descriptions of her actions and goals
 - (B) through examples of her surfing accomplishments
 - (C) through discussion of her scholastic achievements
 - (D) through examples of documentations of her life