



Surfing Star Bethany Hamilton Shares Tips for Rocking the Waves

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By Samantha Shelton

Back in 2004, the nation was rocked by the story of Bethany Hamilton: a year earlier, at only 13 years old, the young surfer was attacked by a tiger shark and lost her left arm. Did that stop her from chasing her dreams? No way. After her surgeries, she popped back up and started winning competitions, placing first in the 2005 NSSA National Championships a year after her attack! She's gone on to [place in numerous competitions](#), has a movie about her journey (*Soul Surfer*), and a book so you can hear how it all happened, from her point of view.

With all of her success came a lot of press. Not content with her smile, Bethany was soon under the care of the [Damon System](#), who turned her pearly whites into a show-stopping grin. We stopped by a recent event Damon hosted with Bethany to see her smile shine in person, and to find out who's inspired her lately.

Surfing can be intimidating. What advice do you have for people who are testing the waters for the first time?

First of all, [surfing](#) is one of the most exhilarating sports, and I recommend everyone get out there and give it a go. A few tips that can really build up your confidence:

- Focus on just swimming first. Build up your confidence in being able to swim before you bring the board into the picture. That way, once you're in the ocean, you're fine. Whatever happens, you know you can swim.
- Work on balance, as well as both [lower and upper body strength](#). Think about how exercises in the gym, like burpees, can translate into helping you surf. You need strength to be able to pop up onto the board.



Bethany's happy place? On a surfboard, obviously. (Photo courtesy of Ormcoc Corporation)

- It's really important to get instruction your first time because it's a very tricky sport, and you need to learn to understand the ocean. So just having someone there to watch and instruct you can help because they can correct you and it's a safety net – you know someone has your back.
- Start small. Try little waves and use a big longboard – both make it easier. After teaching surfing to some of the contestants on season 13 of *The Biggest Loser*, I'm confident everyone can get out there and try it. Every one of them did such a great job.

I watched that episode of *The Biggest Loser* and it looked like so much fun! What was that experience like for you?

Oh my gosh, it was so exciting! It was one of the coolest TV show experiences I've had. And I definitely would never think of any of them as "losers." I had a blast with the whole gang.

Did you have a favorite contestant?

I was really proud of them all. I was confident they could all get up and surf, but you really never know what's going to happen. But they all did it and had a blast. Seeing the joy they had now in their lives was awesome. You know, six months before they were sitting in their houses with a really boring life. And all of a sudden, now they've worked their butts off to make it to Hawaii to go through this whole experience. It's just awesome. It was so special to be able to be a part of that show.

Obviously surfing is your favorite form of exercise. What's your favorite non-surfing workout?

I absolutely love tennis. I'll also [go on hikes](#) with my dogs or my friends. I like doing high intensity interval training (HIIT), too. I just like being active, mixing it up and keeping it fresh. I feel like if you do the same thing over and over, you get bored.

If you want to see Bethany ride the waves herself, check out [her website](#) for her competition schedule and more fun features.

<http://www.fitnessmagazine.com/blogs/fitstop/2012/09/14/fitness/surfing-star-bethany-hamilton-shares-tips-for-rocking-the-waves/>