

A high-action photograph of a female surfer in a white and purple bikini riding a wave. She is leaning back with her right arm raised and her left hand flat against the water. The wave is breaking with white foam. The background is a deep blue sky.

BEN MARCUS | LUCIA GRIGGI

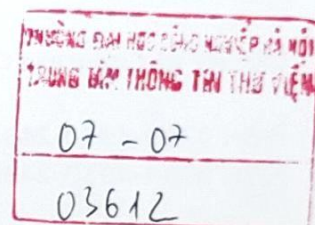
WOMEN WHO SURF

***CHARGING WAVES WITH
THE WORLD'S BEST***

WOMEN WHO SURF

***CHARGING WAVES WITH
THE WORLD'S BEST***

BEN MARCUS | LUCIA GRIGGI



FALCON®

GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT



**GIFT OF THE ASIA FOUNDATION
NOT FOR RE-SALE**

**QUÀ TẶNG CỦA QUỸ CHÂU Á
KHÔNG ĐƯỢC BÁN LẠI**



An imprint of Globe Pequot

Falcon and FalconGuides are registered trademarks and Make Adventure Your Story is a trademark of Rowman & Littlefield.

Distributed by NATIONAL BOOK NETWORK

Copyright © 2017 Rowman & Littlefield

All photos by Lucia Griggi unless otherwise noted


All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Information available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-4930-2485-8 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-4930-2486-5 (e-book)

 The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

The authors and Rowman & Littlefield assume no liability for accidents happening to, or injuries sustained by, readers who engage in the activities described in this book.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
INTRODUCTION	viii
Rochelle Ballard —Kauai Pride	1
Wrenna Delgado —Jersey Shore to North Shore	9
Bethany Hamilton —Gotta Have Faith	19
Maya Gabeira —She's So Tough	33
Keala Kennelly —Not Fearless, Bold	49
Andrea Moller —Waterwoman	61
Leah Dawson —Soul Salvation	75
Mercedes Maidana —A Concussionary Tale	85
Easkey Britton —Irish Up	99
Alana Blanchard —Born This Way	121
Bianca Valenti —Cold Sweat	129
Paige Alms —Maui Wowie!	141
Alison Teal —The Adventuress	151
Sally Fitzgibbons —The People's Champion	167
Rosy Hodge —The Face, the Voice	183
Janet Macpherson —Surfisticate	199
Pauline Ado —Much Ado about Pauline	213
SOURCES	224
INDEX	229
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	232

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Okay, it's 13:21 p.m. Hawaiian time on Saturday, December 17 and this book is almost *pau*—that means “done” in Hawaiian. I am upstairs at Kekoa Collective in Ward Center, across from my boat in Kewalo Basin. I just finished proofing this book on Dewey Doan's big iMac—because my Chromebook doesn't like Word (and neither do I really. Google Docs are the way to go). I would like to thank Dewey for the use of the office, and the computer, and the peace and quiet, and the chocolate-covered macadamia nuts.

This book is almost *pau* and that's a good feeling. There are a lot of people to thank.

Should I do that back to front, front to back or off the top of my head, stream-of-consciousness style?

Going back to front, thanks to Dewey Doan and his staff at Kekoa Collective. Thanks to Meredith Dias, Paulette Baker, David Legere, Sheryl Kober, Neil Cotterill, Melissa Evarts, and anyone else at Falcon Publishing involved in getting this book proofed, laid out, and done.

Of course, thanks to all of the women involved. All 17 of the women here cooperated in the writing and editing of their profiles. I am very, very careful when it comes to laying down people's lives, so thanks to all 17 of the women, but also Becky and Tom Hamilton for help with Bethany's profile and also Alana Blanchard's. Tami Gabeira for help with Maya Gabeira's profile, and also Carlos Burle and Rosaldo Cavalcanti and others who know Maya's story.

Thanks to Rochelle Ballard, Wrenna Delgado, Keala Kennelly, Andrea Moller, Leah Dawson, Mercedes Maidana, Easkey Britton, Bianca Valenti, Paige Alms, and Alison Teal for looking over their copy and making sure it was all accurate.

Special thanks to Martin Fitzgibbons for his help with Sally's profile. Very appreciated.

Also thanks to Peter Mel, Tara Mel, Shaun Tomson, and Nick Carroll for chiming in on Rosy Hodge, and also to Rosy for answering all those pesky emails. She's the busiest gal in show business.

Many thanks to Janet Macpherson for all she has done for a poor writer over the years. Hopefully her profile in this book is some kind of payback. Also thanks to Rachelle Hruska and Sean Macpherson for the family photos. And Jonette “Jonie” Mead in New Zealand for that Kiwi shot.

Thanks to Pauline Ado and David Bianic for their help with Pauline's profile.

A big thank you to the athletes who I interviewed that didn't make it into the book. My apologies, but there's always the second edition!

Thanks to Tonya Bickerton Watson, Chuck Gallagher (1934-2016), Duncan Norris, Jeff Nighswonger, Vanessa Siravo, Libby Defries, Cameron and Karen Farrer, and everyone else I forced the profiles on, and asked them to read them and give feedback.

Apologies to Lucia Griggi for blowing my top more than a few times on this book, and thanks to her for her photos and help with finding others. And that also goes for Sachi Cunningham, Elizabeth Pepin-Silva, Erik Aeder, Shannon Marie-Quirk, Fred Pompermayer, Martin Fitzgibbons, Tim McKenna, Sarah Lee, Mike Coots, Tony Heff, Dylan Gordon, Gary Miata, Red Bull, Ricardo Estevez, Anna Riedel, Bidu, Mike Bresnen, Jeff Munson, Jelle Mul, Waves of Freedom, Fitzgibbon International, and all of the photographers who contributed to this book.

I ran an Indiegogo to help raise money for the photo budget on this book, so thanks to Krickie McCooey, Dewey Doan (again), Gregg Brilliant, Rob Oliveros, Natasha Z, Cameron Farrer, R.J. Couture, Alexander Haro, Rachel Pettit, and Sarah Hauser for kicking in and helping to make this book POP!

Matt Luttrell is headed this way with \$50 for another article I did. Thanks to him for his financial help.

Who am I leaving out of this? Who am I not thanking? Most likely, lots of people.

Thanks to L and L Hawaiian BBQ for letting me sit there hour after hour and work on this, and also Mike and Colleen at Snapper's Bar in Waikiki (sorry I was late yesterday) and all the bartenders and servers who kept me floating on club soda. This book took a loooooooooong time to get done.

Thanks to the Hawaiian Islands, and of course, thanks to King Neptune for providing the waves you see in this book.

And apologies to everyone I am forgetting.

No words needed, Teahupoo
Photo: Tim McKenna



INTRODUCTION

In September 2011, Keala Kennelly was badly injured and nearly killed after a wipeout at Teahupoo—aka Chopes—an outer reef on the island of Tahiti that breaks with great vengeance and furious anger over unforgiving coral. Kennelly had successfully ridden giant waves during the famous Code Red swell on August 27. A few days later Kennelly was invited by Bruce Irons to surf in a special memorial heat for his brother Andy Irons during the Billabong Pro Men's World Championship Tour Event.

SOMETHING REALLY BAD

This was not a big day at Teahupoo, but as Kennelly explained to *surfermag.com*, Teahupoo is dangerous at any size: "That wave is so powerful from 2 to 20 feet. You are never really safe out there. There is always the possibility of something really bad happening."

On this day, something really bad happened. Kennelly got clipped by the lip on a just-overhead wave. Her face slammed into the reef; she came up bleeding, dazed and confused, and had to keep from panicking during a long rescue from the reef to the shore to an ambulance to the hospital in Papeete, in what must have been a very long, two-hour ride. Surgeons repaired the facial wounds, anesthetized her to remove pieces of coral embedded in her skull, and in the end placed sixty to eighty stitches in her face and ten in her skull.

This was a serious injury to a highly skilled surfer, and the shocking photos of Keala's reef-wracked face went around the world. If Kennelly never surfed Chopes again, no one would have blamed her. But two years later her facial scars had healed, and it was time to work on the mental damage.

Kennelly was ready to get back on the dragon that mauled her.

RETURN TO CHOPES

In May 2013 Keala returned to Teahupoo. "I came back and surfed the biggest waves at Chopes up until that point and got the best barrel of my life," Keala said in an e-mail. "I won the Women's Performance award at the XXL Big Wave awards that next year (2014)."

Two years after that—four years after her injury—in July 2015 Kennelly was back at Teahupoo on a day algebraically bigger and meaner than the day that nearly killed her. She flew to Tahiti, landed at 5 a.m., drove to the other side of the island, loaded her tow board into a kayak, and solo-paddled to the outer reef—hoping to take a rope from one of the established tow teams.

That's how Keala Kennelly rolls. She is gnar.

Kennelly travels on a wing and a prayer, with no set tow partner and no guarantee anyone will give her a shot. "I spent the entire day all geared up waiting for a turn with the tow rope," Kennelly told *surfermag.com*. "But skis were limited and the sets were inconsistent, so it was taking a long time for guys to get waves."

I waited all day. Finally, at the end of the day, Raimana [van Bastolaer, a Tahitian local] took a break and was nice enough to let me borrow his ski and driver.”

After waiting all day and watching bomb after bomb unload on the reef—with surfers flinging themselves into death or glory rides—Kennelly was eager to get a bomb of her own before the sun set or the wind got too weird. And then she got one—and made history.

SWALLOWED

She remembered the time to surfermag.com:

I had to come into it real straight-on because when it sucks below sea level, it creates a trench that you don't want to come at sideways. If you do, you can catch a rail. Once I got through that trench, I bottom-turned up into the barrel and stuck my line. I was pretty determined to make it out of the barrel, but the wave turned mutant. The west bowl bent back at me at a 45-degree angle right as the bottom of the wave dropped out. It just swallowed me whole.

I got pinned on my back against the reef and was held there for a while. I came up and got a breath just in time to get the next wave on the head. It slammed me on the reef with so much force it blew my helmet off. The whole left side of my body hit really hard, and I felt like I broke my elbow and my hand. But after that wave I had so much adrenaline running through me, part of me wanted to go back out and get another one, but I was bleeding and in a lot of pain.

KEALA IS GNAR

Images of Kennelly's mutant Teahupoo wave went around the world just as the images of her smashed face did, and they caused a big sensation. She was nominated for the Pure Scot Best Barrel award of the annual World Surf League (WSL) XXL Big Wave Awards.



**Keala dances with the dragon, tow
surfing at Pe'ahi/Jaws on Maui**
Photo: Erik Aeder

And on April 23, 2016, at The Grove in Anaheim, California, Kennelly accomplished what no other woman had done before: She won an XXL award in a category open to both men and women.

WORD FOR WORD

Kennelly took the stage to a lustful roar from the respectful crowd. Her speech was so heartfelt and good that it's worth repeating, word for word. Imagine these words, with Keala repeatedly interrupted by roars from the crowd and her own nervous, stoked giggles: