

FOREWORD BY

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Racing Aloha *with*

THE *Inspiring* JOURNEY OF
A HUMBLE BAREFOOT MAUI BOY TO BECOMING
A *Champion* IN THE WATER

FRED HAYWOOD

Foreword

The Ambassador of Aloha

by Laird Hamilton

I have found there are two kinds of people: competitive people and creative people. Competitive people are fulfilled by beating others, and creative people are fulfilled by accomplishing things.

Fred Haywood and I both grew up in Hawaii, influenced by the tropical environment of the Hawaiian Islands--at times nurturing and at other times fierce. The formidable ocean drew us irresistibly to her to challenge our abilities at riding her magnificent power. At the same time, the gentle nature of the Hawaiian culture infused us both with the spirit of aloha.

Aloha is a creative, collaborative philosophy. Hawaiians have always favored creativity over competition, curiosity over judg-

ment. They aren't very concerned with keeping a secret that might give them an edge over the other guy. They are more curious about how they can partner with others, working in a community to offer input, listen, and come up with ideas in the interest of the whole. Success is greater among people who work with each other rather than against each other.

When you live in Hawaii for most of your life as I have, embodying the spirit of aloha, you value collaboration and camaraderie over competition. And that is the essence of Fred Haywood. That is what Fred and I have in common: we enjoy connecting with and helping people. In fact, I may have learned this from Fred one day in 1983 on a challenging windsurfing run on Kauai.

The sport was becoming popular, and I was new to it compared to Fred. The run from Tunnels to Hanalei Bay was challenging, winds were maybe fifty knots, and we were climbing twenty-foot whitewater waves—impossible on a surfboard, but not on a windsurfer. I've always been a bit of an adventurer on the water, and this day was no different. I was dancing maybe just a little too high on the waves (some thirty feet in the air?) when Fred summoned me down. If I had broken down, Fred would never have been able to find me in the whitewater. This day was another lesson in my ocean life about functioning within the limits of your skillset and your equipment. My career has been a series of trying to work within and yet push the limits with respect and calculation. It is truly the only way to operate year after year.

The next day I tried the same trick in calmer waters, and I broke the fin off my board. That accident could have been life-threatening the day before. I was young and full of testosterone. Fred knew exactly when to rein me in, and he only did it when he knew it would help me be better on the water.

That run to Hanalei was the beginning of many adventures between Fred and myself, building a lifelong bond of love and respect.

Three years later, at a windsurfing contest in France, Fred challenged me to outrace the French champion, Pascal Maka. The French were crazy about windsurfing, and they were even crazier for Pascal. Fred and Pascal had tossed records back and forth for a few years in what Fred considered a friendly rivalry. It did feel a bit more serious for Pascal.

On the last day of the competition, I was in third place when the winds died. Pascal was in first, and it looked like the contest was over. Suddenly, the weather changed. The officials, in typical French style, spontaneously decided to open the course again. Everybody scrambled to the start line to get some runs in. I don't know if I had a problem with my rig or if Fred knew his would be a little faster.

“Here, try my rig,” he said. “Go out there and beat Pascal!”

Fortunately, on this day, I did.

After my third run, I broke a European speed record. I was surprised and thrilled! Not to mention it may have been made a little sweeter by beating Pascal on his home turf. Best of all—I earned my first sponsorship with Neil Pryde Sails, the largest sail builder in the world. It was a Cinderella story, and Fred made it happen for me. He was willing to give up the chance to beat his perennial adversary, and he gave me his equipment to attempt it myself.

That experience was one of many pivotal points in my career as a waterman. Winning that event and getting sponsorship contributed to my going on and with a crew to pioneering tow-in surfing at Jaws on Maui. This way of approaching water sports

contributed to how I would approach riding waves and a lot of other innovations I have been fortunate to be a part of.

I have Fred to thank—for the gear that day, for the encouragement, for introducing me to Neil Pryde, and for his willingness to step back and let me have a shot at the win.

That is the spirit of aloha. Fred has always been an ambassador of aloha. I've traveled with him all over the world, and I have seen him share it with everyone, from young kids like me, filled with testosterone, to experienced water athletes. They never threatened his essential nature or competitive urge. "Sometimes you'll be faster; sometimes I will be," Fred says. He doesn't hold back on helping people.

Because when you listen, when you live in Hawaii, when you are immersed in the ocean's enormous power, you realize no one's a threat. That most of the time, we all need each other to get through life with grace. This understanding is what Fred has mastered and has modeled. And this is what you will read in *Racing with Aloha*.

I'm glad Fred is sharing his story. This book entertains, informs, and inspires. There are heroes amongst us, and Fred is one of mine.

Ho'okipa

had just set the windsurfing world speed record in 1983, breaking the thirty-knot barrier in Weymouth, England, but that's not how I made my name in the sport. My fame came on a day when I was surfing alone, thanks to an eccentric and very wealthy fellow windsurfer and cover photographer for such magazines as *Vogue* and *Life*, who showed up to watch me after everyone else had left the beach for the day.

One morning, I was driving along Hana Highway on Maui when I could see Arnaud de Rosnay cruising toward me in his convertible.

"Hey, Fred!" he called.

Waving wildly, he stopped me on the road, and we chatted while our cars idled. In those days on the island, traffic was light, and we could sit there for several minutes without worrying about blocking traffic.

Arnaud was dressed all in white, his long hair blowing in the breeze. Before the end of the year, the dashing and wealthy French baron would disappear, attempting to windsurf across the South China Sea's one-hundred-mile Taiwan Strait. But on this particular blustery spring day in 1984, Arnaud was eager to photograph what he claimed would be the best day to surf the north shore of Maui.

“The biggest waves in the world will be coming in at Ho’okipa today. I’ll be there at noon with a helicopter to shoot it. Come sail at noon!”

“Yeah, I know,” I said to him. “But I’ll be there at three. I’m going to sail a really big wave at around four o’clock, maybe four-thirty.”

“But I’ll have the helicopter there at noon!” Arnaud insisted.

“I’ve been sailing every day,” I told him, “and every day, the big waves have been coming late. The biggest set of the day will come around four. I don’t want to sail until it’s going to get really big. I think someone is going to ride the biggest wave in the world, and I want to be the one.”

It was an exciting time to be surfing on Maui. Matt Schweitzer, Mike Waltze, Pete Cabrinha, Malte and Klaus Simmer, Dave Kalamala, Laird Hamilton, Craig Masonville, Robbie Naish, Greg and Alex Aguera, Vince Hogan and I were experimenting and innovating with our boards on the water. We weren’t the first to do anything, but we convinced those who were that Maui was the place to push their limits. They came. They pushed. And windsurfing took off, followed by big wave tow-in and paddle-in, stand-up paddling, kite sailing, and foil-boarding. Maui offered the stage that showcased the stars.

I have lived on Maui my whole life. I know the water. I know the waves. I knew Ho’okipa, a beach that offers some of the biggest challenges for board surfing in the world but was pretty much a secret in the early eighties.

I showed up at three o’clock to find David Ezzy, Malte Simmer, Mike Eskimo, and Craig Masonville there, and so was the helicopter. I stood on the beach to watch Malte Simmer going up to face a wave, making a turn at the top, and coming back down.

The waves were huge, indeed. The faces were maybe forty or fifty feet—the hugest I had ever seen at Ho'okipa. I started to second-guess myself. I wondered if I had misjudged the best time to be on the water. I rigged up to sail out on a 5.9-square-meter sail with a seventeen-foot mast—a big rig for my windsurf board, which was a can-opener style.

I tried to sail out, but I had to push over whitewater twice as high as my mast, and a few threw me back. It took me thirty minutes to cover what should have taken me thirty seconds—if I hadn't kept getting blasted by the waves. When I finally got outside, the wind suddenly dropped. It was late. I looked left and right, and I saw nobody. The helicopter was gone. Everyone had gone in.

“Okay. Oh, well,” I said to myself. I hadn't come for the helicopter. I just wanted to surf the world's biggest wave that day.

And then I did.

I waited for what seemed like forever for that wave. It wouldn't come through. I took a few, but the waves weren't that big. I kicked out to look for it.

And then I saw out in the distance, a mile or two away, a wave that was standing some twenty feet above the others. That was it. This was the tide change. By the time the wave caught me, I was hydroplaning. The wind was turning more offshore now, and I was going almost straight upwind. To drop in, I had to veer off to the right and slide across the wave.

I got to the top and looked down—I must have been six stories high. I took the power in my hands, and I zipped down the face. I ran out on the flat, trying to get in front of it. I didn't know when it would break.

All of a sudden, the lip of that wave came over and crashed right on my tail block. I almost ditched my rig, but I held on by

my fingertips. It didn't hit me. There was whitewater all around me. I hung on my boom. A moment later, I caught a blast of wind from the collapsing wave and started sailing. It took me back to land and pushed me right up to the dirt bank at the back of the beach.

I lay there, taking it all in.

I did it, I thought. And then, as if I had spoken out loud...

"You did it!" I heard someone holler. "Fred! YOU DID IT! You surfed the biggest wave in the world!"

It was Arnaud. I looked up to see him running toward me through the sand with a camera bouncing around his neck. Everyone else had left. But not Arnaud. Arnaud was a real pro, both on the water and behind the lens. He would never miss the wave—or the shot.

"I got it!" he exclaimed. "I shot a whole roll of film on one wave. You are going to be famous! These pictures will make you even more famous than breaking the world record!"

Arnaud was right. I made all the top trade magazines. But the one that put me on the map was *Life* magazine. In 1984, *Life* was widely admired by a broad general audience for its photojournalism.

Arnaud's photos won me a windsurfing sponsorship, launching my professional career in speed sailing and earning me sponsorships for nearly a decade. Not bad for a boy who grew up on the beaches of Maui and went to grade school barefoot.

My love of the water started when I was baptized, figuratively speaking, in Kahului Harbor at the age of seven.