

Racing with Aloha: An Inspiring Journey from Humble Barefoot Maui Boy to Champion in the Water

Fred Haywood

Morgan James Publishing (Aug 24, 2021)

Softcover \$17.95 (210pp)

978-1-63195-371-2

Racing with Aloha is an adventurous memoir about competition and friendship in the world of water sports.

Fred Haywood reflects on his career in water sports in his memoir *Racing with Aloha*.

Haywood is a Maui boy, born and bred. As a child he swam, sailed, and surfed in the waters of Maui, leading to a lifelong love affair with water sports. He parlayed his leisure activities into a successful career, starting when he joined the swim team of Hawai'i Preparatory Academy.

While on a swimming exhibition tour of the mainland in the summer of 1965, Haywood met and befriended future Olympian Mark Spitz. He made the decision to leave Hawaii and join Spitz in California, finishing high school there and training with the Santa Clara Swim Club. An undiagnosed heart condition caused Haywood to miss the 1968 Olympic Games, but also opened the door to a new career and a new sport.

After spending several years as a realtor and part-time surfer, Haywood discovered windsurfing. A fast learner, he mastered the activity. With friends, he innovated new materials and equipment for maximum speed on the water. Competing at the highest levels of windsurfing afforded Haywood everything he'd always wanted: the ability to travel, be on the water, and develop relationships with water-loving athletes worldwide.

Haywood displays a genuine love for all things water, from his own sports (swimming, surfing, and windsurfing) to fishing and sailing. That love is infused throughout the book, giving it a lighthearted and breezy feel. The focus on sporting and the friendships that Haywood developed while training and competing keep the book moving forward, but also make it more obvious when the story veers away from Haywood as the subject to recenter Haywood as a historian. Still, there are interesting asides in the book about Maui's plantations, the famed swimming coach Soichi Sakamoto's approach to swim training, and the development of resort destinations on Maui.

The book's genial tone, coupled with its stream-of-consciousness style, make it similar to a talking story in Hawaii. That is nowhere more apparent than when Haywood is relating the mechanics of swimming and windsurfing competitions; such sections tend to contain unexplained sports-related jargon. Their actions can be inferred with a basic knowledge of the sport being described, but the more technical aspects are elusive without more information.

Haywood's father features into the text as a mentor and challenger, reminding him to remain humble even as he breaks swimming records and becomes a well-known windsurfer. This is a lesson well learned, as every competition-related anecdote is filled with respect and camaraderie for fellow competitors, many of whom are now water sporting legends. The book skims the surface of these relationships, though, instead focusing on the Hawaiian concept of "aloha" that serves as their foundation—a spirit of welcoming, loving, and being noncompetitive. Haywood's story is just one example of how embracing aloha leads to lifelong friendships among competitive athletes.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (August 23, 2021)

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