

Story of Christian Surfer Bethany Hamilton Headed to Big Screen

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✖ Filming began this week on a biopic about Christian surfer Bethany Hamilton, who has become a top professional surfer despite losing her arm in a shark attack six years ago.

Soul Surfer stars AnnaSophia Robb (*Because of Winn Dixie*) as Hamilton, Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt as her parents and Grammy winner Carrie Underwood as a church youth leader.

Photo: Bethany Hamilton

The film is based on Hamilton's 2004 book, *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*, which has sold 1.5 million copies.

A native of Hawaii, Hamilton, now 19, entered her first major surfing competition at age 8 and won such contests as the 1999 Haleiwa Menehune Championships and competed in the National Scholastic Surfing Association (NSSA) circuit. But in 2003, when she was 13 years old, her promising surfing career was nearly derailed when a 14-foot tiger shark attacked her while she was surfing off Kauai's North Shore, biting off her left arm.

Hamilton lost more than half her blood, yet miraculously survived with support from her church and family. She was back in the water a month later, learning to paddle with one arm and to find her balance on the surfboard. Two summers later she took first place in the NSSA National Championships, and

in 2008, she began competing full-time in the Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) World Qualifying Series.

Recently she competed at the ASP World Junior Championships, and in 2009 she placed second in the World Junior Pro in Portugal, which propelled her into the top 12 world rankings.

“I’ve been a writer and producer for the past 32 years, and I’ve never encountered a more inspiring true story than Bethany Hamilton’s” said *Baywatch* co-creator Doug Schwartz, who is co-producing the film. “The movie will encourage people worldwide to rise above adversity.”

The film’s release date has not been announced.