

Q&A With Keoni Yan

Keoni Yan, 14, travels to international surf competitions two or three times per year, during school vacations. He loves to compete. In doing so, he gains experience and improves his skills

During competitions, Keoni tries to stay focused on the particular heat and to learn as much as he can. When he returns home, he practices what he has learned and trains as much as he can, while not sacrificing his education. Both he and his mother will tell you that schooling comes first!

Keoni has been to France, Australia, and Hawaii for competitions, placing second in Australia twice.

During the filming of *The Ultimate Wave Tahiti 3D*, Keoni was in the water for hours at a time. He did not get a chance to speak to champion surfer Kelly Slater, but he tried to learn some techniques from him. Keoni was amazed by the camera equipment and also daunted by its complexity.

Keoni has a 16-year-old sister named Kelly who enjoys taking photos of him surfing.



Keoni Yan

PHOTO: SUZANNE MCCABE

Q: How old were you when you started surfing?

A: I started surfing at age 6 with my father.

Q: What do you like best about surfing?

A: Surfing is simply magic. Waves are never the same, and the ocean is so relaxing for your body and mind. You are free of stress.

Q: Could you explain to young people in the United States what surfing means to the people of Tahiti and why it is so important to their culture?

A: Historically, surfing started in the Polynesian Islands, so it is actually part of our culture, and we perpetuate it. For me, I surf whenever I can—on the weekend and

Wednesday afternoons after school. My father told me that I was born to be a surfer because I love the ocean and I have talent.

Q: What do you like to do besides surf?

A: In my free time, I read books, chat with friends on the Internet, play games, skateboard, and sometimes go fishing with my dad.

Q: What would you like to be when you grow up?

A: When I grow up, I would like to be a professional surfer. But I will never drop school. Education is very important.

—Interviewed by Suzanne McCabe