Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2245

O’Donell, Phyllis

(1937 - 2024)

Born	19370101, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Died	20241106, Pottsville New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Surfboard Rider

Summary

In 1964, at the age of twenty-seven, Phyllis O’Donnell won the first ever world championship in women’s surfing. For her efforts, apart from the glory, she won $250, a surfboard and numerous packets of cigarettes.

When she entered the sport, it was dominated by men, some of whom, she recalls, would take aim at her while she was paddling out to catch waves. She was delighted how far the sport has come and how the position of women in it has improved. ‘The girls, especially on the pro circuit, are absolutely fantastic.’

The Ma Bendall/Phyllis O’Donnell Memorial Interclub Contest with other women’s clubs is competed for once a year.

Events

1964 - 1964
Phyllis O’Donnell won the inaugural women’s World Championship Surfing Title at Manly Beach

Published resources

Resource
Surfing into the Olympics, The Sports Factor, 2006,
http://www.abc.net.au/rn/sportsfactor/stories/2006/1743137.htm

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html

Article
A tribute to Phyllis O’Donell (1937- 2024), Brugman, Emily, 2024,
https://tracksmag.com.au/a-tribute-to-phyllis-odonnell-1937-2024#:~:text=Phyllis%20O'Donnell%20was%20Australia's,and%20lo

Author Details
Nikki Henningham

Created 2 January 2007
Last modified 15 April 2025