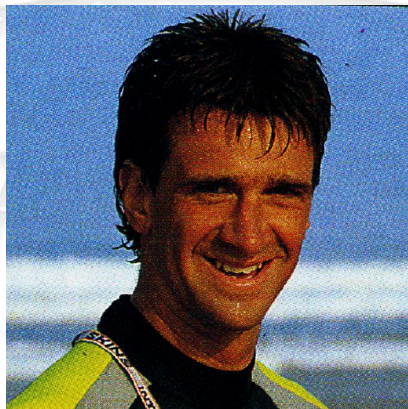


SPORTING LEGENDS: BARTON LYNCH

SPORT: SURFING

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1983 - 1998

As Barton Lynch stepped from the water after winning the 1988 World Professional Championship, an eager interviewer thrust a microphone under his nose and asked, "Does it feel good?"



Lynch paused, turned his gaze from the Hawaiian beach to the skies and said, "That's an understatement, mate. A chronic understatement."

The young Australian's win was long overdue. Since joining the World Tour in 1983, he had regularly challenged for the title only to slip back in the final events.

Some had doubted if Lynch would ever make it. Sure, he was consistent, correct even clinical, but where were the radical moves and big wave mastery of a true champion?

By clinching the championship in pipes of the height of small houses, Lynch put an end to the whispers and immediately announced his intention to retain the title in 1989.

Lynch learned to surf on the beaches surrounding his Manly home on Sydney's North Shore. "Dad bought me my first surfboard," he remembers. "It was an old second-hand job which he painted green to make it look a bit newer."

"When I first started I didn't like it much, particularly after I nose-dived the first three or four times. It was my father who encouraged me to go out again. Then one day I stood up."

From that moment on he wanted to be the best: first in his group, then on the beach and finally, the best in the world.

SPORTING LEGENDS: BARTON LYNCH



Lynch never hesitated whilst performing his daring surf routines.

At sixteen, Lynch left school to pursue a career on the waves. He turned professional two years later and was soon among the prize money in junior events. There are few more exhilarating ways to earn a living, but surfing can be dangerous as the rookie discovered a year after joining the senior tour.

Off the coast of Japan, Lynch was locked in battle with the great surfer Mark Richards when a three-metre tiger shark encircled them. Thinking quickly, Richards caught a wave, extended his leg for Lynch to grab and towed him to shore. The Manly surfer celebrated his escape with a first A-grade Grand Prix win at Bondi.

In the lower swell, Lynch's ability to drain the last drop of energy from a wave by riding it tight onto the foreshore gave him a big advantage, but he was suspect in big seas.

In 1986, his strong challenge for the title floundered in the huge waves off Hawaii. A year later Lynch conquered the monster surf for the first time. Although he ended the season with pneumonia, the corner was turned.

Lynch spent around thirty hours a week in the water, but practice was only part of his success. Careful planning and astute analysis gave Lynch a mental edge and had earned him the label 'Thinking Surfer'. Lynch kept detailed records on his rivals and used the latest video technology at the time to improve his own performances. By adopting a scientific approach, he hoped to develop new moves and methods.

Lynch also paid careful attention to diet, avoiding all dairy products and, like marathon runners, ate lots of pasta. Aerobic fitness is vital to top surfers. Lynch admitted to losing past finals purely through exhaustion at the end of a long day of heats. Being drilled played well and Marino's efficiency declined.

SPORTING LEGENDS: BARTON LYNCH



Lynch is one of the true survivors of the surfing game, still enjoying it to this day!

To build resistance to fatigue, he put in eight extra hours training per week, swimming and working out in the gym.

"Fitness is not something I particularly enjoy, but it's a means to an end," he says. "It is something I put up with because I have to. You get nowhere in this sport unless you can hack the pace."

Despite the ensuing influx of young talent, Lynch managed to remain competitive well into his 30s. His consistency and drive kept him near the top of the ratings through 1995. When he won the Rio Surf Pro in Brazil at age 32, he was the oldest surfer to take out an event.

As with many ex-world champions, Lynch's pro surfing dream later soured. Disillusioned with the blatant image-manufacturing within the sport -- and possibly because of his limited sponsorship - Lynch accused the surfing media of corruption based upon sponsors' dollars.

Since retiring from competition in 1998 - with 12 appearances in the top 10, the most of any male surfer -- Lynch now seems content, living back on the northern beaches, surfing recreationally and co-hosting a new Australian TV surfing show.

He enjoys spending time with his daughter and is clearly happy not having to appease sponsors. For Barton Lynch, that freedom - the luxury of being normal - means everything.

SPORTING LEGENDS: BARTON LYNCH



Scott Burton's Final Thought

Outside of Australia, New Zealand and the USA, the sport of surfing rarely receives much attention from the mainstream sports media.

However, it is a sport that requires an incredible degree of fitness and skill. Barton Lynch possessed all the necessary qualities to become World Champion, which is the pinnacle.

Quite an outspoken character, Lynch never suffered fools gladly. This approach often rubbed up the judging panel in the worst possible way, but he never cared.

He knew that his ability would shine through in the end, and for the majority of his surfing career, it certainly did.



Lynch continues to inspire future surfing champions!