

Surf News



5 Minute interview with
Connor O'Leary

Connor O'Leary

Connor O'Leary is 15 years old and has just won the U/16 division of the Rip Curl Grom Search held late January in Cronulla. From a strong family surfing background, his mother Akemi was a Japanese surfing champion as well as an Australian champion and his father Finbar and uncle Colm also keen surfers, Connor was always going to get plenty of help with his surfing.

Where do you live?

Just over the hill behind Wanda beach

How long have you lived there?

Forever

How long have you been surfing for?

There is a picture of me lying on my dad's board in Hawaii when I was 2.



Where's your favourite surf spot?

KP rates up there but it's a bummer that it doesn't break very often, Voodoo is a very fun wave and is almost always firing when we have a bit of south swell. Not sure how I'll go when it gets sizey out there, Voodoo has a pretty heavy rep, but I hope my time will come where I can master it. I've surfed the Point on a few bigger days but it's a bit of a drag for the goofy footers out there. My mates surf the Island a bit but again that's a bit more difficult on your backhand. The Alley has had the best banks while I've been surfing a lot but my dad tells me about Wanda and John Davey Reef getting good too. The 2230 movie where they surf 5th, I'd like to have a go at that one day.

Who are the local guys you see out everyday tearing it up?

Dylan Hallyar is always out there flaring, Wylie Fowler is always ripping and my mate Rory is constantly pushing me to improve, he's really good, and we have a lot of fun surfing together. There's plenty of great surfers around here, chasing all sorts of waves from heavy slabs to beachies; young and old.

Are you involved in club surfing?

Yes-Elouera Boardriders, we won the last king of the beach local teams contest, I was the cadet surfer, the boys were stoked because we hadn't ever beaten the sharks boardriders at home. I grew up through North Cronulla Junior Boardriders and I go to Christian Surfers when they are on 'cause they are always fun and well organised.

I hear you are training for your Bronze Medallion, how is that for a surfer?

It's fun and is also cross training for surfing, maybe one day I'll get to need the skills. No harm in having some first aid, resus and rescue skills. I've also met new people that don't look at the surf the way I do, that's interesting.

Favourite international surfers?

Rob Machado, Clay Marzo, Taylor Knox and Ry Craike.

I hear you went to Australian Titles at Margaret River, what were the highlights of the trip?

Surfing clean 8-10ft Margarets, getting smashed and nearly drowning, getting to meet and stay with new people in the NSW team, especially Dean Bowen who was team captain, and experiencing what a beautiful place it is.

Do you go on Myspace?

I sure do.

What is your favourite manoeuvre?

Big finners, Carves, still working on the airs.

School is?

Educationally necessary.

Best advice from a coach?

Definitely from Martin Dunn, started me off with a correction to how I got to my feet on takeoff. Changed everything, without that and some other pointers I'd be just awful.

Favourite moment?

Going well at the Australian Titles at Margaret River (5th) in amazing waves or winning the Ripcurl Gromsearch recently at Cronulla. I suppose winning should top a 5th but the awesome West Oz waves we had can't go unnoticed.

Any os surfing trips?

I went to the Maldives with mum and dad a few years ago and had a chance to surf but I was still too little to surf the reef breaks with any confidence but I am eager to go to Bali or Hawaii, or both.

Surfing will take you where?

I haven't given it much thought yet, all I want to do is to keep improving and having fun.



So Connor, you must be getting through a few boards these days, have you got any preferences right now?

Yes. I seem to be getting taller very quickly so I've moved from 5'6's to 5'8's and 5'9's in about 18 months. The length of the boards seems to be more important than any other dimension right now. My boards are shaped by Brett Warner and they go very well for me. Generally we stick to the standard squash tail so nothing unusual there. I'm lucky 'cause I know a lot of kids don't have the chance to get the best equipment, when right now I think I am on some of the best boards going around. I ride some older boards from home when the waves are small, even the mal gets a go sometimes during the summer.

What are your sponsors?

Quiksilver have been really generous over 2008, I started with them in January. I get to choose a bunch of fashion items and also new wetsuits. It's always nice to have a new wetsuit on, especially before winter. Maybe if I work hard Quiksilver will set me up with Kelly Slater one day.