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MANLY SURF – Where every wave tells a story
Premieres on One HD, Wednesday October 20
at 8pm. www.manlysurftv.com

5 MINUTES WITH... **Layne Beachley**

Iain Boyd chats with the former world surfing champion about nude surfing, fending off sharks, a little girl she'll always remember... and never thinking she was that great.

Your friend, surfing legend Kelly Slater, said of surfing, "It's like the mafia: once you're in, you're in. There's no getting out."

Ha, yeah I agree, but it's not like if you try and get out, you get shot! It's more like a really healthy addiction, and once you've caught the surfing bug you'll never lose it. It provides you with such adrenaline, satisfaction and reward, and it's also very challenging.

In 2000, you rode the biggest wave ever ridden by a woman, on Hawaii's north shore... challenging?

Yeah, the 50-foot wave was exhilarating and also incredibly frightening. It made me realise how much I enjoy fear because it made every cell in my body tingle. It brings me to life, gives me an incredible sense of awareness.

You once said you feared winning: winning seven world titles sounds like the way to go...

It was a recipe for success! If you fear something, you are focusing on it and what you focus on, you overcome. It wasn't until I won that I realised that it was winning I was afraid of. Winning came with being placed on a pedestal, and I was afraid of people thinking I was any better than I was. I never really thought I was that great. I believed I had it in me to be a world champion but I had to work really hard at that.

You met some amazing people on tour. Can you tell us about someone who left an impression on you?

In 2008, I competed at the Rip Curl Pro at Bells and I lost to Steph Gilmour

in the semi-finals. I was so angry and wound up in my own self-importance. Afterwards, I was invited to talk to this little girl who was in a wheelchair – she had a really aggressive form of cancer. She loved surfing but had one leg amputated and was watching the tournament. That opportunity reprioritised everything and pulled me out of my own misery. It made me realise how wonderful life can be, and I was forever grateful for her presence in my life.

You described the ocean as "your office" – but it's an office with sharks in it. Do you use a special technique for 'not looking like a seal'? And is it true that if you spot a shark, you should swim towards it and poke it in the eyes?

My wetsuits are blue but I think sharks are colour-blind... so I surf with other people and that tends to lower my chances. I don't encourage people to swim towards a shark but I've always been told to keep eye contact with them. I realise that I'm in their environment and am very aware of their presence and respect their power.

Legend has it that in 2002, you went nude surfing to celebrate your fifth world title. As the host of TV's *Manly Surf*, what kind of fun surf antics can we expect?

There won't be any nude surfing but you'll meet a lot of colourful characters and hear some inspiring and interesting stories. Ultimately, the aim is to get you down to Manly to learn how to surf! We aim to draw attention to the positive aspects of surfing and how it changes people's lives. ●