



Tuesday, May 11, 1999



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin
Jason Momoa was one of three who made the final cut out of 1,100 who auditioned for "Baywatch Hawaii."

On **BAYWATCH** duty

By Tim Ryan
Star-Bulletin



Three Oahu residents -- two models and a Kakaako fireman -- tomorrow are expected to be named as members of the "Baywatch Hawaii" ensemble cast.

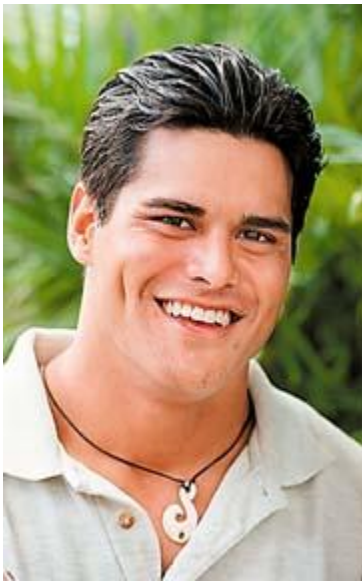
The announcement will be made at a news conference at the Hilton Hawaiian Village.

Honolulu Fireman Kala'i Miller, 26, of Heeia; and models Jason Momoa, 19, and Stacy Kamano, 24, of Honolulu; were chosen from more than 1,100 auditioners in an arduous process that began nearly a month ago.

When the finalists were narrowed to seven, they went through several more auditions, acting workshops and swim tests before Greg Bonann, executive producer and creator of "Baywatch"; star David Hasselhoff; the show's writer and casting director; local casting director Margaret Doversola; April and Al Masini, "Baywatch Hawaii" production coordinators; and a few state officials made the final choices.

Originally, there were to be just one local male and one local female cast in leading roles, but Momoa and Miller translated so well to film and looked "so good in roles obviously natural for them that producers decided to expand the cast," said producer Bonann.

The finalists last week attended a party at the Masini estate on Hawaii Loa Ridge to also meet with "Baywatch" owners, Pearson Television.



By Dennis Oda, Star-Bulletin
Kala'i Miller



Kala'i Miller

Iolani graduate Clifford "Kala'imaikalani" Miller accompanied a female friend to the "Baywatch Hawaii" Hawaii audition at Ward Warehouse but he was asked to meet with the casting staff right away before hundreds of others waiting in line for hours.

"It wasn't something I ever considered; not something I yearned for," said Miller, who is part Chinese, Portuguese, Hawaiian and Caucasian. "I started wanting it but I have a great job now. I love being a fireman."

Miller, 26, who's been a fireman at the Kakaako station for three years, has an undergraduate degree in business/economics from the University of San Diego. He appeared in the 1996 Men of Hawaii and 1998 HFD Firefox calendars, as well as in Island Magazine.

When he's not working, Miller enjoys water sports, especially jet skiing, surfing, paddling, canoe sailing and free diving. Miller sailed with the Polynesian Voyaging Society in Tahiti and Alaska in 1995.

"I would love to do my own stunts because the things they do on the show are the things I do in my everyday life. I have three jet skis at home; I live on the ocean."

Miller also enjoys what he calls "firehouse cooking," though he's pared his diet since "Baywatch" auditions began in April.

"I realize that this is the biggest thing to hit Hawaii since the Miss Universe Pageant and means tremendous publicity for the state," Miller said. "My goal is to portray Hawaii and the culture in a way that everyone here can be proud and say, 'Yes, that is the way we do things; this is the real deal.' "

Miller is ecstatic that producers selected two "local boys."

"There's a lot more to offer with the two of us," Miller said. "The shows can encompass the whole picture of the Hawaiian lifestyle because Jason and I have different backgrounds."

To celebrate, Miller will take his parents out to dinner tonight and expects, with his new salary, to pick up the check. He also plans to buy a new truck to replace the well-used one he now drives.

"There's role play and then there's playing a role you already play," he said. "Helping people and being in the ocean all the time is who I am. The only difference now (is) I'm in a different department.

"What it comes down to is, I don't know how to be anybody else but me."



By Ken Sakamoto, Star-Bulletin
Stacy Kamano

Stacy Kamano

Stacy Lee Kamano, who is single, grew up in Waimanalo and graduated from Kaiser High School in 1992. She started modeling after winning the Miss Tropical Pre-Teen Hawaii at age 11. She's appeared in fashion shows, on posters, commercials, catalogs, was the Miss Steinlager spokesmodel and appeared as an extra in several television shows including "Fantasy Island," "Marker" and an episode of "Beverly Hills 90210" in which she posed as a drowning victim.

Her favorite food is sushi; she likes Richard Gere and Sharon Stone, body boarding, tennis, swimming, snowboarding and water skiing; and she always has her pet Maltese, Brando, with her.

"This is such a great opportunity," Kamano said. "And I get to stay in my beautiful home of Hawaii. 'Baywatch Hawaii' is great show that represents everything I represent."

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Jason Momoa

By Nadine Kam

Features Editor



Jason Momoa's life has been marked by one wish, to get "home."

Hawaii has always been close to his heart, if somewhat removed from Norwalk, Iowa, where he spent his childhood, raised by his single mom.

Summers spent here in Nanakuli with his dad only deepened his sense of belonging in this place. So two months ago, he packed up his belongings, sold his car and came here to enroll at the University of Hawai'i.

With his love of the outdoors, he also considered the possibility of supporting himself by finding work as a lifeguard. Among the first things he did when he got here was to get certified in CPR.

Now it looks as if he'll at least be playing a lifeguard in the TV series "Baywatch." Momoa was one of three "locals" picked for lead roles in the series that starts taping here in mid July.

"My life has turned around 360 degrees. I make plans and I stick to them, I don't go half into anything. But I like to keep doors open. If I'd planned this, nothing would have happened."

What happened was that Momoa met designers Takeo and Eric Eugene Chandler soon after his arrival. The two designers have built a reputation for coaching beauty queens and have recently started an agency to represent talent. They quickly enlisted the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Momoa as a model for their menswear.

They sent him on photo shoots, helped him build a portfolio, then sent him on that fateful audition.

Of the 1,100 local people that turned out for the first "Baywatch" auditions, 30, including Momoa, got callbacks for further swim tests and readings.

"We never thought of it as a competition," Momoa said. "At first we were afraid none of us would get it. At the first reading we were terrible."

"No ... Mitch ... no," he recited, with the energy and drawn out pauses one might associate with the slowest reader in the class.

"The next time, everyone improved," he said. "We wanted this show in Hawaii and we wanted locals representing us. Technically, I didn't grow up here, but it's such an honor to represent my heritage. I don't think it matters that I didn't live here my whole life. It's in my heart."

Momoa's father is Hawaiian. Momoa was raised by his German-Irish mother in Iowa. Both contributed to his sense of ethnic pride.

"My dad gave me aloha spirit. I'd spend every summer, or at least every other summer here. My father's a big water man and we'd paddle, surf, go boogie boarding.

"My mom told me stories, cooked the foods and taught me to speak Hawaiian around the house a little bit. I'm glad that she kept the heritage close, respected it."

In addition, he said Norwalk had a larger community of Hawaiians than one might expect. "We were all close so it was great. Whenever anyone came back here, they'd bring back food."

Momoa would bring back his favorites -- manapua, Portuguese sausage, kim chee, and laulau made by his grandmother. He also admits a weakness for Hawaiian Sun's passion-orange juice.

Being here is "surreal," he says. He wanted to be in the ocean, and now spends a good part of his mornings training with his uncle, Brian Kaulana. In the afternoons, he usually works out with weights to bulk up for his chest-baring scenes.

He says he's not a particularly good surfer and practices in secret spots because "I no like shame my family."

These days, he spends half his time with his father in Nanakuli, but he's found a second family in Takeo and Chandler, whose ambition for Momoa extends to the big screen.

"None of this would be possible without them. They're allowing me to stay focused on my future. They're like my fathers. They take care of me, feed me. It's really hard feeding me coz I eat a lot."

The dependence factor is somewhat embarrassing for the usually independent Momoa. Before coming here, he had been in his sophomore year at Colorado State. He had his own apartment and was working two jobs to support himself.

"The main thing is that this works out so good that I can help my mother and my father out.

"I'm trying to get my mom a car. For a long time, it was just me and my mom. She's worked so hard her whole life to support me, and I can finally repay her some day if I get full blown into this.

"Hopefully, I can get her back over here too."