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A WORLD CHAMPION FLYBOARDER

MEET KRISTIN SMOYER

Among the events held at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show (FLIBS), few deliver the wow factor like the flyboarding performances. Featuring multiple time world champion Kristen Smoyer, the shows have a futuristic sci-fi feel as Smoyer soars up to 60 feet above the water, propelled solely by water pressure from her self-guided personal watercraft. Spectators are left in awe as Smoyer effortlessly executes backflips and other tricks while gliding airborne around the performance area.

Smoyer has been flyboarding professionally since 2014. During that time, she's won numerous titles and secured partnerships with global brands such as Royal Caribbean. Her special blend of raw athleticism and showmanship make her a huge draw wherever she performs. It also earned her the nickname The Destroyer in flyboarding circles.

But Smoyer's journey to becoming a world champion didn't follow a traditional sports path. She obtained a degree in sociology, psychology, and criminal justice and a master's degree in applied sociology from the University of Massachusetts in 2005, then pursued a successful social justice career focused on child welfare. It was a serious medical diagnosis for her then three-year old son that unexpectedly steered Smoyer to the world of professional flyboarding.

Smoyer posted a work wanted ad on Craigslist to supplement her income and cover her son's growing medical costs. A local homeowner hired her to repair his dock. On the jobsite, the owner mentioned he had a flyboard and invited Smoyer to try it out. She gave it a go, but it wasn't love at first try. Smoyer has a fear of heights. Flyboarding didn't seem like a great fit.

It took flyboarding pro Ben Merrell to ignite Smoyer's passion for the sport. Merrell needed someone to drive his Jet Ski during a competition and asked Smoyer to step in. She agreed and helped Merrell win the title at the North American National Championship event. It was that experience that hooked Smoyer on flyboarding.

To pursue her dream of competing professionally, she embarked on a grueling schedule that carved out a few hours each morning to practice. This was in between her full-time job as a social worker and her overnight shift delivering newspapers. With her toddler in tow, she practiced daily. It paid off, and Smoyer took third at nationals and worlds in her first year of competition. She eventually made professional flyboarding her full-time career.

Today you'll find Smoyer competing around the world. When she's not at a competition, she shows off her skills



at shows like FLIBS and other venues. She also brings the same energy to private events.

When asked about things that stand out in her flyboarding career, Smoyer recalls a specific experience at FLIBS. She first noticed a large bull shark when she was high above the water during her first performance. The shark's size dwarfed the ten foot safety kayak nearby.

It was breeding season for bull sharks, so it wasn't surprising to see one in the area. What was unusual was the shark's determination to hang around the site three days in a row. Safety divers and kayakers were unsuccessful in encouraging the shark to stay away after Smoyer's initial sighting.

During a subsequent performance, the bull shark returned and bumped Smoyer's propulsion hose, cutting off power to her gear and knocking her into the water. As she swam toward the Jet Ski, the shark bumped Smoyer before eventually swimming away.

Many would choose to stay out of the water after that close call, but not Smoyer. She got back up and finished the show. The ethos that Smoyer lives by is "don't take falling down as an answer." It's a motto she applies throughout her personal and professional life, including encounters with sharks twice her size. 

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