

**B**rooke Burns has all the features you'd expect to see in a *Baywatch* cast member. She's tall, blond and attractive, and that trademark red swimsuit couldn't fit any more perfectly if it was painted on. While Brooke matches the show's mold in most respects, when it comes to getting in the water and actually diving she differs significantly from many of those other *Baywatch* figures who have patrolled the sand over the years.

According to those familiar with the show, while many episodes in past seasons have featured diving, it wasn't an activity some of the actresses found appealing. In fact, if it wasn't for the script, they may not have put scuba gear on at all. However, Brooke brings a whole new perspective to playing the role of rookie lifeguard Jessie Owens, she's anxious to put on her dive gear and get in the water. "I enjoy the action side of the show. The days we do the water work are when I have the most fun. The boats, jet skis, swimming and diving—I love that stuff."

# Getting wet with **Brooke**

BY SCOTT D. JONES

It's good that she's not afraid to get her feet wet, because *Baywatch* producer Greg Bonann required cast members to go through a scuba certification course to prepare for this season's 22 episodes. The goal? To make all of the water work as authentic as possible.

So Brooke, along with fellow cast member Mitzi Kapture, took private lessons in a 10,000-gallon specially-constructed tank on the *Baywatch* set. The daughter of a national champion swimmer, Brooke has always been comfortable in the water and, as a result, impressed her instructor, Bob Atkinson. "She's not only a beautiful model, she's also a model diver. During her underwater scenes, she doesn't have to act. She's a great diver and it shows," he recalls.

Brooke was excited to be able to formalize her scuba training after taking resort courses in Jamaica, the Seychelles and Malta while on various modeling assignments. "[My first dive] was great, but spooky. Diving is so quiet that it's beautiful, and hearing yourself breathe underwater is quite relaxing."

The young actress, who was once a professional ballet dancer, took to scuba so quickly that now she wants to do as much underwater work as possible. "I'm offended when they ask if I want a stunt woman. I tell them, 'Excuse me, but I can do this.'"

All the same, Brooke may have wanted to ask for a stuntwom-

an when she heard that in her first underwater scene she was going to meet up with a rather large co-star—a giant moray eel. The scene called for her character to be trapped under a large rock. So, after stunt coordinators carefully choreographed her underwater movements and placed large plastic rocks on her, Brooke played her part, which she described as "showing fear."

Although the scene was only a few minutes long, it helped set the stage for Brooke's desire for more underwater work. "It was exciting," the young daredevil confesses. "I like to live life on the edge and I'm a bit of a risk taker...."

Last fall, when it was announced that Brooke was joining the show, many people thought she would be playing a glamour part similar to the fantasy girl role she played on *Ally McBeal* last year. But the young star, who grew up in Dallas, had other ideas.

"My character was meant to be an aspiring actress," she recalls. "But I went in and asked Greg [Bonann] if they could make her

an aspiring stuntwoman instead, and he agreed." As a result, viewers this season saw Brooke racing jet skis, climbing buildings and diving for lobsters in addition to her lifeguarding duties.

Brooke understands that she is a role model and is often in a position to give something back. She just completed a public service announcement for the State of California encouraging people to become environmentally aware. "...My work time and now my playtime involve the ocean and I want people to take care of it."

Being able to dive has also helped her develop a better understanding for the ocean. "A lot of the time we focus on what we can see, and a lot of the underwater world is unseen to us. The beauty of the underwater life needs to be protected."

Brooke has had some real quality encounters with the ocean's inhabitants. She recalls diving in Hawaii on a family vacation and running into a sea turtle. She expects to have more such encounters during the coming year, as *Baywatch* producers have announced the series will relocate to Hawaii. The series, renamed *Baywatch Hawaii*, will premier this fall.

Brooke's future diving plans may involve trips to Belize and Australia, and while she hasn't encountered any man-eaters yet, she has learned to deal with the sharks that prowl Hollywood. "I think they are a bit more dangerous," she concluded. 🐠

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