

## bp surf rescue awards

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### BP Surf Rescue of the Year

On January 11, 2007, Lilah Foote, Rebekah Gee and Briar Macken finished an early morning training session in Mount Maunganui, and came back to Pukehina Beach in the Bay of Plenty for a quiet morning of patrolling.

The Pukehina estuary mouth can be a treacherous piece of water, guarded by a constantly shifting sand bar, and on this day a messy 1.5m swell was causing added concern.

Head lifeguard Lilah Foote was on tower duty at around midday when she noticed a 6m Scorpion craft returning to port and preparing to cross the bar. She monitored the boat intently, and when a large wave caught it from behind and flipped it, she sprang into action.

Lilah and Rebekah Gee immediately closed the patrolled swimming area and launched an IRB in the estuary for a more direct route, while Briar Macken raced along the beach to provide support.

On arrival, Lilah and Rebekah found a man in a lifejacket clinging desperately to the side of the vessel, amid copious amounts

of floating debris, and were informed there were four other people – a mother, teenager and two small children – still unaccounted for.

Rebekah established the driver had no significant injuries and advised him to remove his lifejacket and heavy clothing in the pounding surf. She then dived under the boat, and discovered the four missing people were likely trapped in the upturned cabin of the boat.

Unable to provide support with the IRB in the surf, Lilah piloted it to nearby Newdicks Beach, grabbed her fins and swam back out to the scene.

Diving under, Lilah tried several times to free the trapped passengers without success, and quickly grasping the enormity of the situation, instructed Briar to call other emergency services.

Given large fish bins were obstructing the cabin doorway, Lilah established the only way to rescue the trapped occupants would be to right the boat, which was now stuck firmly in place by the anchor and cable, which had come loose.

Two members of the public swam out with life jackets and a knife to assist the rescue,

while Rebekah and Lilah sought signs of life from the trapped occupants. As the two helpers – one a former lifeguard – arrived, a whistle sounded under the boat, and with renewed hope, Rebekah cut the anchor line and everyone lifted one side of the boat.

Lilah and the driver dragged the four occupants free and they were quickly ushered to shore on the Newdicks Beach side. All five on board the boat appeared to have only minor injuries, but the lifeguards established the two children had a severe blood-clotting disorder, so Lilah and Rebekah skilfully re-launched the IRB through rocks and surf with the mother and children on board, in order to meet the ambulance on the Pukehina side.

They returned to pick up those remaining on the other side, and helped secure the boat so that it could be salvaged later.

The whole rescue took more than 90mins of hectic, adrenalin-fueled activity – but in true professionalism, once they'd been debriefed, the three lifeguards calmed their nerves, re-established a flagged area and continued their patrol for the rest of the day.



## NZLGB Lifeguard of the Year

The New Zealand Surf Lifeguard of the Year is awarded to David Pontin for his dedication and passion for lifeguarding during the 2006/2007 season.

David is the chief instructor at the South Brighton club in Christchurch, is a district examiner and patrol inspector and is also a member of the district advisory committee.

Although he totaled more than 60 exceptional hours of patrolling during the last season, this didn't include the extra hours he took just 'popping down' to the club.

As chief instructor, David set about his duties with professionalism and energy. His attention to detail and awareness of the beach environment was faultless, while his dedication to the safety of the public was unrelenting.

David has rejuvenated the IRB patrols at South Brighton, firstly by obtaining funding for a new hull and motors, then training crews, and ensuring the maintenance of the craft met his own high standards.

He has lifted the overall standard of South Brighton patrols, operating as patrol coordinator, and has established himself as the 'go to' person whenever there is a question or problem with a patrol.

As district examiner, he ensured those attending exams were properly prepared and put them at ease while attempting the exams to get the best result for themselves, their club and districts.

David also gave up his own time to be involved with an open water swim series run by an outside organisation, ensuring the safety of competitors. He's spent countless hours on the beach giving advice to swimmers, has

passed his examiners' qualification and kept up to date with the latest in first aid procedures.

South Brighton president Bruce Lomax described David as a mentor to all lifeguards at the club.

"His dedication has encouraged other people to become more involved in lifeguarding," Bruce explains. "He continues to encourage and train people to achieve high levels in patrol standards and continues to deliver a service to the public that young impressionable lifeguards aspire to."

Surf Life Saving New Zealand Chief Executive, Geoff Barry, is adamant lifeguards like David Pontin are worth their weight in gold.

"David embodies the very best of the traits found in New Zealand lifeguards; he's enthusiastic, adaptable and takes real pride in delivering the very best service he can. Through all his activities, he's remained focussed on Surf Life Saving's core purpose - preventing the loss of life."

**BP Surf Rescue of the year winners.**  
**From left to right: Rebekah Gee, Lilah Foote and Briar Macken**

## bp surf rescue awards cont.

### Most significant Print Media Contribution

Most significant Print Media Contribution to Surf Life Saving was awarded to Hawkes Bay Today. Hawkes Bay Today showed significant and consistent coverage across both lifesaving and surf sports over the previous year. Hawkes Bay Today's support of both local Surf Life Saving Club's and High Performance athletes was well beyond the call of duty.

### Best Surf Life Saving Photo

Best Surf Life Saving Photo was awarded to Dean Purcell from The New Zealand Herald. Dean's shot captured competitors having taken leave of their sport to assist in putting out a potentially threatening scrub fire. The judges thought Dean's

shot "showed the competitive side of surf, the service and vigilance, and the typical nature of lifeguards who go beyond the call of duty not just to save lives in the surf but any environment they may find themselves in".

### Best Surf Life Saving Story in Print

Best Surf Life Saving Story in Print was awarded to Murray Hills of The Taranaki Daily News. Murray again proved himself one of New Zealand's most experienced surf journalists, submitting a classy feature on triple world ironman champion Cory Hutchings. He was helped by inspiring subject matter, but Murray packaged the story perfectly, showing an understanding of the sport and the role it plays in grooming our top lifeguards.

#### **Below:**

**Best Surf Life Saving Photo, awarded to Dean Purcell, NZ Herald**



## **national recognition**

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# National Recognition

### 2007 Hall of Fame Inductees

- Jo Clark
- John Jarvis
- Chris Billing
- Rex Dalton
- Jenny Abrahamson (nee Clark)

### Life Memberships

- Kent Jarman
- Peter Thorpe
- Raymond Trilford
- Ian Maclainne
- Alan Larsen

### Distinguished Service Awards

- Lynette McFedries
- Desmond Lyons
- Paul Ryan
- Gary Richards
- Patricia Olsen
- Alfred Scandrett

### Service Awards

- Peter Housaix
- Brent Warner
- Peter Young
- Graeme Porter
- Sydney Jago
- Cory Hutchings
- Trevor Williams
- Donald Dring
- Paul Veric

### Fifty Year Service Badge

- Alan Bayless
- Barry Green
- Dave Jackman
- David Swann
- Geoff Le Cren
- Ken Morse
- Murray Bray
- Trevor Corkin

### 2007 Volunteer of the Year

- Scott Weatherall

### 2007 Surf Official of the Year

- David Price

### 2007 Instructor/Examiner of the Year

- Claire French

### 2007 Coach of the Year

- Jason Pocock

### 2007 High Performance of the Year

- Chelsea Maples
- Glenn Anderson

### London Trophy

- Opotiki SLSC

The London trophy is awarded to the club which gains the most Surf Lifeguard and instructor Awards per number of members

### Gudsell Trophy

- Piha SLSC

The Gudsell Trophy is awarded to the club who gains the most Surf Lifeguard Awards in a year



Graeme recently hung up his togs after more than 50 years patrolling New Zealand's coastline. He is the oldest, but wisest Matheson still deep in the Surf Life Saving tide.

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# Graeme Matheson

Grandfather, Father

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