

Surfer Conquers Biggest Waves in the World Despite Only Having One Leg

‘Pegleg’ Bennett was born with a birth defect that led to the amputation of his foot when he was a baby, but the 55-year-old never let it impede the pursuit of his passion: surfing.

The father of three has traveled the world surfing, making it to some of the most famous big wave surfing spots in places like Indonesia, Hawaii, Australia, and Portugal. He’s also represented his country in a para-surfing championship, and pioneered some best practices in making prosthetic legs for surfers.

Bennett was born with the ankle of his left leg missing and his foot looking twisted and mangled.

At the hospital, his parents were given the choice of amputation—which the doctors said would actually ensure he had better quality of living.

“The ocean is my happy place,” said Bennett, who legally changed his name to Pegleg—a childhood nickname—in 2016. “When I’m riding a wave nothing else matters, nothing else is there—it is just me and that wave and feeling that glide and that ride.”

He describes “harassing” the UK’s National Health Service for years, “and eventually they gave me what they call a ‘beach activities leg’ and then my surfing progressed at a phenomenal rate after that.”

After learning to surf on it, Bennett drilled holes in that first prosthetic leg to improve its functionality, and this led to a phenomenal surfing career.

His new leg, made from carbon fiber and titanium, has taken his surfing to a “new level”, he said.

“I have got a surf specific leg—it’s got a titanium ankle joint in it so I can stand on the board a lot better than I used to.”

For his whole adult life, Bennett has been at the crest of the wave of para-surfing, which has undergone a revolutionary transformation.

“I don’t believe in barriers. I believe in we can do it.”