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Lifeguards Would Go: From Rescues to Winning “The Eddie”

HONOLULU – Luke Shepardson, 27-year-old North Shore native, started his day at the Eddie Aikau Big Wave Invitational on-duty with his fellow Water Safety Officer lifeguards and Hawaii Government Employees Association (HGEA) members.

Shepardson would later win the competition before humbly excusing himself to finish his shift after an interview with [KHON2 News](#), "Brah, I gotta get back to the (lifeguard) tower ... I gotta get back to the tower and make sure everyone's OK until the end of the day."

A rare surf competition that is only held under specific conditions, "The Eddie" honors fabled big wave-surfer and lifeguard, Eddie Aikau, who went missing at sea after attempting to swim to shore and get help for the crew of the capsized Hokule'a.

The "Eddie Would Go" slogan and surf competition keep the memory of Aikau alive who, true to his profession as a lifeguard, would brave stormy seas and big waves to save lives.

The spirit of the lifeguard seemed to permeate competition day, with Water Safety Officer lifeguards busy performing rescues and protecting the crowds of thousands who squeezed onto the cliffs overlooking Waimea Bay or on the shore, resulting in [a few close calls](#) when waves washed in and swept spectators into the water.

Overall, the [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#) reported 103 rescues and 12,090 preventative actions on the North Shore and West side, with the majority occurring at Waimea Bay. This included a startling incident where lifeguards responded to a wave [sweeping a baby under a North Shore home](#).

"I want to extend congratulations to Luke Shepardson on his historic win," said HGEA Executive Director Randy Perreira. "This illustrates the high caliber of talent that we have within the ranks of public workers. Our Water Safety Officers dedicate their lives to protect the public at great risk to themselves. HGEA is proud to represent these hardworking lifeguards who have proved time and again that they 'would go.'"

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