

## Big Wheel

OUR CELEBRITY:

### Monique “Pua” Sawicki, Mountain Biker

Pua knows pain. Monique “Pua” Sawicki is the country’s top-ranked mountain biking endurance racer and among the best in the world. In 2005, 2007, and 2008, she won the 24-Hour Solo U.S. National Championships, which for this brutal sport entails pedaling through a long outdoor circuit as many times as possible in 24 hours. The petite Mililani native started out as a cross-country runner on scholarship at Chaminade University in Honolulu before switching to cycling. She resides in Southern California and races worldwide, but she returns to the Islands for lengthy visits at least once a year to see her family and crash single-track trails with friends.

HER FAVORITE LOCAL GETAWAY:

### Kualoa Ranch Trail, O’ahu

“Kualoa is a special place that can hardly be described with words,” Sawicki says. “When riding, hiking, or just being on the grounds of the ranch, you get this sense of being in your own little oasis. There is nothing like pedaling on the single track that sits right at the base of the jutting cliff walls on the Ka’a’awa Valley side of the ranch, working through the technical rocky sections, and then having to stop for a moment to look around you and take it all in. There are very few places where you can have the dense rain forest, steep cliffs, broad open valleys, and view of the beautiful blue ocean that surrounds Chinaman’s Hat as you pedal back out of the valley.

“Mountain bike racing in Hawai’i has been kept alive because of Kualoa. We are surrounded by private lands, and many restrictions make finding a race venue or training grounds a little tricky, but the ranch has always shown its support by granting us access.”

—Alex Salkever

Photograph by Ric Noyle

