Local hero, Sofía Mulanovich, is looking stronger than ever. Today she posted the highest combined score of the Women’s winners bracket to make it to the main event semifinals. Photo: ISA/Marotta

Home-team Advantage Pushes Host Nation Peru into First at the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games
South Africa Surges, Australia Struggles and Team USA Falters; Tahitian Father-Son Team Advance in Longboarding Heats While Women Prove Their Talent

Billabong ISA World Surfing Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen
Punta Hermosa, Peru
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Under a fading swell, Day six of the Billabong ISA World Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen saw a tightening of the pack as the event inches itself closer to a podium finish, with Peru and South Africa vying for the top spot. With every division of the competition hitting the water today, there was no shortage of action amid the head-high rights at Caballeros. From longboarding, and men and women’s shortboarding, the competition at the event reached a slow boil with each team striving to make their team and country proud.

Proof that surfing is growing in spades is the blossoming Polynesian powerhouse of Tahiti. The Tahitians have had an outstanding showing at the games this year. Year in and year out, the ISA Games continue to produce great moments in the sport. And yesterday, surfing under the Tahitian flag, father and son team Jean and Heifara Tahutini, both scalped graceful wins in their respective heats in the longboarding division. If that wasn’t enough to add a flutter to the hearts of
Tahitians watching the event at home, Hira Teriinatoofa advanced from his open shortboard heat in an agonizingly close battle.

The emotion in the repercharge rounds lit up the beach, with each team’s fans shouting and applauding wave after wave for their compatriots. Every round the competitors manage to advance brings a national team closer to the main objective: taking home a medal.

In the Open Men’s division, South Africa suffered the loss of Warwick Wright in the sixth round and Peru saw Javier Swayne eliminated in the seventh. The same happened to other top team members Mike Losness (USA) who fell down opposite to juvenile Cristobal de Col (PER) and Mick Campbell (AUS).

The South African Greg Emslie, who days earlier had said that he was “not losing two times in this contest,” demonstrated vividly what was obvious: he won six consecutive victories in the championship, which confirms his status as giant killer.

The whole South African team has proven to be physically and mentally sharp in the Games this year, fielding a pack of heavy-hitters. At the cusp of their team stands Emslie and Chad du Toit with both advancing into the next round of the Repecharge. “As the heats go on, the competition is definitely getting harder and you have to surf smarter,” said Emslie post-heat. If the Zaffas continue with their current pace, they could prove extremely lethal in the coming rounds.

In a tremendous blow to the Americans, both of their premier members, Mike Losness and Ben Bourgeois, fell from the Games today in narrow losses. All hope is not lost for the Americans however as Women’s Division Kulia Doherty tested her mettle with the Yank’s back against the wall.

When Team USA head coach Ian Cairns put two 14-year-olds on America’s squad he noted that it would be “good to get them some experience.” Maybe Cairns knew something nobody else did. Case in point: young Kulia Doherty. Today, with only a couple minutes left on the clock, she was leading Heat 4 of Round 3…against former world champion Chelsea Hedges who pulled a 9.0 out of her hat at the last second. She’d been surfing a smart heat, and was holding two moderate scores in the bag. By heat’s end Hedges would overcome the deficit to take first, but nevertheless, Doherty would advance on helping to keep America’s team’s hopes alive.

Longboarders Tony Silvagni and Steve Newton surfed their longer sticks with a combination of radical rail transitions and elegant footwork to remain in the Games.
A star on the repecharge, Greg Emslie (RSA), today won his six consecutive heat and made it to round 8. Photo: ISA/Marotta

But it wasn’t all good news. Down at Señoritas Trevor Thornton and Benny Bourgeois were both eliminated from the men’s draw. Meanwhile, in the repecharge Nikki Viesins won her heat but was beat at the buzzer in the next repecharge, placing even more weight on the young shoulders of Doherty. “I just tried to surf smart today,” Doherty told an interviewer afterwards. “Coach Cairns gave me some things to think about before I paddled out, and it really made a difference out there today.”

There were other tough battles as well: “It looks like the best surfing we’ve seen per square foot,” Adam Replogle claimed, referring to Silvana Lima’s opening wave in her Round 4 repecharge heat. Lima was then promptly eliminated from the event. “I think we just may have seen a pretty big upset right there,” followed up Replogle. Arguably the best female surfer at the Games somehow just went down to Enilda Alonso from Panama and Sarah Beardmore from the UK. Hard to bear, given the weight that she was carrying on her shoulders for Team Brazil, but that’s surfing-- those things can and do happen. In her defense, it was an extremely slow heat in tricky conditions. Prior to her heat, Silvana was seen in the stands enthusiastically waving the Brazilian flag.

Not every surfer at the ISA Games is coming from a pro surfing pedigree. Take English longboarder Ben Skinner, for example. Eliminated today in his Round 4 battle with Aussie all-star Harley Ingleby, Skinner comes from a family of beer makers—albeit stoked beer makers. “Skindog,” as he’s known by friends and family back in Cornwall, is the son of Steve and Sarah Skinner, purveyors of
Skinners Brewery. An award-winning brewery (which says a lot given England’s fondness for a good glass of suds), father Steve has been surfing since he was 15 and served a stint as the president of the Jersey Surfboard Club. Ben was thrown in the pond at three, and has been at it ever since. He owns 16 British titles, a silver medal at the 2006 ISA Games, and is currently the only British surfer ranked on the ASP World Longboard Tour. The pluck Brits have put up a spirited charge in the 2010 World Surfing Games and look to be a top 10 finisher.

As day six of eight wrapped up for the women’s division here in Punta Hermosa Peru, there were several impressive shows and some disappointing ones as well. Heat 1 of Qualifying Round 3 included Australia’s Rebecca Woods, France’s Pauline Ado, Chantelle Rautenbach of South Africa, and Carina Duarte of Portugal all put forth great efforts in the 6 foot swells that they faced. However, this qualifying round is a double elimination round and competition is fierce. Rautenbach and Ado came ready to make it to the next round, smoking their opponents Rebecca Woods and Carina Duarte by almost double.

Not surprisingly in Heat 3 native Peruvian Sofia Mulanovich placed first with the highest score of the entire day, a 16.0, and placing second in that same heat, joining her tomorrow was Karelle Poppke of Tahiti. Missing the 1st place in her heat by only a fraction of a point was Paige Hareb of New Zealand; it was Anali Gomez, the other Peruvian native who took 1st place in the heat with a score of 10.66.

The last heat of the Qualifying Round 3 proved to be just as competitive as the first: Australia’s Chelsea Hedges came out on top with an impressive score of 14.00, and following close behind representing the USA was Kulia Doherty who finished with an 11.17.

With only two more rounds of qualifying to come before the Women’s final, and only the best of the best continuing on, the battle for the best waves will be intense.

The contest will be webcast LIVE everyday at www.BillabongISAgworldsurfinggames.com There will be new video, stories and images uploaded on this site daily, with separate, nation specific folders for every team competing in the event. Simply open the site and look for the folder with the nation you wish to cover.

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About the International Surfing Association (ISA)
The International Surfing Association (ISA) is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as the World Governing Authority for Surfing. It was originally founded as the International Surfing Federation in 1964 and has been running world championships since 1964 and the Junior World Championships since 1980.
ISA membership includes the surfing National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of over 60 countries on six continents. Its headquarters are located in San Diego, California. It is presided by Fernando Aguerre, first elected in 1994 in Rio, and re-elected six times since. The ISA's four Vice Presidents are Alan Atkins (Australia), Robin de Kock (South Africa), Mike Gerard (USA) and Karín Sierralta (Peru).