Peruvian Power and Local Knowledge Maximizes Momentum for Host Nation at the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games Presented by Amarok of Volkswagen

Finals Tomorrow Will See Stylish Tahiti and Seemingly Unstoppable Peru Battle Powerhouses Australia, South Africa, Brazil, and France

Billabong ISA World Surfing Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen
Punta Hermosa, Peru
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As the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen in Peru moved closer to the final day of competition at the lefts at Senoritas, the rest of the competing nations put their hopes in their remaining surfers on Day Six of the event. Testament to the growing appeal of surfing worldwide, the teams moving in closer to the podium reflect an eclectic mix of traditional surfing nations and a handful of unexpected dark horses vying for a medal.

If enthusiasm, fan support and national pride could determine the outcome of a competition, Peru would already be champions here. Far and away, the most heartening showing at this year’s Games has come from the local Peruvian squad. Headed by Matias Mulanovich and Gabriel Villaran, both of whom have displayed blistering performances throughout the Games, the hometown heroes...
are poised for great things as we move in to the final rounds of competition tomorrow. After watching both surfers annihilate their competition over the last week, it’s clear that the future of surfing in South America remains strong.

In fact the Peruvians advanced in every single heat today as their momentum continued to push all but one of their team members into the final rounds tomorrow. Sofia Mulanovich showed her World Champ chops, and her younger teammate Anali Gomez came through as well, while the chants of “Peru, Peru, Peru!” drowned out even the loudspeakers.

It has been an incredible week of large, powerful, consistent swell where nations from far flung parts of the world showed how much pride and passion is brought out by the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games here. Venezuela, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Israel, Puerto Rico, Great Britain, Chile, Spain, Argentina and Mexico showed grit and power, along with many flashes of brilliance. “Unforgettable” was how the Israeli team described competing in these Games, and that seemed to reflect the general feeling all round from the 31 surfing nations lined on the beach.

250 surfers later, the heat draw for the final day reads likes this: Five Peruvians, five Australians, three French, two South Africans, two Brazilians, and one Tahitian. Yes, the Peruvians have seized full control of the home court advantage and are bearing down for a gold-medal showdown tomorrow, but right there in the hunt are the gritty Aussies.

They’ve got a former world champ in Chelsea Hedges, and she’s been surfing tack sharp. For the men, Mick Campbell and Drew Courtney’s combined years of Pro level experience has been the anchor of a hyper-talented team. And don’t forget perhaps the most stylish surfer in the contest, Harley Ingleby, who, along with cohort Josh Constable seem to have the longboard division on lockdown. They’ve been here before, they know what it means to win gold, and they’ll be more than ready, come game time Wednesday morning.

America’s hopes for a repeat gold were dashed today when Micah Byrne came up with a fourth in the semis, and Toni Silvagni and young Kulia Doherty both failed to advance out of the repercharge semi-finals of their respective divisions.

Unfortunately, an American contingency that started off the Games in fine form hasn’t been able to hold onto their momentum, suffering a string of uncharacteristic losses in the past few days. The bright spot for this games has to be the evolution and coming out of Kulia Doherty and Nikki Viesins. Those two girls are going to be around for a long time to come, and thanks to the openness of coach Ian Cairns to give them a shot, America’s long term surfing future is in better shape.
Capitalizing on the missteps of the Yanks, the Australians managed to keep a medal hope alive by fielding Mick Campbell and Drew Courtney (it should be noted that Drew sliced his foot and will be surfing slightly injured in the coming rounds) into the coming heats. Both Campbell and Courtney have surfed on the elite level in the past and should be considered the top surfers to beat tomorrow.

Rounding out the last leg of heats today, the Brazilians and Tahitians are represented by snap-crackle Alan Jhones and ultra-flow speed artist Hira Terinatooaf respectively. Both surfed brilliantly to find themselves in the closing rounds of the event where they will square off with the larger squads in hopes of bringing a medal back home to their country.

On the longboards, last year’s champion, Antoine Delpero from France, and the always smooth Australian Harley Ingelby, have remained in-form and will be surfing in the final day of competition tomorrow.

The women’s heats had few surprises: Professional World Champs Sofia Mulanovich and Chelsea Hedges along with top Pro Paige Hareb all moved forward and Pauline Aldo earned an expected slot.

And then there’s South Africa’s Chantelle Rautenbach. Out of all the divisions at this year’s games the women’s was the most stacked. Filled with former world champions and soon to be stars, for Chantelle to come out and surf through so
many heats with so much poise, demonstrates why South Africa is once again reemerging as a global powerhouse. There was no question that a seasoned vet like Greg Emslie was going to get through a few heats, but for Chantelle to make it over so many different hurdles speaks highly of her focus, her talent, and her future.

We’re looking for an increase in swell as the final day of the 2010 Billabong ISA World Surfing Games finishes up in Peru tomorrow, so tune in for an action-packed final day. Competition starts on Wednesday October 27 at 8:30am Peruvian time. Awards Ceremony starts at 1:30pm local time.

The contest will be webcast LIVE 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 over 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).