The best Peruvian Surfing Team in the history of the sport celebrates the Team World Championship Title. Photo: ISA/Latorre

Peruvian Gold!

Host Nation Peru Wins the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games Holding Off Australia, As South Africa and Brazil Take it to the Wire

Billabong ISA World Surfing Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen
Punta Hermosa, Peru
October 27, 2010

Forty five hundred years after first riding waves in reed boats and 45 years after the World Contest was held in Peru, surfers from this proud nation took back a small but precious piece of their gold – as Team Gold Medalists in the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games Presented by Amarok of Volkswagen.

It was a fairytale ending to an event steeped in a mix of camaraderie and cutthroat competition as Team Peru gave every ounce of effort to take the overall gold medal today from Team Australia in solid 5-foot Señoritas lefts at Punta Hermosa, near Lima, Peru. It was the first time that the Peruvians have won an overall ISA Title since Felipe Pomar’s individual win in the 1965 World Championships more than four decades ago when the Titles were only individual, not national teams.
After a week’s worth of big, powerful swell, high-octane snaps and stylish nose rides, the 2010 Billabong ISA World Surfing Games presented by Amarok of Volkswagen in Peru came to a fireworks finish today with a nail-biting set of finals. With more than 200 surfers competing at this year’s games, the sleepy surfside village was transformed into surfing’s version of an Olympic city with as many languages being spoken, as there were waves on tap for the event.

Throughout the week, flags were raised and anticipations swelled as the dream of taking home a Team Gold medal took root in the minds of every surfer in the event. Remarkably, the overall gold medal didn’t have to travel very far as the Peruvians took the win in a heartfelt moment. The Australians would come in second earning the Team Silver Medal with the South Africans third and Bronze, and Brazil taking the Copper for fourth.

From the opening heats of the Games at Punta Hermosa that began eight days ago, the Peruvians appeared razor sharp and sublimely focused as they competed against the 30 other teams vying for a spot on the podium. With the final day of competition looming overhead, Team Peru stood firm and was able to place five team members into the three finals and looked to be the team to beat.

On the individual level, a veritable pantheon of current surfing giants and future stars proved to be razor sharp. Claiming the prestigious men’s shortboard Gold, Tahiti’s ultra-stylish Hira Terinatoofa squeaked out a narrow win over Peruvian hometown hero Gabriel Villaran.

"I am very happy winning the Gold. All I wanted was to make the final and to have fun," said Terinatoofa, who repeated the Gold that he had won 6 years ago at the ISA World Surfing Games in Ecuador. “Thanks goes to God for the choice of the waves I took.”

Throughout the Games, both Terinatoofa and Villaran looked impeccable, but it was Terinatoofa’s lightning fast turns and competitive strategy that proved golden. As they played the Tahitian anthem, Terinatoofa shrouded himself in his flag, held his hand to his heart, and emotionally soaked in the glory of winning a gold medal.

“I cannot explain what I feel, the emotions are overwhelming. I just want to go home and celebrate with my family.”

In the Women’s Division, Australian surfing superstar and 2002 ISA Gold Medalist Chelsea Hedges dropped the highest-heat score of the final with a blistering performance on the rippable lefts to the tune of a 17-point combined heat total. In second place stood New Zealand’s Paige Hareb and in third was Peruvian Sofia Mulanovich with France’s Pauline Ado rounding out the final.

A reflection of more than just progressive surfing, the ISA World Surfing Games also included a longboarding division, which was swept with the effortless poise
and grace of Brazil’s Rodrigo Sphyer, who took down Australians Josh Constable and Harley Ingleby, and Peruvian Benoit Clemente in the final.

The team results were kept extremely secret until the awards ceremony at the other end of the beautiful sweep of the bay. With such a tight race where only a few points separated the last heats, a tense crowd of fifteen hundred mostly Peruvian fans waited to hear the results from the podium. Once the standings were announced the crowd exploded.

“Peru! Peru! Peru!” was the deafening cry as the Peruvian National Team danced and sang, even crying as their national Anthem played.

“I have no words, except that God has blessed Peru,” said Karin Sierralta, the Peruvian event organizer. “I struggled to bring an ISA event here to Peru, and now the team I love are the champions! After so much effort and so much work it feels incredible. To hear my country shouting “CHAMPION!” is the biggest thing in my life. My dream has been made a reality. What I feel inside me, this happiness goes beyond explanation.”

The Closing Ceremony concluded with ISA President, Fernando Aguerre, saying, “This is the moment to say farewell, but I hope to see you again soon. Señoritas and Caballeros have given us incredible waves, and the best surfers of the world came to enjoy them.

Aussie Chelsea Hedges scored 17 points out of possible 20 to win her second gold medal in the World Surfing Games. Photo: ISA/Marotta
It is important that we all know that surfing may have originated in Huanchaco, perhaps in Hawaii, in Polynesia, - we do not know where it originated, but the most important thing of all is that these people left us this gift of the sea, which we share every day,” concluded Aguerre.

The Fernando Aguerre ISA World Team Trophy was given to the Peruvian Team by Fernando himself, and they also received the prestigious IOC President’s Trophy, which was presented by Eduardo Arena, ISA Founder and first President.

Aguerre added “Today we present to the nations of the world a vision, a unified hope of surfing for a better world. This is what we want to bring to the world and I hope that it can be spread and promoted. Surfing is a great sport in Peru. Finally, I want to congratulate all the countries that attended. ”

In the end there are so many surfers and so few medals. Thirty-one countries, 220 surfers, 250 heats surfed and thousands of waves ridden. It’s been an amazing week here in Peru at the 2010 ISA World Surfing Games, highlighted, of course, by the hometown team’s domination and podium-topping performances. But perhaps more importantly, we’ve seen countries that are home to only a handful of surfers emerge from obscurity and rise to the occasion. We’ve seen longtime powerhouses continue to vie for global supremacy. We’ve seen youngsters stand tall and proud for their country, while grizzled veterans have helped show them the way.

When the parties have slowed, and the celebration is over, we’ll look back at the 2010 Billabong ISA World Surfing Games for the success it was, not just because Peru won the Team Gold, but because of all the various victories that don't make headlines. Tahiti has a World Champion they can rally behind, South Africa is once again on the rise, and yes, the Peruvians, have demonstrated they are worthy opponents on this most global of stages. So congratulations to everyone, you’ve earned it, and until next year!

FINAL Team Results:  GOLD - Peru – 14370 points  SILVER - Australia – 13160 points  BRONZE – South Africa - 11820 points  COPPER - Brazil– 11340 points

INDIVIDUAL FINAL RESULTS  Open Men Gold: Hira Terinatoofa (TAH)  Silver: Gabriel Villarán (PER)  Bronze: Jhones (BRA)  Copper: Mick Campbell (AUS)

Open Women Gold: Chelsea Hedges (AUS)  Silver: Paige Hareb (NZ)  Bronze: Sofia Mulanovich (PER)  Copper: Pauline Ado (FRA)

Longboard Gold: Rodrigo Sphyer (BRA)  Silver: Josh Constable (AUS)  Bronze: Harley Ingleby (AUS)  Copper: Benoit Clemente (PER)

Final National Ranking
1 - Perú
2 - Australia
3 – South Africa
4 - Brasil
5 - France
6 - Tahití
7 - USA
8 – New Zealand
9 - Costa Rica
10 - Spain
11 - Venezuela
12 - Puerto Rico
13 - Chile
14 - Argentina
15 - México
16 – Great Britain
17 - Panamá
18 - Japan
19 - Ecuador
20 - Germany
21 - Uruguay
22 - Switzerland
23 - Guatemala
24 - Portugal
25 - Canada
26 - Sweden
27 - Dominican Republic
28 - Israel
29 - Jamaica
30 - Ireland
31 - Barbados

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Contact us, we´re here to serve you
Pablo Zanocchi
Media Manager
International Surfing Association
+51 986470025
www.isasurf.org
pablo@isasurf.org
Skype: p.a.zanocchi

Jim Kempton
jkempton@billabong-usa.com
Director de Medios
Billabong-USA
(949) 753-7222 X3363

Local Media
Andrea Carrera
Prensa FENTA
www.surfingperu.com.pe
prensa@surfingperu.com.pe
+51 994163573

Pablo Panizo
Prensa FENTA
www.surfingperu.com.pe
prensa@surfingperu.com.pe
+51 981470293

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).