Duel Waves Sites and Dueling Nations Debut At The Billabong ISA World Surfing Games

*Punta Hermosa, Peru provides a Unique Set-up: a Right and Left Hand Wave on Opposite Sides of the Bay as 31 Nations Vie for a World Title*

Two different sets of scaffolding, one on either side of the Punta Hermosa rocky bay allowed two separate heats to compete simultaneously as 4-7 foot waves greeted the first heats of the Billabong ISA World Surfing Games Presented by Amarok of Volkswagen this morning.

A chilly sideshore south-southwest wind kept the skies grey while the ocean delivered a consistent southwest swell, as more than 30 countries and 200 surfers have gathered in pursuit of global surfing domination as their teams went dueling across the bay. Many of them have served notice that they intend to make it a multi-nation challenge.

Host country Peru won 5 out of 6 of their heats with one second place showing - much to the delight of the local crowd. Costa Rica (last year’s host) won all six heats for a clean sweep. New Zealand, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela all performed well. But it was the crack Australian team that looked the most formidable in the opening rounds. With five current or former pros they came to play - hard.
“The Australians were definitely the dominant performers out here early on,” noted Mike Parsons, a former World Tour surfer, big wave legend and commentator for the event. “At Senorita’s there was nobody close.” That of course was on the lefts. At Caballeros, across the bay on the rights, Team USA swept all six of their heats as well. Quiet but deadly, by end of day they once again surprised everyone.

Last year Team USA took the team gold medal -- only the second gold for America since 1996, when the World Surfing Games were first held (replacing the ISA World Championships run by the ISA since 1964. This time around Team USA, headed by Coach Ian Cairns, is considerably younger and a bit less experienced. Nonetheless, they’d love nothing more than to repeat ’09’s podium-topping performance.

However, in a field of 31 nations there was plenty of talent and in the opening rounds a slew of teams won heats. France, South Africa and Brazil (perennial powerhouses in the surfing world) moved several members into the next round.

But many other smaller nations also charged the intermittently strong wave sets to push their teams up the ladder. Great Britain’s Micah Lesler and Gilbert Brown of Costa Rica both took firsts. Mexico’s Jose Trujillo won his heat, as did Santiago Muñiz who is surfing for Argentina but actually lives in Brazil.

Frequent flyer, Martín Passeri (ARG), made it to the second round, along with all his team mates that went to the water today. Photo: ISA/Marotta

“It’s crazy because I was born in Mar del Plata (Argentina) but moved to Brazil
when I was three months old, where I've lived for the rest of my life," Santiago explained when asked about both being Argentinean and Brazilian. “It's strange because my brother competes for Brazil and I compete for Argentina. I compete against my friends and now we're rivals from different countries. Nevertheless they've supported me so much and I'm happy to represent my country the best I can.”

The fact of the matter is, after the big five (Australia, Brazil, France South Africa and the USA), the race is wide open. Example? Thirteen-time national Panamanian Champion Gary Saavedra shocked Australian Mark Richardson sending him to the repercharge round.

With over 200 competitors representing over 30 countries any semblance of scouting’s gone out the window. Every heat is a wildcard draw, which means a dark horse can come from just about anywhere and go deep in this event. At the very least it makes calling the webcast tricky. "He looks like a pretty good surfer," or "I think I saw him surfing out here yesterday," were common utterances from commentator Mike Parsons, whose breadth of surfing knowledge is as expansive as anyone in the business, yet found himself lacking material on some of the more obscure surfers. But that's the fun of it, right? Sweden, the Dominican Republic, Canada, Israel - everybody was going for it in the shifting four to seven-foot peaks, and you can certainly expect more of the same as this global village event gets more serious. It'll be interesting to see who emerges from the herd.

And if you want to go really deep, tune into the live webcast tomorrow and everyday to keep up in real time. Tune in to http://www.billabongisaworldsurfinggames.com for more to come from Peru as the competition develops.

Videos, photos and other stories, are also available. For cool video interviews, go to International Surfing Association on Facebook.

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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).