

WRAPPING UP 2009'S HYDRO-TURF NATIONAL TOUR

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010 ISSUE 1 | [watercraft.com](http://watercraft.com)

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# 2009 IJSBA WORLD FINALS



# SURF POUNDS Blowsion's SURF SLAM



## Freeriding Blends With Buoy Racing in Tierra Del Mar Beach, Oregon

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEATHER SELWITZ-BRIGLIA

**M**ore than 40 professional freeriders and MotoSurf racers representing 10 countries from around the globe converged on the West Coast of Oregon for the Blowsion Surf Slam. The International Freeride Watercraft Association (IFWA) and the International Jet Sports Boating Association (IJSBA), joined forces to put on a one-of-a-kind show just north of Pacific City on Tierra Del Mar Beach. With the competitors in place, fans flocked to the rapidly changing shoreline to watch racers battle it out for the IJSBA Western MotoSurf Championship and the freeriders compete in the second round of the IFWA World Tour and the IJSBA Freeride World Cup.

The Blowsion Surf Slam matured from a long-running and much-beloved event, the Blowsion Beach Bash, a gathering of like-minded people who loved to freeride. During last year's event, one of the top

professional freeriders in the world, Zach Waddle, and his fiancé were hit by a car leaving behind their son, Mason. From this tragic event, the Blowsion Surf Slam was born to honor Zach and the art/philosophy of freeriding. Waddle had pursued and perfected his passion for freeriding on the IFWA World Tour. His European sponsor and good friend, Ramon Ferre, honored Waddle by competing in the Amateur Freeride class on Zach's PWC.

Some say Waddle was watching over this event since the surf was so harsh. According to the local freeriders, the conditions weren't typical for this time of year, but more like the conditions of Oregon's wintertime. The combination of 15- to 20-foot waves on the backset, with an afternoon high tide and a storm surge elevating the high tide, brought in sneaker wave after sneaker wave, causing mayhem on the water and the beach.

The event commenced on Friday morning; the sun was shining, the surf was up, and it appeared that the weather goddess was shining down upon us. The riders' meeting was a who's who of international freeriders: Pierre Maixent, Federico Bufacchi, Ross Champion, Dustin Motzouris, Marc Sickerling and Graham Reid, just to name a few. There were also a few blasts from the past. Former professional freestyler Josh "Live Wire" Lustic was in attendance from Florida competing in Pro Freeride. Ex-stand-up racer Robby Myer was ready to battle it out in the surf in the Pro/Am Ski class. After a few quick words from the higher-ups, the world-renowned judges (including big-wave rider Randy Laine) took their places and the action began.

By 2:30 in the afternoon, high tide was coming in, bringing sneaker waves that began to wipe out the beach. Rogue waves pushed



beached runabouts around like floats and cars began to sink in the rapidly approaching tide line. Thanks to the expertise of the event organizers, Carol Anne and Rob Guistina from On Course Events, and John Dady from Blowsion, no real damage was done. Large equipment (a John Deere loader) was on hand to extract the largest of trapped trucks and trailers. The day wrapped up with a slight paranoia of what was to come the following day.

The paranoia was justified, as the beach was littered with a few small fish, a rather decent-sized squid, lots of foam, and rumors that the water may reach the road the following day.

By Saturday morning, the fog had rolled in, the surf was rising and a storm that was 300 miles offshore was slowly approaching, that was causing havoc on the beach by 7 in the morning. Over the course of the weekend, Rob and his crew tore down and rebuilt the "tower of power" at least five times, three of which were on Saturday.

Riders gathered promptly on the beach by 7:30 a.m., but, with the uncertainty of the tidal fluctuation, everything was on hold while deciding how to proceed; move the event to the famous beach break at Haystack Rock or evacuate the beach by 3 p.m.? In the end, the decision was made to stay at Tierra Del Mar, and finish the day as quickly as possible.

While the foggy conditions made life difficult for judging and spectators, the riders did their best to be entertaining. Following the guidelines set by IFWA president and founder Marcelo Brandão during the riders' meeting, riders attempted to "stay in the middle set for safety and judging." However, it was hard to resist the rather large outside set for showing off surf-riding skills. I mean, who can resist a reentry off of a 15-foot wave or slashing the lip of a monstrous wave? And, of

course, you need to at least try and get in the tube. Even the amateurs held their own in such unpredictable conditions. Amateur competitor Tanner Thomas from Alaska had never even ridden in the surf before.

With a very tight schedule, Sunday began quickly and easily. The surf was still large, but slowly coming down, and fog still obscured the air. Over the course of the day, 16 Pro riders were cut down to the final two rounds of head-to-head judging. Scoring was 50/50 jumps and wave riding. In some rounds, it was easy to pick a winner, while others came down to the wire.

During the semifinals, Pierre Maixent of France battled against California's Mike Serlin. While it's hard to beat the jumping style of Maixent with his huge backflips, Madonnas, Supermans and barrel rolls, Serlin just barely beat him, thanks to his impressive surf-riding skills.

The final came down to two Californians: Serlin vs. Ross Champion. Champion is the current IFWA World Champion and tour points leader. Champion once again proved to be the best, on and off the water; his all-around



With uncharacteristically cold and windy weather, this past September's Blowsion Surf Slam felt more like the dead of winter.



Although the surf made running the abbreviated buoy course nearly impossible, the foaming breaks made for some stellar freeriding.



