

Nik Baker

As one of three new locations in the PWA Wave series, Ibiraquera was a welcome addition to the regular stops in the Canaries, Germany, Maui and Portugal. **Brian McDowell** reports...

BRAZIL

Mormaií Ibiraquera Wave Contest

WHERE?

The small village of Ibiraquera sits in an amazing nature reserve in Southern Brazil's Santa Catarina state, around an hour from Florianopolis. Set around a stunning lagoon backed by lush sub-tropical mountains covered in a dense mix of palm, eucalyptus and bamboo vegetation, the sandy beaches at Ibiraquera and Luz enjoy South Atlantic swells and consistent high pressure winds during almost all of the Southern Hemisphere late winter and spring.

Although popular with tourists (especially from nearby Uruguay and Argentina), this laid-back holiday spot has, until now, been under the windsurfing world's radar. But with the help of its famous resident Kauli Seadi, the 2005 World Champion, Ibiraquera is now on the map and ready to rival Jericoacoara, five hours' flying to the north.

WHEN?

9-16 September 2007.

WHAT?

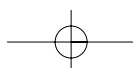
Men's only wavesailing.

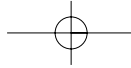
PRIZE-MONEY AT STAKE

€30,000 to be split amongst the top 16 finishers.

CONDITIONS

Typical Ibiraquera conditions are cross-offshore port tack, driven by stable high pressure systems that lock a steady northerly airflow of temperate breeze, although the bay is a little





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➤ Kauli Seadi

gusty due to the small island upwind. Southerly swells from deep in the South Atlantic break with power on the fast sandbanks, but windblown surf is much weaker. During the competition it was fairly offshore and mostly windblown after the initial groundswell faded, so it was pretty soft – the pictures make it look more powerful than it was. But it was still pretty quick, a little punchier on the inside and really really good fun as it was almost impossible to get totally munched!

MOST TO LOSE?

Tour leader Kauli Seadi, and Victor Fernandez, the current runner-up and form player after two back-to-back victories.

MOST TO GAIN?

Cabo Verde winner Josh Angulo in third place after a serious showing up by the youngsters in Portugal and Gran Canaria. The rest of the old guard, such as Nik Baker and Kevin Pritchard, who also went out early at Guincho and Pozo to young upstarts. Jonas Ceballos, who arrived in fourth overall with a golden chance of a podium.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

German waverider Klaas Voget beat Jason

Polakow by sailing like the Polakow of old. Robby Swift is back! His style oozes class, he's looking more powerful than ever, and, best of all, he's injury free and ready to be reckless again.

COMPETITION COMPLETED

One double elimination of Waves. Despite his victory here Seadi's Tour lead was actually cut, as the season's first event discard allowed Fernandez to throw away his Cabo Verde result and eat into Seadi's lead.

A great Super Session won by Josh Angulo. It was nice to see timeless and technical aerial 360s taking the judges' fancy over the latest combination jumps, which have tended to dominate media attention recently.

PODIUM FINISHERS

Kauli Seadi (BRA-253), Nik Baker (K-66), Levi Siver (USA-0).

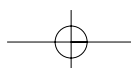
A great result for local boy Seadi, and obviously for Baker, too. Nik really shut the door on the new generation, who struggled (as they did in the similar riding-biased setup at Ponta Preta) to translate their formidable freesailing talent into competition. Levi Siver's single elimination final was his first ever PWA final appearance bar maybe one four-man final in Hawaii.

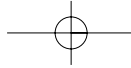
➤ Kauli's in there somewhere...



BIGGEST SURPRISES

Marcilio 'Brawzinho' Browne's failure to give the Brazilians something other than Seadi to cheer about. He was under huge pressure to perform in this fiercely proud surfing and soccer mad country. With the help of a sizeable public relations push, in the same way that surfing rivals football in the media here, Brawzinho and Seadi are playing a massive part in helping windsurfing to gain equal respect with the masses. But Browne, aged just 18, went out early in the single elimination ➔





Levi Siver

and was downed in the second round of the double by Caribbean ripper Camille Juban, who's aged just 17. We tipped you off about Juban in Guincho, and this young fella's gonna be more dangerous sooner than most think.

Nik Baker really making it count when it mattered most. With shock knockouts all over the place Baker played it safe and snagged all the set waves to render the jumping ability of the new-skool null and void.

McKercher not really capitalising on conditions that had 'Gramps' written all over them. Scotty and Angulo, Timo Mullen, Brawzinho, and even Volwater looked awesome in the freesailing sessions, but just couldn't get it together in a heat.

NO SURPRISES

A great result for local boy Seadi. He knows this place like the back of his hand, but more importantly he just looked supercharged and positively electric in front of his home crowd. Just where does Seadi get the energy to wind up so much power and torque for his turns? If you could bottle his style and vigour you'd get very rich very quickly.

BRITS ON TOUR

Nik Baker: 2nd. This podium result moved Nik up to 4th from 6th place overall before the Tour headed to Sylt. You'd have bet on Baker to make the top 5 of any riding biased event, but once the head judge threw in a jump Baker admitted he was nervous to go against some of the nippers. The wily old dog certainly used all of his cunning to outfox the cubs and punish them for getting tempted by the scraps on the



Phil Horrocks

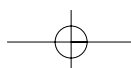
inside sections. Baker stayed upwind of the peak and only raced through to the inside bowls when they opened up fast and hollow. If they didn't he pulled out and went back outside to hunt for more. Sounds obvious, but many were tempted to race along the inside sections as it just seemed so natural to wait for steeper walls to jack up, just as you might do yourself.

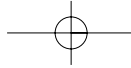
Ross Williams: 9th= here moves him up from 16th to 11th overall. With Sylt and Tirez still to go Williams can now make his move for a top 10 finish. Ross sailed well here in a tough fleet, but suffered in his final and critical heat against Polakow in the double as both his feet were infested with urchin spines from a trip to Indo just before Brazil. He can't complain about equal 9th considering this handicap, but to be honest he'd probably have gone a fair way further up the ladder and

would normally have given Polakow a much, much harder time.

Phil Horrocks: 17th= means Horrocks actually slipped a few positions in the rankings after the discard. He heads to Sylt ranked 25th and desperate to make a better showing in the last two events. The curly haired Welshman did, however, steal a lot of the publicity with his new back loop variant, the dubiously named 'plum' – a back-loop aerial duck-tack / upwind air chacho move with potential for a few variants.

Robby Swift: 6th place here drove the message home that Swift ain't gonna be playing it safe no more. After suffering injuries and setback, Swift finally got to show his real talent again. As one of three Brits in the top 10 he showed off a really potent style, and many were surprised to see him knocked out by a





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jerky and unsettled looking Fernandez. It was particularly surprising as our man-of-Kent had just defeated Polakow in stunning fashion, too. With the discard shifting the overall standings about a bit, Swift actually fell down from 12th to 13th overall after this event. Like Williams he's a really strong top 10 end of season contender, which is fantastic for the Brits at this level in the king of all disciplines.

John Skye: A respectable 13th= after Vidar Jensen beat him in the double. Skye slipped to 17th overall for the season so far, and now pins his hopes on Sylt and Tiree to claw his way back up the rankings and to match his status as one of the world's best wavesailors.

Timo Mullen: 33rd for 'Mullet', who enjoyed a holiday from his day job at Animal. (Even though he's a perennial weekend and mid-week warrior and known to fly to Australia for the weekend on a forecast.) Mullet had loads of the pros that see him so regularly all over this planet sweating with his outrageous goitas and riding in the warm-ups. But our favourite charismatic Ulsterman is an all-or-nothing character, and just can't compromise or play it safe in a heat to avoid crashing and losing points. Fair play to him. Everyone loves his relentless go-for-it approach and you just wouldn't want him to be any different.

No Ben Proffitt in Brazil, and no Mat Pearch. Pearch took one for the team and dutifully went to Maui to test race sails, while the rest of the North gang went to Brazil. Proffitt might have fared well here, and it's a shame he didn't show up.

BEST WIPE-OUT

The wave was pretty soft, so no-one really got pounded. There were some amusing crashes after the comp as everyone tried to learn the plum, but most attempts looked like the local vultures diving onto the remains of dead seals and fish on the beach.

HOTTEST HEATS

Polakow vs Swifty and Voget vs Polakow. Pure power. Pure class. Pure style. Such varied attacks of smooth turns, hacks, snaps, slides, airs and flowing linking turns is what wavesailing is all about. Anyone sailing against the Australian legend raises their game, but Swift and Voget ironically looked like Polakow himself, and even Jason was happy to have been beaten so deservedly by his Neil Pryde stablemates.

MOST CONTROVERSIAL HEAT

Swift's exit at the hands of Fernandez. On any given day Fernandez might well outclass Swift on port or starboard tack jumping. But on a wave Swift has no shortage of talent. Not taking anything away from the Spaniard (he's won two events this year), but Fernandez' 13th place in Cabo Verde's epic



Robby Swift

swell said it all about his riding style, which perhaps lacks the class of Seadi, Angulo, Baker *et al.* Although he's only 23, his Mediterranean background and that lack of imprinted, open ocean heritage, shone through. Fair play, he can land goitas and all manner of aerial tricks during a ride – but he's just missing that classic surfing style. On the beach a lot of people were surprised to see Swift relegated to 6th in the double, and it's a shame as he was building momentum and looking good for a podium that day.

PRESSURE BAROMETER

Pretty low. It was almost as if everyone had assumed Seadi would win. Of course, he looked better than anyone out there, but the wind blew consistently and the waves kept coming, so the event was completed fairly smoothly. Siver and Baker were a little nervy as the final stages of the double elimination approached, but the place was so relaxed there was no pressure anywhere really. It seemed a strange decision to roll the finals on to another day after Baker eliminated Siver – and in fact, although the final was supposedly delayed to wait for better conditions the next day, the swell was smaller, less powerful and not really befitting of the occasion. Baker explained that he'd rather have gone straight into the final while he was on a roll and feeling good, but he also admitted he wasn't expecting to beat Seadi in his own back yard at any time.

TIME OUT

Superb steak, seafood, *caipirinhas* and surfing. The wind blew 24/7, so multiple

extended sessions on the water were the norm for everyone there. The event was fairly low profile, so everyone slotted into the laid back local vibe of eating, sleeping, sailing, sailing again, surfing, sailing once more, eating, drinking stupidly strong *caipirinhas* and cheap beer, and sleeping. Wow, those *caipirinhas* are strong!

EVENT SUMMARY

Great competition on the water, a great place, and really fun conditions. If there were direct flights to Florianopolis (and apparently there will be soon), then this place could really take off as a new value long-haul holiday venue. The area is stunning, safe, and really family-oriented too, with the tranquil lagoon setting and sandy beaches, friendly locals, and cheap but high quality food and accommodation. ☺

