

“Despite global economic tsunamis the PWA Tour has grown even bigger!”

2008 Wave Champ and '09 each way cert, Kauli Seadi

PWA SEASON PREVIEW

Feeling smug for near-as-dammit picking all the 2008 winners, Pro Tour pundit **Brian McDowell** surveys the going and thumbs through his grubby formbook to select the front-runners for 2009. Pix: **JC / PWA**.



kay. So 2008 wasn't exactly an epic season or stacked full of events, but there were results at all bar one location and heaps of high quality competition. And during the off-season – despite the economic tsunamis that have shuddered the world – the PWA Tour has grown even bigger! Unfortunately, while it's great news if you're a fan of Slalom (with eight events teed-up for the year), this racing-heavy schedule feeds the bigger, older blokes and starves the skinny, twisted trick-inventing freestyle kids into near anorexia. And sadly, while it hasn't ever

officially been phased out, Super-X hasn't made it into the mix once again, even though it was a total hit among the pros and spectators. Just not amongst the local organisers...

But it's good to see a couple of events in new locations, including the reappearance of the indoor discipline in Madrid (TBC), and a new (and also TBC) racing stop in Sardinia. Mercifully, Portugal and Scotland – which both missed out in 2008 – are at least pencilled in for revisits. So with all that in mind let's have a look at what's involved with the three disciplines, who's in the running and what they're up against.



K-66 Nik Baker, Cabo Verde '09

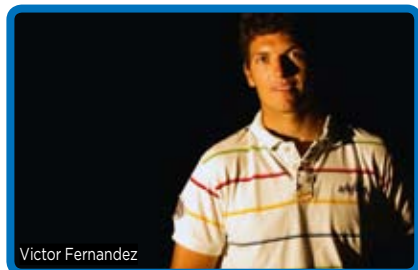
After just three competitions last year, Guincho and Tiree are thankfully back in the picture. The five-strong string of events for 2009 gives the Wave discipline added respectability by really feeding the fleet through the mincer in a cornucopia of conditions to spew out a worthy champion. There are still only three events for the ladies, but hey, that's better than just the two they had last time out. With no sign yet of an Aloha Classic comeback, Cabo Verde remains the jewel in the crown, and Scotland gets to host the season's grand finale once again ... in a village hall!

2008 Overall

1. Kauli Seadi BRA-253
2. Victor Fernandez E-42
3. Jonas Ceballos E-40
4. Josh Angulo CV-1
5. Kevin Pritchard US-3
8. Nik Baker K-66
13. Robby Swift K-86
14. John Skye K-57
20. Phil Horrocks K-303
25. Ross Williams GBR-83



Kauli Seadi



Victor Fernandez

Top 2009 Picks

The smart money goes on Kauli Seadi and Victor Fernandez to fill 1st and 2nd places, so a strong start in Cabo Verde will be critical to both before the Tour hits more unpredictable conditions. Seadi's up for a fourth title, but



K-89 Robby Swift, Cabo Verde '09



K-303 Phil Horrocks, Cabo Verde '09



K-57 John Skye, Cabo Verde '09

quiet man Fernandez will be going balls-out to gun-down the Brazilian in violent fashion on and above the water.

But Don't Write Off...

Watch out for Ricardo Campello and the first triple loop in competition, Dany Bruch, Marcilio Browne and any of the usual suspects such as Baker, Pritchard, Angulo, Siver, Ceballos, Traversa and even Swift or Williams to fill the other slots in the top 5.

think they'd better watch out because Frau Jaggi's about and openly stating that her goal this season is to take the wave crown. Word on the street is that freestyler Laure Treboux has been working hard on her wave performance too, and could be an outside bet for a podium. But whether she's got what it takes to beat the likes of Junko Nagoshi or Nayra Alonso only time will tell.

Women's 2008 Overall

1. Daída Moreno E-64
2. Iballa Moreno E-63
3. Nayra Alonso E-4

2009 Women

Las damas de España might well get another clean sweep of the silverware, but I



Daída and Iballa Moreno

2009 Wave Calendar

Date	Event	Conditions
Feb14-21	Cabo Verde (men only)	Mobile event based at the gusty, mostly light wind, and starboard tack cross-offshore point break of Ponta Preta. (Rock and sand bottom.) Various other, mainly starboard tack, razor-sharp lava reef breaks nearby and one mushy port tack jumping spot.
TBC	Guincho, Portugal	Starboard tack cross-on to cross-off punchy beach-break. Usually light in early afternoon and super-strength by sunset. Even bias jumping / riding.
July 10-19	Pozo, Gran Canaria	Nuclear strength cross-on port tack generating windswell with occasional groundswell. Slight jumping bias.
Sept 24-Oct 5	Sylt, Germany	Port and starboard tack northern European autumnal conditions, mostly onshore windblown mush on sand bottom. Jumping bias.
TBC	Tiree, Scotland (men only)	Total lottery. Port tack, starboard tack, onshore, offshore. Mostly beach-breaks.

SLALOM

With eight events it's bound to be harder for Albeau and Jaggi to dominate outright, and it'll be interesting to see how the first year of extra equipment in the 'Slalom 63' (6 sails, 3 boards) format works out. If it's a goer, then I wonder how long before it goes back to custom gear again? The new stops are in Austria and Italy, although the sheilas only get six events and will have their season sewn-up by September in Sardinia. The blokes' final showdown is in Sylt as usual, but if recent seasons are anything to go by Albeau might be done-and-dusted by the end of Fuerteventura.

2008 Overall

1. Antoine Albeau F-192
2. Bjorn Dunkerbeck SUI-11
3. Kevin Pritchard US-3
4. Ross Williams GBR-83
5. Cyril Moussilmani F-71
13. Robby Swift K-89
21. Mat Pearch K-16
23. Dan Ellis GBR-52



Antoine Albeau



Bjorn Dunkerbeck

Top 2009 Picks

There's been a bit of a pre-season sponsorship merry-go-round - the main whirlwind surrounding top players Albeau and Dunkerbeck - so the odds might well have shortened a little considering they're both on new gear. Plus of course there's the added pressure the extra events bring. The safe money's always on AA, but the pro punter's value bet is always going to be on Big Bjorn or KP for another title. Can Ross make the top 3 this year? He certainly wants it...

But Don't Write-off...

Bulky Micah Buzianis mangled his leg halfway through the last campaign, so he's unlikely to be at the back of the fleet is he? You can also see some potential for team-racing with stable mate Albeau working to his advantage. Of course



K-16 Mat Pearch and GBR-52 Dan Ellis, Turkey '08



GBR-83 Ross Williams, Turkey '08



K-89 Robby Swift, Turkey '08

Maynard's always in with a chance for a medal, and there are other dark horses like Dutchies Pieter Bijl and Ben Van Der Steen - and even Josh Angulo, who's gone to the trouble of registering his own-brand boards to do the business.

Women's 2008 Overall

1. Karin Jaggi Z-11
2. Valerie Ghibaudo F-444
3. Sarah Hebert ARM-1



Karin Jaggi



Valerie Ghibaudo

2009 Women

It's kind of a two-horse race here with Jaggi possessing the speed and Ghibaudo the superior turning and starting skill. Hebert's hot but not physical or consistent enough, and maybe not hard enough mentally yet. Then there's always the threat of Iballe Moreno snapping at her heels along with younger talents like Lena Erdil or Alice Arutkin. It'd be nice to see someone else step up and take the limelight from Jaggi - even she agrees that it's time for a change in reign, and I guess this season is the time to do it if her thoughts are predominantly on a wave title?

2009 Slalom Calendar

Date	Event
May 5-10	Podersdorf, Austria (men only)
May 16-22	Ulsan, Korea
June 9-14	Costa Brava, Catalunya
July 10-19	Pozo, Gran Canaria (men only)
July 22-Aug 01	Sotavento, Fuerteventura
Aug 10-15	Alaçati, Turkey
TBC	Reggio Calabria, Sardinia
Sept 24-Oct 01	Sylt, Germany (men only)

2009 Freestyle Calendar

Date

June 27-July 05
July 10-19
July 22-26
September 24-Oct 01

Event

Costa Teguisse, Lanzarote
Poza, Gran Canaria (ladies only)
Sotavento, Fuerteventura
Sylt, Germany (men only)

Conditions

Gusty, cross-on, rolling swell, chop and flat sections.
40+ knots. Breaking windswell.
Cross-off gusty wind and short chop.
Anything from gusty offshore and light to howling onshore.



K-540 Andy 'Bubble' Chambers

FREESTYLE

I have to say I feel sorry for the freestylers, and can't help thinking the most talented sailors are having their lunch cut by the slalom bias on Tour. Nothing wrong with slalom, but it's definitely shoving the youngsters out of the way.

Take a look at the new racing events. Austria - the spiritual home of modern freestyle - will host PWA Slalom alongside an EFPT event that's demonstrating the Freestyle Classix format. And in Sardinia the local organisers and the PWA opted to make another flat water location a racing instead of freestyle event, which I think is a bit of a shame really. Similarly, in my opinion Turkey is another perfect spot for a change of gear and a freestyle exhibition, and in an ideal world it'd run alongside the racing to mix it up for the crowds. Anyway... Moving swiftly on. Eyes down for the scoop on the competition.

The men get the chance to duke it out in Lanzarote, Fuerteventura and then a big gap before the endgame's played out in Sylt. The girls have the pleasure of Lanza, Poza and Fuerte all squeezed into a compact and ladylike one-month window. Talk about short and sweet.

The 'Big Moves' format was a success in 2008. At least in terms of making it entertaining, less conservative and simpler, but obviously not in convincing organisers to run more events. Oh well. At least they'll all have the chance of earning some extra cash at the (unconfirmed) indoor in Madrid. I'm not sounding cynical or anything am I? Good.



Women's freestyle sensation, Sarah-Quita Offringa

But Don't Write-off...

Ricardo Campello's retirement from freestyle opens the door a little, so watch out for Andre Paskowski, Normen Gunzlein (in his last year on Tour) and Edvan de Souza. We all know freestyle is wide open to those who build momentum up the ladder, so it's anyone's guess who else will make the top 5. Andy Chambers finished above some big players last season, and it's only a matter of time before he makes the top 10 or even an event podium.

Women's 2008 Overall

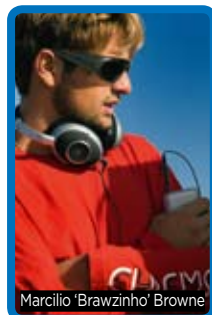
1. Sarah Quita Offringa ARU-91
2. Daida Moreno E-64
3. Laure Treboux SUI-4



Sarah-Quita Offringa

2008 Overall

1. Jose 'Gollito' Estredo V-01
2. Marcilio 'Brawzinho' Browne BRA-105
3. Kiri Thode NB-61
4. Tonky Frans NB-7
5. Antxon Otaegui E-169
16. Andy Chambers K-540



Marcilio 'Brawzinho' Browne



Jose 'Gollito' Estredo



Laure Treboux

2009 Women

Treboux made me look a fool by not matching my prediction for victory in 2008, but I'm going to forgive her and back her to be either first or second this time round. Offringa is a certainty for one of the top two spots as well, and with only three events Daida Moreno might not fancy giving up just yet - especially when one event is the jump-fest in her back yard at Poza, where her rivals are unable to let their sliding tricks out of the bag.

But Don't Write-off...

The standard from the other girls shot up last year again to narrow the gulf between the first and second-rounders and top seeds. Most impressive and the biggest dangers would be Margarita's Yoli de Brendt and Spanish stylist Vicky Sanchez if she shows up. [boards](#)

Top 2009 Picks

Bar another major injury, it's virtually impossible that Gollito won't be in the top 2. Post rehab in his off-season he's mastered at least five new tricks, and is making powerful triple air-move combos that will blow your mind. Everyone will catch up soon enough, but pulling them off in the heat of competition is another thing altogether.