

The 2nd Annual Punta Sayulita Surf Classic

By Roberto Chuy Madrigal / Apr 11 • Categorized as [Living Overseas](#) •  [Download Print Friendly PDF](#)



The Place You Thought You Knew

My arrival in Puerto Vallarta was uneventful except for having Customs Agents marvel at the 6' 6" SUP Skate- boards I had brought to Sayulita, one of them would be for the winner of the SUP Elite Race. Having had prior meetings with the Customs Director at the Puerto Vallarta airport and other Mexican authorities had been the key and they were all willing to help. As I waited for my bags and surfboards in the baggage area I was greeted by the Customs Director with a smile and I was soon on my way. It was great to see that the Mexican Government has indeed made some positive adjustments in their treatment of tourists coming into Mexico and that was clearly evident at every step of the way. Once I came out into the arrivals greeting area there was Miguel from Punta Sayulita waiting for me, the weather was a nice 80 degrees and the smells, friendly people and colorful landscape that is Mexico filled my senses and put a smile on

my face; it was great to be back. After a short drive north we rolled into Sayulita and it was not hard to see that the 2nd Annual Punta Sayulita Surf Classic was on. Banners hung over the streets and on light posts everywhere; I soon found myself immersed in the great vibe that permeates the village of Sayulita. It is definitely a place where one can feel at home and let your hair down. As always, there were pretty women from everywhere, local townspeople, surfers and children all present and involved in their daily hustle and bustle and everyone with a beautiful friendly smile. I wondered where were all of the negative things that the US Media continually hammer at Mexico with; this place is truly a paradise.

Bringing it all together

The results of my more than 6 months of collaborative effort with the Punta Sayulita Development Group would soon become a reality. It was time for the production phase of the event and it did not take long to start seeing it all come together. World renowned Jericho Poppler, Candice Appleby, Kalaia Jardine, Slater Trout, Sean Pointer, Scott Bass, Anthony Vela and Malibu's favorite son, Jimmy Gamboa and his wife Kim rolled into town as did the father and son teams of Matt and Zane Schweitzer and Aaron and Riggs Napoleon from Hawaii. Last year's winners Ikaika Kawai, Mary Osborne, and Chuck Patterson also arrived. Eco Warrior-James Pribram, Reef Check's Mary Luna and big wave Surfing, legends Garret Mc Namara, Scott Chandler and legendary surf, Zen master and old friend Gerry Lopez arrived. We even had Mike Downey, official announcer for the Battle of the Paddle show up. For a place not known for big waves, some of the world's top Big Wave Riders were now part of the large contingency of competitors, some having their go at small wave SUP surfing and racing.

Sayulita began filling up with visitors and cream of the crop professionals from as far away as Peru, Virgin Islands, Brazil, California and Hawaii. The media presence followed suit, photographers and camera crews were to be seen everywhere interviewing everyone and taking in the sights. This year's event was definitely a whole lot bigger as the town filled up with people and began rocking and whooping it up. For those that wanted to just kick back and relax, well it was not hard to disappear into the tranquility that is also Sayulita. Expectations ran high and the surf vibe increased a thousand fold. Who was going to win the races, the surfing competitions? For many of the local surfers and townspeople, some of the surfers present had previously only been seen in the pages of Surf, SUP Magazines, the Web and videos; now here they all were walking the streets of Sayulita. The local and neighboring cadre of hot surfers and SUP'ers would be surfing against legendary surfers which for many were their long time heroes. There was some first generation Mexican surf Legends around as well, the likes of Antonio Ochoa and your smiling promoter, Chuy Madrigal.

Never a Dull Moment in a Promoter's Life

As I walked and inspected the event site on the early morning of Friday, March 11, the now visible event structures were all in place and our crews were putting the finishing touches to the main beach structures and to the Concert stage which was a mere 20 feet from the water where small waves were lapping at the shoreline. Our State of Nayarit and Federal Tourism sponsored heavy machinery had already done a great job leveling and cleaning the beach and I had taken a precautionary step the night before and had them build a small 1.5' sand berm around the Concert stage just in case the tide got a little too close. As the sun came out over the hills my phone began ringing away and my computer was being bombarded by e-mails from all over the world:

TSUNAMI Warning, Japan and its people had suffered a horrific catastrophe; an 8.9 magnitude earthquake followed by a 30' plus Tsunami had caused incredible damage. Now it was time to deliberate the potential consequences of such an act of nature to Sayulita a half world away, especially to our event and Concert Stage which stood at the ocean's edge. The Civil Protection authorities closed all beaches on the entire Pacific coast of Mexico expecting the worse. After making numerous calls to Hawaii, California Civil Protection and Marine Safety agencies in California I stared out towards the beach at my 1.5' sand berm around the stage and shook my head. I looked towards the sky and said "God, please cut us a little slack, this all about Aloha and Ohana".

The Great Wall of Sayulita

After waiting for the Terror wave that could potentially sweep the beach and our event into oblivion, the ocean began retreating well after the Tsunami's predicted arrival leaving many fish stranded in the now shallows of the receding tide, including a giant Stingray that was now flopping around on the sand. Dozens of spectators and some competitors including my own son Steven ran out into

the receding tide and gathered around the Stingray ahhhhwing and oohing; that is when the Tsunami surge began rushing back towards the beach. Everyone screamed and ran for their lives but God and whatever other forces were at play had seemingly listened to my plea. The Tsunami was only a one foot wave that rushed toward the beach and got a few towels wet, but best of all, my 1.5 berm-barrier, Chuy's Great Wall of Sayulita, had stopped the surge; the Stage was saved and all was well for everything and everyone except for the Stingray; it became an impromptu meal for a few happy beach goers. Sayulita was out of danger and now the happy host to the Elite of the SUP and surfing world; the stage was set for a great competition.

Mishka's Concert

One of the highlights of the Classic's festivities was the Saturday evening benefit concert headlined by international Reggae recording artist, Mishka who played a seemingly never ending set of nearly three hours to the enjoyment of a packed beach of concert goers who sung and danced deep into the night and witnessed Mishka's first live performance in Mexico. The *j.k. livin* recording artist later commented that the "vibe of Sayulita" made it one of the best venues he has played in his career. The Concert has already been seen on the pages of You Tube and both the Sayulita Classic and the concert will soon air on Televisa's Tele-Hits.

The Competition

After two days of fierce competition that went on late into Sunday afternoon, Darren Eudaly of Laguna Beach, California, edged out Sayulita resident and 3-time Mexican National Longboard champion, Patricio "Ticho" Gonzalez, to take 1st Place in the Men's Longboard division with an incredible array of turns, cutbacks, nose riding and Longboard surfing skills. Last year, it had been the other way around, Ticho Gonzalez was the one who edged out Eudaly in the finals and taken home the win.

In the Women's division, Mary Osborne of Ventura, California successfully defended her women's Longboard title in a tightly contested final which featured top "Waterwoman" Candice Appleby of Hawaii and young guns Karina Rozunko, Hallie Rohr from California. The Men's SUP surf Division saw many favorites fall by the wayside during the earlier rounds of fierce competition. The Finals featured local favorite Guillermo "Tigre" Cadena, big wave super star, Garrett McNamara, and San Diego's young ripper Sean Poynter. When it was over, it was Poynter who came out on top barely squeezing by Cadena and taking home the title in a diminishing swell and some challenging surf conditions. Although McNamara rode the highest point value wave in the finals, he was unable to register a second scoring wave which resulted in his taking 3rd place. In spite of Cadena's incredible surfing it was Sean Poynter's radical turns in small waves that captured the judges' attention and give him the win.

The grueling 10k paddle race and the SUP Elite (A crowd favorite) were both won by Slater Trout as the 17 year old professional from Maui held off a tough field of elite paddlers that included Anthony Vella, Zane Schweitzer, Chuck Patterson, Aaron Napoleon and local Sayulita favorite Ryan Helm. Slater seemed to have an extra gear in both races and showcased his impressive paddling technique with Vella and Schweitzer finishing close behind in 2nd and 3rd positions in both races. For the women, it was reigning "Battle of the Paddle" champion Candice Appleby of Hawaii winning the women's Elite Race title and Cabo's Schulyer Robbins the "Queen of the East Cape" placing first in the 10K distance race.

"It would have been nice to have more consistent, bigger waves so that the spectators could really see how talented these competitors are," remarked Kevin Roberts, a principle with event organizer Punta Sayulita. "However, the small waves did not diminish the great Ohana vibe and aloha spirit that surrounded the weekend event. Moreover, with surfing legends Gerry Lopez and Jericho Poppler competing and holding their own against the younger surfers, it was really a special treat for competitors and spectators alike," added Roberts. "Despite their years of experience, Lopez held his own quite impressively in the SUP Elite and Distance races and both Poppler and Lopez showcased their classic wave riding skills throughout the surfing competition".

The Awards Presentation

Just like last years Awards Gala Affair, this year's celebration truly rocked. Everyone danced the night away to the beat of the popular local band "The Sayulites" that was also the opening band for the Mishka concert and Mishka made a special appearance and jammed with them. Don Pedro's Restaurant treated our palates with a delicious buffet of local fare and spirits and the Punta Sayulita Development Crew surprised us all once again with the organic design of this year's trophies to the delight of the contest winners. The Hamboard SUP Skateboard went to the Winner of the Elite race – Slater Trout, the smiling giant killer of course.

Sponsor abled Community Programs

As a result of the fantastic sponsor support, volunteers and competitors, there were respectable contributions raised by the Punta Sayulita Surf Classic. All funds will go towards supporting the activities of The Reef Check Foundation and the Punta Sayulita Foundation's 2011 Community programs. One such recipient program that took place during the week prior to the Punta Sayulita Surf Classic was the International Surfing Association (ISA) Level 1 Coaching Clinic for Surf and SUP Instructors. It was established to develop and enhance the education and regularization of instructors around the world and support the growth of the sport of surfing. The course was a great success and was completed by 25 surf instructors who participated in an intensive 3-day clinic. All participants received ISA Instruction Certifications. Additionally, prior to the start of the Classic competition, a group of 20 special-needs and underprivileged children had an incredible time at the beach and learned to surf under the personalized instruction of Jimmy Gamboa and members of his TheraSURF Foundation alongside many of the visiting professional surfers and local Sayulita surf instructors.



Roberto Chuy Madrigal

Aloha Y'all

The Spirit of Aloha had once again permeated the event and been felt by all; the feel good vibe was everywhere and there was never a negative incident throughout the entire days of the event. The only sad thing that all event goers experienced was the realization that it was all over. We all said goodbye to new and old friends and bid farewell with a tear and a smile....Aloha for now.

Next year's event promises to be bigger and better and everyone is cordially invited to participate in the festivities and activities of the 3rd Annual Punta Sayulita Surf Classic, so see you all there.

(Complete results for the surf contests and paddle races are available at www.puntasayulitasurfclassic.com.)

Media inquiries, event photographs, videos and general information regarding the 2nd Annual Punta Sayulita Longboard & SUP Classic can be obtained by visiting www.puntasayulitasurfclassic.com or by contacting Jose Luis Caselin at U.S. Toll Free (866) 947-6017 or +52 (329) 291-3957. For more information about the Punta

Sayulita resort community visit www.puntasayulita.com.