



Riding the waves at Chi First ever Second Life surf contest

by Surfdaddy Orca



The judge's stand at Chi

CHI—SamyJo Ah practices her moves as I arrive for the first-ever Second Life surf contest. The contest, sponsored by Namiko Surf Company, is at Chi's delightful pipe break. SamyJo, a lean and vivacious avatar, spreads her arms forward and crouches like a tiger about to pounce on her prey. I think to myself "dude, what am I getting into?"



SamyJo Ah,
winner of the Namiko Pro at Chi

I look up at the stands and see the contest judges: experienced surfers such as Surferjoe Wind and Kiana Foxley, and the board master himself, Sebastian Saramago. I'm in the first of four heats, and I find myself scrambling quickly to adapt to a friend's laptop as I paddle out to the pipe. My home computer was... well, let's just say it was not available.

I hear surf music kick in as the voice of Sierra Sugar comes over the speakers:

"We have 17 surfers signed up to compete today in 4 different heats. Each competitor will get a score on 5 waves with the top 2 scores being counted towards the total for that heat. The top 2 competitors in that heat will move on to the next round."

This is serious, I think to myself. In spite of my avatar's "Surfdaddy" name, I haven't surfed Second Life much in several weeks and I'm feeling rusty on an unfamiliar computer. Sierra continues:

"Scoring... this is the important part... there is a scoreboard over at the end of the beach over by the bridge... for each heat, for each surfer's score, scoring is based on the length of the ride, the tricks, the surfer's style, and technical execution like hitting the wave at the right spot at the right time..."

At this point a big pipe is coming my way and I'm unable to hear the rest of Sierra's introduction. I quickly paddle to position my board on the left side of the pipe, and... boom... I'm up and surfing across the wave's face on a fast right furiously trying to control my Namiko Bamboo surfboard with the arrow keys of my friend's computer.

Having just gone surfing in real life, I feel a similar sense of exhilaration as I manage to do a 180 on the wave and turn my right into a left. "Whew, that felt good," I say out loud as I slide off to the side of the pipe and reposition my board for the next wave.

The heat continues as I take off on another beautiful pipe wave. In real life, I would never attempt a wave of such size and power. I am not familiar with other surf games such as Surf Riders on the play station. Surf games have a simple premise and simple execution - you surf. In Surf Riders, I understand that there are two modes of play: world challenge cup mode, which is a competition mode where you tour around the globe to different locales, and a free play mode, where you hone your skills. In either mode, you're given a group of surfers and a group of surfboards to choose from. The different surfboards affect your acceleration, turning, and jumping abilities.

SL boards for this first-ever contest are also tuned—in this case, for Heather Goodliffe's amazing waves. What makes this SL surf event different from other surf "games" is the multi-user competition with surfer avatars from all over the globe in a resident-constructed virtual environment. Naturally, experienced gamers have an advantage if they understand and have practiced with the scripts and commands associated with the surfboards. Positioning on the wave and the ability to read the sequence of wave sets, however—what the ancient Hawaiians referred to as "wave knowledge"—is something that comes mainly from real world surfing experience. As an experienced real life surfer, using that knowledge is something that I'm counting on in this contest since I have not practiced much recently with Heather's pipe waves.

See **Surf Contest, D2**



Polysilox Apogee paddles out at Chi.

► Surf Contest

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After the end of the first heat, I discover that I've made it to the semifinals. Unfortunately, I'm unable to get back to my friend's computer to finish the competition or to attend the after-contest party given by Keala Mimistobell and contest sponsors Poid Mahovlich and Sally LaSalle. I'm happy, however, to know that I've done my best under the circumstances and end up with a respectable 8th place finish.

During the surf contest, SL surfer extraordinaire Valent1ne Apogee shot over 9 GB worth of video footage, producing a fantastic 9-minute machinima of the event. Poid Mahovlich constructed a special theater on the beach at Chi for a screening.

The SL surfing community is a wonderful group of people, and the number of SL surf sites continues to grow with the addition of an Xtreme wave site at the Weather Channel sim, a new pipe at the soon-to-be-renamed Headonism Beach, and another Namiko-sponsored contest in April.



Surfdaddy sits with Zen and Carl as Pablitin munches popcorn during the first screening of Valent1ne Apogee's amazing machinima, "Pipe Dreams".

Contest Results

Finals

1. SamyJo Ah
2. Blue Alonzo
3. Polysilox Apogee
4. Seano Osumi

Semi Finals

5. Flynn Sheridan
6. SurfBoy Wollongong
7. Gerran Voss
8. Surfdaddy Orca

Quarter Finals

9. Kitt Snookums
10. Malcolm Sydney
11. JD Snook
12. Thor Bishop
13. Kidd Ikarus
14. Kimmy Leroux

As of this writing, the video is available at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2511774071995584364&hl=en>
Additional photos and contest descriptions are available at <http://blog.namikosurf.com/>



Contestants wait for the judges' decision.



SamyJo celebrates her win.