



Surfing's all about style. You need the board, the shorts, the shades and, of course, the car



Pure white sand, tropical temperatures and waves on demand. The perfect ingredients for the first ever *Zoom-Zoom* surfing championships. Who needs Hawaii when you've got the Seagaia Ocean Dome?

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SURF'S IN

Kicking up trails of sand from their heels as they charge into the ocean, boards at the ready, the five surfers paddle out towards the blue horizon to meet the first wave of the day. But something's not quite right with this picture. The sand isn't actually sand, it's 600 tonnes of white marble granules imported from China. And the ocean is in fact a huge freshwater pool with waves machine-manufactured on demand. Even the horizon is actually a painted mural and the tropical temperature comes, not from the sun, but from industrial heaters.

Welcome to the Seagaia Ocean Dome, the world's biggest artificial beach and currently the only place on the planet >

'Mash' makes a splash as he dives into the artificial ocean for the first time. The real beach is just 500m away



SURF SPEAK

- Rip:** to execute drastic and radical moves on the wave
 - Flip:** a 360° flip, landing on the back of the wave as it breaks
 - Lip:** the top edge of the wave that curls forward
 - Tube:** cylindrical vortex created between the wave and the lip
 - Hollow:** an extremely concave, curling wave
 - Shred:** to surf aggressively
- Find more at riptionary.com

where it's possible to rip, flip and hit the lip under one roof. Situated in Miyazaki, on the Japanese island of Kyushu, Seagaia is an astonishing feat of engineering. It cost a staggering US\$2 billion to build and is recognised by the Guinness book of world records as the largest indoor water park in the world. The three-storey high, 2,800-tonne titanium, Teflon and steel roof can retract in four sections to open the indoor ocean to the elements. The Seagaia sea is six times the size of an Olympic swimming pool and holds 13,500 tonnes of fresh water, which is continuously filtered and heated to a balmy 28°C. Seagaia's waves are generated by 10 powerful vacuum pumps linked to 40 individual water chambers that are capable of sending waves up to 3.5 metres high crashing towards the 140 metre-long beach. At peak times up to 10,000 beach lovers enjoy the tropical temperatures, the three exhilarating water slides and the various pools, fountains and man-made exotic flora and fauna.

But not today. Today is the first ever Zoom-Zoom Indoor Surfing Championship. Our judge is Takashi Kato, a prominent member of the Nippon Surfing Association. He's been surfing breaks in Japan and all over the world for many years, but it's his first visit to this plastic surf paradise and he's quickly into his board shorts to join the competitors for a warm-up. Following Takashi into the artificial ocean are local board shaper (and the firm favourite) Tomokazu Ujihara, *wahine* surfer Sachiko Tamura and – in the spirit of international competition – Matthew 'Mash' McCollough, Aarron Edwards and Sean Carey, all from across the water in New Zealand. A klaxon sounds and some 1,800 tonnes of water is released to form the first wave. This wall of water crashes to the concrete bottom of the ocean floor, then rises again to form the wave. With only that brief audible warning and no

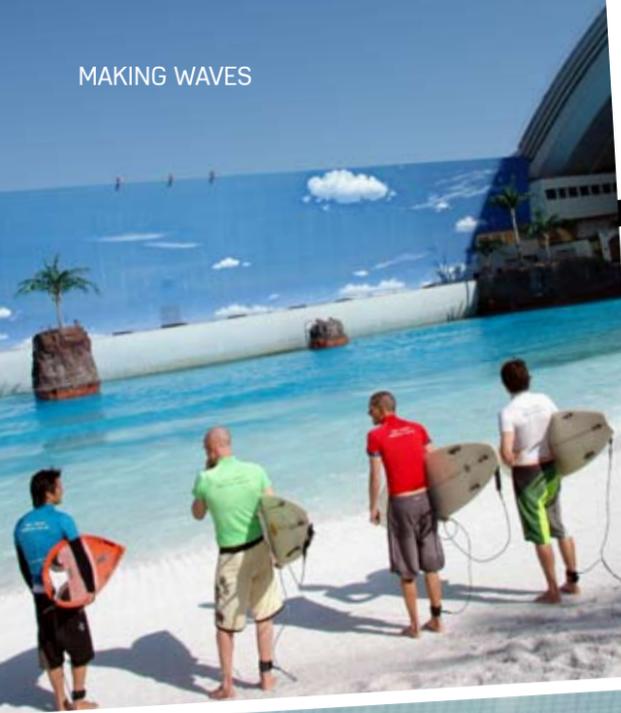


From top: plastic palms and painted horizons under a covered sky; Aarron and Sean go head-to-head; Sachiko and Sean sprint to the sea

'A KLAXON SOUNDS AND 1,800 TONNES OF WATER IS RELEASED'



THE FIRST SURFERS ARE CAUGHT OUT AND VIOLENTLY DUNKED'



From top: contenders ready; Aarron takes his first ride of the day; Tomokazu gets the shredding and smiling prize



chance to see the wave forming, the first surfers are caught out and violently dunked beneath the foaming surface.

Surfing Seagaia is not easy, as a sodden Sean explains: "The fresh water doesn't have the same buoyancy as seawater so it's much harder to stay on top of the surface. And, even though there's that freaky warning sound, the waves still come on all of a sudden."

Correct positioning in the water is absolutely critical to ride Seagaia's surf. There's a sweet spot for every wave and the riders have to be on it at the precise moment the wave is conjured up. It takes several more dunkings before our surfers have it sussed. Waves are created in sets of three with just a two-minute breathing space between them as thousands of tonnes of water are pumped and primed.

In a standard surfing competition the judges would be looking for technique, but this is a *Zoom-Zoom* contest, so Takashi's being more lenient, judging the riders' grins as much as their ability. Two hours of tubes, hollows, rips and flips later we have our winner and, sure enough, it's the local favourite, Tomokazu. Although he's never actually surfed Seagaia before, he's mastered the man-made waves better than the rest. But not only have his shreds wowed the judge, so have his smiles. He's had an ear-to-ear grin the whole time.

"Fantastic!" he beams as he thrusts his trophy in the air. Now that's a *Zoom-Zoom* moment. ■

ON BOARD WITH THE MAZDA CX-7: Engineered with the 'soul of a sports car', this crossover SUV has a 2.3-litre DISI turbo engine, with 244bhp, a six-speed auto transmission and seating for five. The perfect machine to transport our surfers to Seagaia.



Tomokazu catches the tube. Just one of Seagaia's wide range of waves which can be conjured up at the press of a button



WORLD WIDE WAVES

JAPAN The Seagaia Ocean Dome in Miyazaki, Japan opened in 1993 and cost US\$2 billion to build. The air temperature is kept at a constant 30°C and up to 10,000 people can relax on the beach and swim or surf in the 'ocean' at any one time.



Visit seagaia.co.jp

EUROPE The first European indoor surf centre is due to open in the UK in 2008. It will offer 365 days of surfing on an artificial reef.



Find out more at surfdome.com

USA The Ron Jon Surfpark in Orlando, Florida opened in 2007 with a choice of wave pools. And another surfpark's opening in New York City in 2010.



For a preview visit surfparks.com