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World's best surfers heading to Long Island

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GNARLY!

World’s best surfers heading to LI

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Who needs Hawaii and Tahiti when there’s Long Beach? The world’s top-ranked professional surfers will ride the waves of Long Island’s South Shore to compete for an unprecedented $1 million in prize money over two weeks in early September.

The Quiksilver Pro New York will represent the first time an Association of Surfing Professionals World Tour event is held on the East Coast.

For Long Beach, it means an expected 20,000 visitors and global exposure from the televised event. Shop and restaurant owners are hoping for increased sales. Hotels envision sold-out occupancy. Some residents are hoping to benefit by renting out their homes, even their parking spots.

But it also means increased traffic and noise, and potential parking problems.

“As a surfer, to watch these professional surfers surf is a dream,” said Elliot Zuckerman, 58, whose Surfing 2 Live school in Long Beach has been teaching the sport for more than 30 years. “As a homeowner, I am very skeptical. It’s going to get very crowded.”

The Sept. 1-15 event will take place on a three-block stretch of beach from Edwards Boulevard to Long Beach Boulevard. Only four days will be used for the surfing competition, with other events filling out the schedule.

Among the competitors will be 10-time world champion Kelly Slater. Long Beach’s Balaram Stack will join the touring pros as a wild-card entrant.

“I’m going to be so excited for all the guys I grew up surfing with to be there,” Stack, 19, said about competing in his hometown.

Quiksilver, a clothing, accessory and surfing lifestyle company, has agreed to host the competition at Long Beach for three years, event spokeswoman Jodi Wilmott said.

While officials declined to estimate the potential economic impact, Deputy City Manager Lisa Mulligan said they expect increased sales and hotel occupancy tax revenue and “the increased exposure will drive tourism after the event, adding to the positive economic impact in the city.”

Security for the event will be handled by Summit Security of Melville, which expects to supplement its workforce with as many as 200 local employees, Mulligan said. The 75-member Long Beach Police Department will provide traffic management. Additional costs incurred by the city will be charged to Quiksilver, she said.

Charles Christensen, owner of Duke Falcon’s Global Grill at West Park Avenue and Edwards Boulevard — four blocks from the event area — cautiously welcomed the crowd.

“I am close enough to it that it would definitely be positive for my business,” said Christensen, whose restaurant has been in Long Beach for 15 years. “It will be good for the town, but we will see how it turns out.”

The Allegria Hotel has reserved the entire nine-floor facility for Quiksilver, said marketing manager Laura Vivonetto. The 143-room hotel expects to house more than 300 surfers, their families and company crew members, she said.

Wendy Sanders, a rental specialist for Prudential Elliman Rentals in Long Beach, is still working to meet the housing needs for production crews.

“The [world tour] was well-known in the City of Long Beach, so many of the homeowners are very willing to open their homes to Quiksilver, their surfers and workers,” Sanders said.

Shelley Gold, 59, of Lynbrook, said many of her friends and relatives in Long Beach are concerned about parking problems, but others see opportunity in renting out their parking spaces.

The event also will provide an opportunity for one or two local surfers to compete with the world’s best.

“This is every up-and-coming surfer’s dream and probably, up to now, a very distant one for young surfers from New York,” Wilmott said.

The New York competition is the sixth of 11 on the ASP’s 2011 World Tour. Other locations include Australia, Brazil, South Africa and Hawaii.

New York was chosen to join the more exotic locales after a study of wave patterns in the area over a 15-year period. The report by Surfline.com concluded that the first two weeks of September, in the middle of the Atlantic hurricane season, provide the most consistent sizable waves off Long Island. The 2011 season is expected to be slightly more active than usual, according to Surfline president Sean Collins.

With Barbara Barker

LOCAL TEEN MAKES WAVES

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