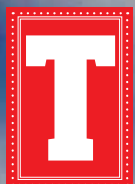


By Ian Walker



# PETE DEVRIES:

## SURF GOD



ranslucent green seaweed sticks to his black neoprene booties as Devries walks out of the Pacific Ocean early one morning. Under his right arm is a surfboard while skipping at his heels is Nai'a, his 3-year-old Golden Retriever.

Devries waves with his free hand as he approaches the shore, then in one fell swoop

peels back the rubber hoodie that's built into his six millimeter wetsuit. Steam rises from his exposed head and his breath is clearly visible, what with the temperature outside hovering around five degrees Celsius on this crisp October day. Just another day at the office for the 26-year-old Tofino native, who somehow has managed to carve out a living surfing the frigid waters off the northwest shore of Vancouver Island.

"In all my travels I've never found a surf destination where I'd want to live full-time more," says Devries. "My dad was one of the original surfers around here and there's such a rich history of surfing here. I'm just glad to be a part of it."

And so modest. But don't let the boy-next-door act fool you. Devries isn't your average surfer. He's Canada's greatest surfer, eh. The first and only dude from the Great

White North to be crowned a surf champion. He accomplished the feat in his own backyard, taking the winner's share of a \$150,000 purse on the fourth stop of O'Neill's Cold Water Classic Series this past fall.

Local stores locked their doors the day of the final, with many of 1,600 townsfolk cramming the shore, all huddled in blankets and layers of clothing with the hopes of witnessing history



in the making. "It felt incredible – to do something like that in front of all those people who watched me grow up," says Devries. "I had daydreams about it, but never really thought it could happen." Oh, it did. Only a couple hundred meters from the house he grew up in at Chesterman's Beach, if you want the whole story. I mean really. Someone get a script to Disney already.

"I just hope the young groms freezing their butts off out there now see anything is possible,"

he continues. Devries was seven when he first suited up. Twice. Technology was so bad at the time he needed two wetsuits in order to stay out longer than a few minutes.

"There's just something about the weather and the climate here, the changes in the wind and sea," says Devries. "It's just an incredible place to be a surfer."

If not the most unlikely of places to be a surfer. Single digit water

temperatures, fog as thick as the accent on the French guy on *So You Think You Can Dance* Canada, sea lions the size of small hippos and the occasional bear strolling the beach looking for a meal all combine to make the area one of the planet's most gnarly surf spots.

Not that it's all Green Peace and Grizzly Adams. The waves in the area are considered among some of the best in the world - the scenery mind blowing. Just picture it:

Idyllic beach breaks crashing onto a cedar-lined shore with majestic snow-capped mountains as a backdrop. And that's when you get it.

"The surf industry, they're always looking for someone new or different and this area just so happens to offer both," says Devries. "The quality of waves and our landscape are second to none." Funny, that. You could say the same thing about Devries.