



MARYHILL FESTIVAL OF SPEED

by Erik Basil

Have you ever come off of a fast carving session or a killer, heart-in-your-throat bombing run and, fueled by that unique mixture of adrenalin, speed and urethane drifts, just wished you could have a private road of your own for a day? Would your private road have any turns? How about 17 full-on curves, including multiple hairpins that arc around more than 180 degrees, esses, decreasing-radius turns and sweepers, all on fresh pavement? Would it be like that? How would it be with 200 of your newest best friends, lifts to the top of the hill and a giant party that goes for days? Pipe dream? Hell, no: it was the “Ex Drinks Maryhill Festival of Speed”!

For five days in September, skateboarders converged on Goldendale, Washington and took literally thousands of runs down a nearly-three mile long road alongside other gravity-addicts there to savor the festival atmosphere, camping, live bands, parties, incredible hospitality of the host city, World Cup Racing and skateboard racing’s triumphant final event of the year.

Photo: Malakai Kingston and Erik Basil

OF SPEED

Maryhill Loops Road is the oldest paved road in the Northwest, designed to accommodate commercial traffic between the Columbia River and the town of Goldendale, Washington, 2000 feet above. In the days of slow vehicles and even horse-drawn wagons, a gentle grade was very important. Switchbacks, called “loops” at the time, were the order of the day and, man, does this one have them! Once deemed the “most dangerous road in the Northwest” due to the number of people careening over the high side of the hairpin turns, it’s now closed to vehicular traffic without a special permit (automobile commercials are often filmed here), so it’s nirvana for motorcyclists, vintage cars and skateboard racers. The 5% grade sounds mellow and it’s a “45-mph hill” for speedboards but, as so many unfortunate motorists once found out, it’s all about the turns!

The downhill skateboard racing world knows all about Maryhill, and skaters converged on the Festival of Speed from all over North America, Europe, South America, New Zealand and even the Middle East. Over 100 skaters hit the hill during four days of free-riding, friendly grudge matches and timed

The twelve guys in the finals and consi were the fastest collection of downhillers I’ve ever seen.

— Chris Chaput

qualifying for an IGSA World Cup race on the fifth day of the Festival. The World Cup race featured top-echelon gravity racers in streetluge, classic luge, gravity bikes, inline DH and 96 of the fastest men and women in DH skateboarding. Multiple current and former IGSA World Champions were hanging it all out next to the next generation of banzai longboarders on Maryhill’s freshly resurfaced pavement, run after run, after run, whether in large packs of free-riders, the single-competitor, time-trial qualifying or heats of six in the IGSA race. The photos you see here are the smallest of samples and there are links on the next page to many more, along with video.

Patterned after the large IGSA races held in Europe every year, the “Ex Drinks Maryhill Festival of Speed” was conceived and promoted by Volcanic Productions to be much more than even the largest skateboard races in North America. With the full support of the City of Goldendale and big dollar sponsors Ex Drink and Abec11, the Festival offered five days of free camping with a skate park, live bands with a beer garden at the campground and amazing athlete hospitality from the town. Hundreds showed up. Each morning began with breakfast prepared by townsfolk that crawled out of bed before dawn, and then the campground would empty with a stream of cars and vans headed for Maryhill Loops Road.

Once on the hill, the Festival of Speed was all about multiple runs and the opportunity to skate with gravity racers from around the world. No two turns on Maryhill are alike. From the top of the hill, speed comes quickly and then you’re into the curves. Six turns later, you’re cutting left, right, left, zigging through the chicane known as “Spaghetti”, then down, down, down the “Never-Ender Left” that twists around 270 degrees before dumping you into a 90 degree right turn and a straightaway leading to the next set of turns. After six more turns, there’s an infamous “loop” that starts with a 90-left into a descending hairpin to the right known as Cowser’s corner. This leads into a straight descent and one last sweeping left turn as the course flattens out to a finish-line area. The radar gun pinged skaters at the entry to the turn at 45mph and the gripping sound of uber-thane wheels as packs dove into Cowser’s on the ragged edge of control was like what you’d hear pulling duct tape off your kitchen floor!



Photo: Michael Speke

FIVE DAYS, 150 ATHLETES, THOUSANDS OF RUNS, THE “FESTIVAL OF SPEED.”



45mph above Cowser's

The freshly resealed pavement had been broken in by some local skaters, and a motorcycle event two weeks earlier, but still stained wheels with tar-like streaks and ground them into coned submission. With a pair of giant box trucks constantly shuttling full loads to the top of the hill, there were over 600 runs before lunch on the first day! By the third morning, nearly 1,500 runs down the hill on skateboards, luges, etc. had polished the surface with long lines visible in some photos and fresh wheels stayed a lot cleaner. If you didn't bring spare wheels, you wished you had!

Each night, the festival moved back to Ekone Park, right in the middle of Goldendale, where the town allowed free camping and opened their small-scale skate park up for locals and visitors to shred before dinner and well after dark, thanks to the headlights of parked cars. Local radio and newspaper coverage alerted the area to a meet-the-athletes/autograph session sponsored by McDonald's that had crowds lined up out the door to meet racers, and then McDonald's gave every racer certificates for free food! Everywhere skaters went in town, grins and welcomes were on every face, including the Mayor and Chief of Police. Orangefiist premiered their skateboard movie, *Livin' Free*, in the Jr. High auditorium to a mixed crowd of skaters and locals while others enjoyed fresh-grilled dinner right in the park with homemade desserts and sides. Giant picnic tables were filled – a nightly feast of friends in many languages.

After the third day of ripping down Maryhill, the Festival really stepped into high gear. The afternoon had been filled with timed qualifying runs for the IGSA World Cup and everyone was stoked to hear about the outcome of the Never Summer Top Qualifier contest for downhill skateboarding. 2007 IGSA World Champion Martin Siegrist took the \$300 premium in a brief ceremony on the stage in Ekone Park, and then the second band of the night, Van-



Erban with a young fan

couver, Canada's "Loose Tooth" hit the stage with Goldendale's first punk concert in 20 years. Bedlam, thrash and stoke! Another band followed, as did more midnight skate park action and tent-city parties in the campground.

Race Day followed. After the parties, you might have expected a lot of bleary eyes at breakfast. You'd have been right to, but among the racers shivering in the post-dawn line for hot, fresh food were many with a deceptively calm demeanor: the best skaters in the world

MORE MARY:

Thousands of photos were taken by several pro photographers, including Jon Huey, Jonah Gilmore and John Longfellow. Links to their galleries are listed at [Silverfish Longboarding.com](http://SilverfishLongboarding.com), along with Maryhill shots in the galleries there.

Daily Race Reports and more are under the IGSA Racing tab on the 'Fish, too.

The official website is: maryhillfestivalofsports.com

Video: Hit YouTube and search "Maryhill"

IGSA rules are at: gravity-sports.com

would be on the hill and it was going to be fast. On the course, sunny skies, a few high clouds and light (by Maryhill standards) breezes couldn't have been any better for the 96 speedboarders heading up the hill in giant box trucks. Siegrist was in the first heat of six racers to launch down the hill, just after 1pm, and the race was on! Over the next few hours,



Reimer and Lang in Turn 17

it was a non-stop series of eliminations leading to an incredible series of semi-, consi- and final-heats that moved along all day, flawlessly.

Abec 11's sponsorship of the DH Skateboarding class resulted in a cash purse of \$2,500.00 and, as the rounds went on, the competition became more and more intense. The crowds in the final curve and finish line area were stoked by a team effort from the announcers: Bricin "Striker" Lyons radioed in color commentary from the start line overlook, which gave him a perspective over almost ¾ of the course. Turn for turn, pass for pass, he called the race, sometimes so excitedly that the radio was overwhelmed and all spectators could hear was an excited roar, punctuated by a pause and then an enthusiastic, "Whoaaaaah!" From Striker, the commentary would transfer to former IGSA Streetluge World Champion David Dean, who'd report the radar speeds taken at the bottom of the straight above Cowser's Corner and then call each heat to the line. Dean kept a constant patter of information, details about the racers and results pouring out of the public address system as spectators screamed at the racers in the final turns and during the lunges for the finish line. The crowd was going nuts and there was even some wagering taking place on the sidelines!

By the time racing reached the semi-finals, the heats were amazing in terms of the level of competition! Minor mistakes or daring moves were the determining factors as racers came through Cowser's tight and fast, together. Out of the first semi, it was Martin Siegrist, Nathan Lang and Noah Sakamoto in a blistering run that sent those three to the final round. The second semi-final featured Kevin Reimer, Tom Edstrand, Fredrik Lindstrom, Scoot Smith, Mischo Erban and J.M. Duran. Mischo had been the top qualifier on day one, K-Rimes was skating at the top of his game with big grins visible through his windscreens, Edstrand was

Photos: Malekai Kingston and Erik Basil



"Spaghetti" into the "Never-Ender Left"

looking aero and aggressive in Cowser's and the unflappable Scott "Scoot" Smith had qualified faster than all but Siegrist. These heats were so strong they could have been finals at any other race in the world. They came down the hill, ripped through the final turn with Scoot on the inside line next to Erban as '06 World Champion Edstrand came down in a surge to pass and then, Wham!! Edstrand was into the hay on the outside of the final turn, his only spill of the weekend, and Erban carried his outside line speed for the top spot. K-Rimes and Scoot followed him in for slots in the finals.

That set the stage for an epic contest between Lang, Sakamoto, Siegrist, Erban, Reimer and Smith. At the call from the top of the hill, Striker was now howling like a monkey, nearly impossible to understand but conveying the intensity of the battle for position going on in the early turns. As they came into spectators' view, streaking down the "Cattle Gate Straight", it was Siegrist in the lead! Martin was followed closely by Scoot and K-Rimes. They went out of our view and headed down toward Cowser's Corner.

As with many runs at Maryhill, the entire race was won and lost at Cowser's. Siegrist took the traditional fast line, with a wide entrance and an angle to the inside. Scoot saw



The Money Shot: Scoot wins it

Unbelievable! I will plan for next year on my flight home!
— Matthias Lang

Siegrist make the move and just went for a last-ditch move down the almost-impossible fully inside line. He leaned, gripped, ripped and somehow managed to keep his wheels from sliding out, which would have spelled disaster for him and Siegrist, together. K-Rimes latched onto Scoot and they train-rolled past Siegrist as Erban also lunged forward. Then, they were hard into the left-hand sweeper before the Finish Line, four of the six nearly elbow-to-elbow. Erban went wide to avoid hitting Scoot and Siegrist ground his hip into hay bales to avoid crashing with Reimer. Scoot and Erban led to the line with Erban gaining ground. As they came over the line, Scoot could see the nose of Mischo's board, knew he had it and threw his arms up with a scream that we could only see over the roaring crowd lining the finish area.

The final results were: 1. Scott "Scoot" Smith; 2. Mischo Erban; 3. Kevin Reimer; 4.

Martin Siegrist; 5. Nate Lang; 6. Noah Sakamoto.

The party started in the run out area below the finish line and kept going all night, right through the steak & shrimp dinner, awards ceremony and a concert with Seattle bands Point One and Tempered Cast. In the middle of it all, after Scoot and the other Festival of Speed Champions had been awarded their giant "checks" (cashed immediately with stacks of C-notes in promoter John Ozman's hand) the incredible schwag giveaway took place. At the racecourse, there had been boxes of t-shirts, wheels, DVDs and a few boards handed out to stoked spectators, but what followed was the Mother of All Schwag: dozens and dozens of completes, decks, wheels, shirts, videos... locals, skaters, everybody was in on the melee!

When that was all over, Marcus Rietema announced that the 2008 IGSA World Championships will be at the Maryhill Festival of Speed. It will be the week before Labor Day and, if perfect weather, an incredible road, a super town, a giant family of stoked skaters and the most intense racing of the season are any indication, you're going to want to be in Goldendale on August 27-31, 2008! Get your gear, get your longboard and be there! **CW**

Photo: Jonah Gilmore



Photo: Michael Speke