

San Francisco Gravity Festival 2002

by Marcus Rietema

This weekends first annual San Francisco Gravity Festival was a resounding success. The road turned out to be a lot of fun. It was 40' wide with three significant turns. Top speeds were in the 55mph range. There were so many different lines down the course it made for some really exciting racing. One of the many nice features was that there is a separate road to shuttle the competitors.

During practice many riders were getting 5-6 runs or more per hour! The venue is located in a beautiful park in the heart of San Francisco. It is probably the most spectator friendly venue we have ever staged an event on.

The weather was definitely an issue all weekend. A large group of volunteers spent the entire day on Friday setting up nearly 600 hay bales and 1500' of fencing. The track also needed some serious cleaning after the crazy storm that had rolled through the night before.

Saturday morning the weather improved significantly. The City of San Francisco was kind enough to send over a street sweeper that worked on buffing out the course for about two hours. Once we finally got practice going we realized that we had a fantastic race course to work with. Qualifying, especially in Street Luge was some of the tightest we have seen in a long time. Bob Ozman marked the first anniversary of his horrific buttboard crash by qualifying second in Street Luge.

Rasayd Chung also had his new Quadcarver, high performance scooter on hand to make some timed runs. His best was a 56.841 which would have placed him solidly in the Downhill skateboard field in 4th place!

Qualifying Results

Classic Style

- 1 John Fryer 51.284
- 2 Richard Hodgkinson 51.507
- 3 Mario Korf 51.915
- 4 Rian James 52.005
- 5 Eric Cole 52.188
- 6 Scott Peer 53.177
- 7 Eric Keepo'o 55.257
- 8 Mark Johnson NoTime

Street Luge

- 1 John Fryer 48.577
- 2 Bob Ozman 48.999
- 3 Paul Busse 49.014
- 4 Rusty Riley 49.064
- 5 Marcus Rietema 49.195
- 6 Richard Hodgkinson 49.247
- 7 Rian James 49.436
- 8 Eric Cole 49.845
- 9 Justin Tolman 50.929
- 10 Steve Pearl No Time

Downhill Skateboard

- 1 Daryl Freeman 54.132
- 2 Patrick Rizzo 54.301
- 3 Eli Smouse 54.377
- 4 Richard Delsado 57.555
- 5 Noah Sakamoto 57.839
- 6 Todd Smith 58.079
- 7 J.M. Duran 58.583
- 8 Roger Jennings 59.488
- 9 Eric Cole 66.592

Downhill Inline Skate

- 1 Sebastien Laffargue 48.606
- 2 Warren Focke 51.981
- 3 Scott Peer 52.103
- 4 George Merkert 52.354
- 5 Bruce Stevenson 53.803
- 6 Robert Wurgaft 55.169
- 7 Pinto Gregoire 55.266
- 8 Thomas Vick 55.336
- 9 Ereik Shaffer 56.413
- 10 David Lambert 57.267
- 11 Keri Tishner 61.654
- 12 Donald Orlando NoTime

Stock Gravity Bike

- 1 Eric Keepo'o 51.965
- 2 Doug Pilcher 52.730
- 3 Rian James 52.908
- 4 Rich Severn 52.964

3/4 Fairing Gravity Bike

- 1 Matthew McLemore 46.880
- 2 Jorge Rerieux 48.537

Sunday Morning greeted us all with cold, dark and windy weather. After about an hour of practice it was decided to cut practice short and begin racing as the weather was looking increasingly threatening. First up were the Stock gravity bikes. Just as the race was about to begin, the heavens opened up and it began pouring rain. The bike riders voted unanimously to go ahead with their race. After three close heats the results were as follows.

Stock Gravity Bike

- 1 Rich Sevein
- 2 Doug Pilcher
- 3 Rian James
- 4 Eric Keepo'o

Next up came the 3/4 Fairing Gravity Bikes. After one treacherous run in the pouring rain won by Jorge Rerieux it was decided to postpone the other two heats of racing until later. We broke for lunch in hopes of better weather in the afternoon.

All of the competitors and officials were treated to a free gourmet lunch consisting of veggie sandwiches, bbq chicken, lamb kabobs and hot cream of tomato soup that was just the thing for the cold, wet racers. During the lunch break the weather improved and the sun even began to come out. Marcus Rietema held a riders meeting and the Downhill Skateboarders decided to go ahead with their race. They raced in a Dual format and Patrick Rizzo pulled out a well deserved victory over Daryl Freeman. The full results were as follows:

Downhill Skateboard

- 1 Patrick Rizzo
- 2 Daryl Freeman
- 3 Richard Delsado
- 4 Eli Smouse
- 5 J.M. Duran
- 6 Noah Sakamoto
- 7 Todd Smith
- 8 Roger Jennings
- 9 Eric Cole

Next up came the Inline Downhill Skaters. This was the largest class of the weekend with a full 12 skaters making up the grid. I believe that is the largest inline downhill skating event ever held in the United States with the exception of the X Games. Sebastien Laffargue and PintoGregoire made the trip over all the way from France to attend the event. Laffargue had really schooled the field when he won qualifying by nearly 3.5 seconds over the 2nd placed skater! It was quite an upset when George Merkert came through with the hard fought victory. Here are the final results for Downhill Inline Skating.

Downhill Inline Skating

- 1 George Merkert
- 2 Sebastien Laffargue
- 3 Warren Focke
- 4 Robert Wurgaft
- 5 Donald Orlando
- 6 Scott Peer
- 7 Erek Shaffer
- 8 Pinto Gregoire
- 9 Thomas Vick
- 10 David Lambert
- 11 Bruce Stevenson
- 12 Keri Tishner

The course was now drying rapidly for the remaining two heats of $\frac{3}{4}$ fairing gravity bikes. After losing the first heat in the rain, Matt Mclemore came back on the drying track to win the final two heats and take class honors.

$\frac{3}{4}$ Fairing Gravity Bike

- 1 Matthew McLemore
- 2 Jorge Rerieux

Since none of the practice sessions had been run on a wet course, Chief Steward Marcus Rietema ordered each class to take a mandatory easy practice run on the wet course just prior to their race. It was on this practice run for the Classic Style that Eric Keepo'o suffered a high speed accident

resulting in multiple fractures to his lower right leg. Eric remained upbeat throughout his entire ordeal that stopped on track activities for nearly two hours. I am happy to report that after surgery Sunday night, Eric is resting comfortably and the surgery was reported to be a complete success. While speaking to him on Monday, he vowed to return to racing again next year. We wish you a full and speedy recovery Eric.

Once we got back to racing, the action was hot and heavy. Eric Cole took a surprise victory over Richard Hodkinson. Here are the complete results for Classic Style:

Classic Style

- 1 Eric Cole
- 2 Richard Hodkinson
- 3 John Fryer
- 4 Mario Korf
- 5 Mark Johnson
- 6 Rian James
- 7 Scott Peer
- 8 Eric Keepo'o

Finally, we came to the final event of the day. Street Luge Qualifying had been really tight so everyone was expecting a really exciting race. I don't think anyone came away from the event disappointed. John Fryer took a close victory of Rian James. Rusty Riley and Bob Ozman also had a close battle for third place with Ozman taking the win. On the podium, Bob Ozman announced his retirement from racing. You may still see Bob racing at the occasional regional event but he said this was his final National or world cup level event. We'll miss you racing and your style and class will never be forgotten. Thanks for the memories...

Street Luge

- 1 John Fryer
- 2 Rian James
- 3 Bob Ozman
- 4 Rusty Riley
- 5 Richard Hodkinson
- 6 Eric Cole
- 7 Paul Busse
- 8 Justin Tolman
- 9 Marcus Rietema
- 10 Steve Pearl

Special thanks go out to Robert Wurgaft for all of his hard work, time and money that made this event possible. Thank you also to David Miles, Warren Focke, Kathryn Kain and the rest of the San Francisco crew that made this event possible. A very big thank you also goes out to Rasayd Chung and Quadcarver for all of their help and support. Thank you to Bob Ozman for all of your help in organizing this event and for your continuing contributions to the IGSA. Finally, a very big thank you goes out to all of the volunteers who constructed the race course, and who volunteered as Course Marshals. Thank you to the many racers and family who helped tear the course down on Sunday night and thank you to those who did all of the little things that none of us even realize.

Without all of the volunteer help, this event would have never been possible.

All in all the San Francisco Gravity Festival was an outstanding event for first time promoter Robert Wurgaft. Many feel this venue has the potential to become one of the IGSA's biggest events. For 2003 the IGSA is planning two National level three day events at this venue. The

Gravity Festival will return in the Spring and the IGSA US National Championships will be held there in the Fall.

Look for the comprehensive results include the full racing brackets, to be posted at gravity-sports.com later this week.