

THE TATTOO

BRISTOL PRESS

MAKING A PERMANENT IMPRESSION SINCE 1994

VOLUME 7 No. 10

Teens to Bristol: build a skatepark

By SARAH JORDAN and KATIE JORDAN
The Tattoo

Ernie Delvalle skateboards or bikes "almost every day." But would he – and his extreme sports-loving friends – use a new municipal skate park if City Hall moves forward with tentative plans to construct one?

"Depends how it is. If it's small, it isn't worth enough," said Delvalle, a 14-year-old, home-schooled Bristol eighth grader. But if Bristol built a good park, he said, he would go to it "a couple times a week."

Local skaters and bikers said they hope the city builds a large park soon and charges little or nothing to use it. And forget city plans to stick it in a park somewhere. The skaters said the placement of choice is obvious.

"They should have it right by ESPN so that if they have a competition they can televise it," said Josh Wickstrom, a Chippens Hill Middle School eighth grader.

Andrew Signore, a Chippens Hill seventh grader, said he'd enjoy a good park. "I'd go to it every day," he said.

Philip Cormier, a 14-year-old and a freshman at Bristol Central High School, said he's got an even better idea.

The city could erect the park "right in my backyard." And, Cormier added, "I think it should be free."

While they wait to see if City Hall ever gets around to building a municipal skate park, local skaters said they head for hot spots such as the Barnes Group parking lot downtown, CT Bike on South Street, the lot near Bristol Eastern High School's baseball field as well as skate parks in neighboring towns.

Wickstrom, who's been skateboarding for nearly two years, said he will skateboard anywhere he doesn't get kicked out. Barnes Group's vigilant janitorial staff has tried to oust him and his friends from its property, he said, but he still goes there

"because it's all waxed up."

Since certain tricks require waxed curbs to perform, using a curb that some other skater has already waxed is a plus, several skaters said in an interview with *The Tattoo*.

Daylene Pitch, a 13-year-old Chippens Hill seventh grader who has Rollerbladed since she was 10, said she heads for Barnes Group because it's close to home.

Signore also likes to skate at Barnes Group. He said, "I like the funky sound my board makes when I go over bricks" there.

Cormier, who also likes Barnes Group, isn't deterred by much when it comes to skateboarding.

"I just don't skate in the rain," Cormier said.

Most of these skateboarders are used to getting run off private property by the police, who normally just warn them to stop trespassing, they said.

Delvalle, who said he skateboards in Barnes Group's lot "because it's fun," said he was once arrested for vandalism while skateboarding at a middle school in Southington.

Patrick Lafferty, a sophomore at Kaynor Tech, said he bikes daily and skateboards once in a while. Although he lives in Waterbury, Lafferty said he comes to Bristol almost every week.

Lafferty said he sometimes goes to CT Bike, which costs \$10, but usually skates on the streets.

To Wickstrom, one shortcoming of CT Bike – a privately run indoor skate park and sport shop in Bristol – is its use of "cheap" materials.

Signore said a city skate park should be outdoors but have a roof. He said it ought to have a street course, a bowl, and a vert course – and made from cement or steel.

"Steel would be awesome," Signore said.

The kids who will use the park should design it, he said.

If Bristol has any trouble coming up with a design, Wickstrom said, he has some ideas.

"They should have a box, in like City Hall,

on how many people can use the park at a time. "There shouldn't be a limit on skating. If you want to skate you can, if there are too many people you go home," he said.

Signore said there must be an age limit so little children won't be hurt.

Wickstrom said he would also recommend that people using the park should have a minimum age of nine, but otherwise it ought to be open to "anyone who skates."

Pitch said entrance to the park should cost about \$5.

Signore, too, said a \$5 fee would be fair and could help pay for extensions to the park.

If a skate park is built in Bristol, Wickstrom said, the admission charge should be reduced for residents.

"If it's better than CT Bike, I'd pay \$10," Wickstrom said, adding that he would go to the park "a couple times a week, if it were decent."

Signore said a restaurant should be built near the park so people can get food. Signore said Bristol would have to get money to

make a quality skate park, but it would be worth it. He said the community could have an annual competition with professional extreme athletes like the ones coming to town for the X Trials.

While the park would clearly cater to teens who are most apt to want to strut their stuff on boards, bikes and skates, local extreme sports fans said that there are more of them than people think.

To Cormier, there is no age at which to stop skating. "My friend, he's 37, he still skates," he said.

where you can drop off a design and if they like it they use it," Wickstrom said.

Pitch said there should be a limit on how many people are allowed into the city's skate park because if it got too crowded, people would run into each other.

If crowd control were left to him, Wickstrom said, he would have different days for different sports. "Skaters and bladers one day and bikers another," he said.

But Delvalle said there should be no restriction

Tony Hawk: go for it

BY JENNIFER PLONSKI
The Tattoo

Skateboarding legend Tony Hawk said the rise in the number of towns with skate parks is "inevitable."

"If cities don't build it, they're going to realize they need to," said Hawk while in Bristol last month for the X Trials.

Hawk, now 33, said he started skateboarding at age 10, was sponsored at 12 and turned pro at age 14.

Skateboarding is "getting bigger than is has" and gaining legitimacy, said Hawk, a retired pro skateboarder who does exhibitions for the Tony

Hawk Gigantic Skate Park Tour.

Hawk said his advice to young people interested in skateboarding is, "Do it if you really enjoy it. Just try to keep challenging yourself."

A big part of skating, he said, is "learning how to fall." He said he wears a helmet.

Hawk said he strongly felt that if Bristol, or any other town for that matter, really does need a decent skate park, they should make one.

Hawk said the towns shouldn't "ignore the fact that there's a need for a skate park."

But whether communities move forward skate parks, Hawk said, "depends on how much foresight the city councils have."

Getting air at the X Trials

By MIKE NGUYEN
The Tattoo

When you think blimps, you naturally think of the fiery Hindenburg crash. But that didn't stop me from jumping aboard the Hood dairy blimp during the X Trials last month.

On a beautiful Saturday morning, I headed to Brainard Airport in Hartford. Miles away, I already spotted the massive white letters that spelled "Hood" on the blimp.

Our blimp escort was ready and waiting. (By the way, the technical term for a blimp is "airship," but no one really minds.) The passengers and I got a briefing on how to safely board and exit the blimp out in the knee-high grass field.

The crew performed what looked like a suicide mission. They ran at the blimp, caught lines connected to the 62,000 to 70,000 cubic feet airship and pulled it to a stop.

After it landed, we boarded the small gondola where pilot Terry Dillard waited.

The gondola was set up like a car, with a back seat that can fit two or three people – if you're small enough. The pilot seat is up front. The dashboard is set up like a plane, with hundreds of buttons and instruments to measure altitude and all that.

Everyone was given headphones with a microphone for contact with the pilot. This way you know if the blimp is going down – you hear all radio contact with the crew and airport.

With the help of an aerial road map, we started our two-hour ride at speeds hitting 20 miles an hour. Slowly and surely – with the windows wide open to get air circulating and a true sense of a breath-taking experience – we rocked back and forth like a boat over neighborhoods, towns and schools.

From 1,000 feet in the air, everything looks like those toy town models you had as a kid. Soccer fields were covered with little moving dots. Houses were lined up neatly in rows and columns with little streets and little toy cars parked outside.

Golf courses we passed were the most interesting, as the carts circled around like they were just taking the same path over and over again.

"We scout out the best golf courses [in the region] and make arrangements for tee time after we fly," Dillard said.

Dillard, from Orlando, Fla., has been a blimp pilot for 10 years. After 15 years as a hot air balloon pilot, "I made a few calls and got my job," he said.

He flies for Lightship, an airship company that owns seven national and five international blimps including Monster.com, Blue Cross and the infamous Budweiser blimps. The airships have flown for over football games and the 2000 Olympics in Australia.

Dillard said pilots don't like to talk about deflating.

"We never use the D-word," Dillard told the passengers. "A blimp is meant to be inflated and flown for its whole life."

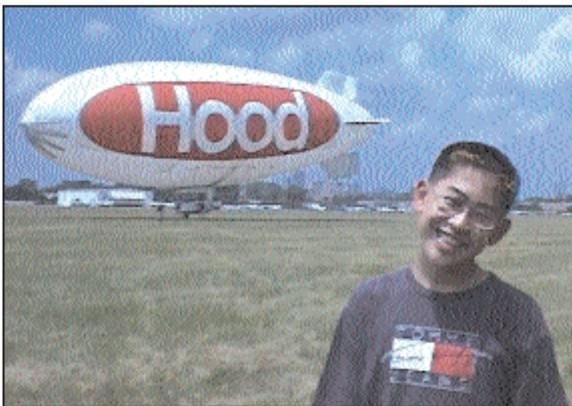
A blimp can live for three years before the envelope or helium sac needs to be replaced, so pilots just fly off to the next destination rather than deflating and moving the airship.

"If a client wants us to go to California, it would take 18 days to get over there, so that's what we do," Dillard said.

Dillard said his next trip to Boston was to escape an incoming storm.

"With an airship, you have to move it to wherever the weather is good," Dillard said as he maneuvered the blimp.

Trips can sometimes take shorter or longer than expected.



Tattoo Photo

Mike Nguyen pauses for a quick picture with the Hood blimp after his flight over Bristol and the X Trials site at Lake Compounce.

"If you have head wind, it slows you down," Dillard said. Tailwind pushes the blimp faster.

About a half an hour or so into the ride, we caught a glimpse of the Otis Elevator building. As we approached, we could see a small outline of the Ferris wheel and swinging pirate ship on South Mountain.

We hovered about the X Trials venue for photo opportunities and a look at the events. I could make out an athlete on the vert ramp flying back and forth. From our high spot, we had the advantage of not having to strain our necks to see.

After hitting the X Trials, we toured Bristol a little more and headed back to Hartford for our last obstacle – the landing. As we took one last look at the Hartford skyscrapers and tangled neighborhoods, we saw the 13-person landing crew and their vehicles driving into the Brainard field.

Amazingly the landing was even smoother than the take-off.

Of course, that might be because it never fully landed, but stayed afloat, just held down.

Remember the blimp can't defla...I mean, the D-word.

With my adventure done, we were loaded out of the airship. The blimp flew off on a little joyride.

Sound fun? Well, the next airship ride can be yours.

Log on to www.hphood.com and click on the airship button, which will bring you to the Hood blimp's page, full of the whirring blimp sound and information on how you can enter yourself in a contest to win a free ride on the Hood blimp.

Trust me, it's worth doing and all you have to do is keep track of the site and collect points to be entered in a raffle. It's easier than it sounds, so log in and get the once-in-a-lifetime chance to fly in a blimp.

Oh, by the way, all passengers get to pick the destination of where to fly. Good luck and happy blimping.

This spot is hot, pro athletes say

By MIKE NGUYEN
The Tattoo

With the X Trials having reached the finish line, the question on the minds of Bristol's extreme sports fans is, of course, can we do it again next year?

ESPN is considering a return trip.

But do the athletes themselves want to make a second appearance in Bristol?

Many said they do.

Jamie Bestwick, an English stunt biker, didn't have the greatest first-time-in-Bristol experience.

During the preliminary rounds of the Bike Stunt Vert, he injured his elbow in a crash.

But even through the pain and disappointment, Bestwick enjoyed Bristol.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't place [in the event, but] Bristol's been great. The atmosphere is great. Everybody's beautiful," Bestwick said.

Fortunately Bestwick grabbed enough year-end points in the Hoffman Bike Association to leave Bristol with an overall Year End title and victory belt.

"I'm really, really pleased,"

said Bestwick after getting the award.

Well, the bikers seem to dig the place, but what about those skateboarders?

Andy McDonald, one of the biggest names in skateboarding, was also present at the Trials, sitting out the skateboarding park finals, but still cheering from the sidelines.

"Bristol is hot and humid," he joked, talking about the high 80's and 75 percent humidity of that Saturday.

Despite the heat, McDonald said he still enjoyed the competition.

Bruce Crisman, a top-ranked bicycle stunt rider, said he was excited about Bristol.

"It's really great," he said, "Hot too. I'm excited for tomorrow for my competition."

Unfortunately, a last day rain out robbed Crisman of his chance to shine.

But despite the rain out, ESPN thought the Bristol X Trials were a great success.

While the company is still weighing options, it seems an extreme sports encore in the Mum City is likely – and that suits the X athletes just fine.

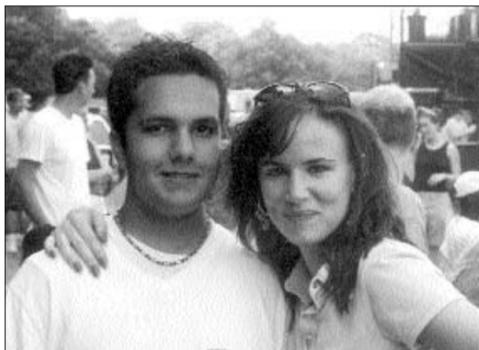
Missed the X Trials? read all about it online

So where were you that Father's Day weekend when the X Trials were going on?

Luckily, *The Tattoo* was there in full force covering every aspect of it, from the wins to the weirdness.

Read the interviews and profiles with extreme sport's biggest names or follow our teenage reporters on the quest for everything from free stuff and Sharpies to the mysterious Caution Tape Man. You can catch our full coverage of the X Trials online at www.ReadTheTattoo.com.

Movie star makes Mum City cameo



Tattoo Photo

He's cool; she's hot. Sam Yosafi and Juliette Lewis.

By SAM YOSAFI
The Tattoo

Not all the stars at the X-Trials were on wheels. Besides high-profile athletes like Tony Hawk, even Hollywood showed up at Lake Compounce.

"I go to a lot of the contests and demos," said 28-year-old film actress Juliette Lewis.

Lewis spoke with *The Tattoo* as she watched husband Steve Berra compete in the skateboard park preliminaries.

She giggled when asked whether she was extreme enough to take on boards, blades or bikes.

"I never tried any of these sports. That's obviously not where my talent lies," she said.

Lewis, star of such films as "Natural Born Killers" and "The Other Sister," said she gets "really nervous" watching her husband skate.

"The contests are very nerve wrecking because he gets really nervous," the red-headed starlet said.

But she said she can relax more with demos – where the athletes are showing off new tricks – because they are a lot more laid back than the contests. Since there is no competition among the participants, everyone is on the same page.

What she enjoys most about her occasional trips to skating events, Lewis said, is talking with the athletes who compete with her husband. She said she always likes to hear what they think of the park they're skating.

"I've heard that they like this course here today. It's a very smooth ride apparently," Lewis said regarding the setup in Bristol.

Lewis is currently teamed up with Uma Thurman in her latest flick where the two play Jersey girls in the late '80s. The movie hasn't hit the theaters yet.

"You just have to see it," Lewis said.

Why you should join *The Tattoo*

Is there something you've been yearning to voice your brutally honest opinion on? Would you like to uncover the truth about what's going on in your town? How would you like to be a student reporter yourself and rake in some awards in the process? If any of those questions apply to you, *The Tattoo* is the perfect answer. You can reach us at www.ReadTheTattoo.com, or call our advisors, Jackie and Steve at 523-9632.

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