

'War of Rails' an aerial battle at Bear

Freeskiers soar and slide in pursuit of huge \$20,000 purse during third annual event

Watch as top freeskiers do battle with some of the most insane tricks imaginable during the third annual "War of the Rails" at Bear Mountain February 24-26.

The brainchild of former pro skier and born-and-raised Big Bear local Craig Coker (story page 2), "War of the Rails" features a \$20,000 cash purse. Riders will tackle a course Coker designs himself in The Scene featuring 15 foot wall and intense rails. The huge purse—\$10,000 goes to the winner—ensures a talented field of 30 invited riders from not just California but also Utah and Colorado resorts. It's a show that's free to watch from the comfort of Bear's 13,000 sq. ft. deck with DJ, giveaways and more.

"War of the Rails is very rider inspired, exactly what riders want," Coker said. "That's where the jam format is good. Riders can take the time to get in the tricks they want. And it's very spectator-friendly, right there at the bottom of Bear."

Friday opens with the new amateur portion of the event. Intermediate and above level riders with the skills to tackle the course compete for prizes plus the winner gets a session at the famous Windells Ski Camp. Heats begin at 12:30 p.m. with the 30-minute final at 2.

The \$80 entry fee includes two-day lift ticket, discount lift tickets for friends and family, plus special edition "War of the Rails" shirt and Under Armor competition-quality jersey. It's a package valued at over \$250, and the top 15 finishers get invited back for Saturday's invitation-only pro event and a chance at the big bucks.

Saturday's big show begins with the first qualifier at 11:30 a.m. followed by finals at 2:15 p.m. In between on the deck there's music plus the "Mega Mo Moment" as spectators are paired with athletes and the winners score cool gear from sponsors Monster Energy, Under Armor, Skull Candy Audio, Windells, Bern Unlimited, Bear Mountain and Burton Helmets.

Sunday—barring snow on Saturday—

is a free day for photo shoots and exploration of the nation's only all-mountain freestyle park. Which should be in prime shape despite the lack of significant snow in January, thanks to powerful snowmaking that has left The People's Park in tip-top shape with mini, standard and Superpipe all open.

As February arrives there's 64 jibs spread about the nation's only all-mountain freestyle park at Bear Mountain plus another 66 snow features. Snow Summit meanwhile has 32 jibs and 32 snow features in the Westridge and Ego Trip Parks with another 25 snow features as the Chair 9 Family Fun Park, itty bitty hitties the whole family can enjoy and learn on. That's almost a hundred hits at Snow Summit, the resort that *isn't* the park specialist!

At Bear there's several unique parks, each different from the others. Skill Builder Parks on Chair 6 are for those just getting

into freestyle, while on Chair 5 there's larger features plus the pipes. Chair 9 sees 1-1/3 miles of jibbing bliss with rails and boxes, pyramid box, Analog Batwing, SpaceShip and "He Stairs at the Rail" contest winners, and jumps of all sizes.

Branching off The Park Run is the new Red Bull Plaza, a street inspired park with heavy stack of rails, wall and ledges.

Lamp posts, street signs and planter boxes give it a definite urban feel, along with staircases and rails. Kind of like skate-



You'll flip too when top freeskiers put on a great show at "War of the Rails"

boarding in the city, only with snow.

Bear offers more than just park too

with four mountain peaks serving some of the region's longest groomed runs. Like Exhibition on Silver Mountain with nearly a thousand vertical feet of descent, and Geronimo as it descends from Bear Peak—sixth highest ski peak in the state—for almost 1,200 vertical feet of double black diamond challenge. On the other side of the spectrum, the resort has Southern California's largest beginner area with several gentle runs descending from the top of the Access Ex-

press.

At Snow Summit virtually all runs are open as well, serviced by two high-speed

quads that access the entire mountain. Enjoy local favorites like Jo's, Tommi's, Perfect Pitches, Pipe Dream and more on Chair 10 where there's never a lineup, even on busy days. Adjacent Chair 7 with Timber Ridge and 7-Down is another great hangout. For more challenge head to the Bowl runs on Chair 6, like The Wall, Olympic, Off Chute and Dicky's.

Progression Parks have also debuted at Snow Summit including down Zzyzx on Chair 3 where flat boxes and tamer jumps await those just getting into freestyle. Signage shows how each feature should be ridden, kind of like having an instructor at your side.

Night sessions at Snow Summit are a good way to get a ton of skiing and riding in for less money, and they're held from 3-9:30 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays and holidays. Get in on the tail end of day session then enjoy Miracle Mile, Summit Run and Westridge under the lights. The latter gets a fresh evening groom to offer corduroy as good as first chair riders got in the morning. Remember a single lift ticket is good at both resorts with a free shuttle running between them every half hour.

Call (909) 866-5766.

Club George hosts reggae parties at Geronimo's

Come to Da Party, Man! Each Saturday at Geronimo's Outpost, the on-mountain retreat that's the site of Bear Mountain Snow Splash, a Jamaica-style party unfolds.

Beginning at noon most Saturdays and Sundays, there's music by popular DJ Club George for a reggae party in the sun. Enjoy full bar and barbecue and nonstop reggae music from Bob Marley to Sean Paul, while taking in the views of top skiers and snowboarders as they descend down Bear Peak high above the beach party on Geronimo, the Southland's steepest, longest, highest run.

Geronimo's Outpost is at the top of the Access Express chair which services Southern California's largest beginner area, so stop by, weather permitting, for a little



Last year's War of the Rails saw skiers sliding the huge 15' wall (left); The Park is in great shape for snowboarders including entrants at January's Volcom PB&RJ