

Pro Zones, Red Bull Plaza Great New Places to Park

More Skill Builder Parks, new pro zones designed by Bear Mountain team rider...even a new urban-style Plaza with downtown hits like lamp-posts and bus benches.



Expanded park offerings await skiers and snowboarders at the Big Bear resorts during the 2011-12 season. Like the new Red Bull Plaza along Street Scene, an urban environment where riders bang of lamp posts, slide on bus benches and tap the sides of buildings, like they do on skateboards in the cities. Top Red Bull riders will host a contest on the snow with the winner earning a berth next September in the 2012 Hot Dawgz and Hand Rails. Last year the resort debuted a granite box top with ledge to get its urban look.

Bear Mountain is also introducing new "Pro Zones" designed by teams of its team riders including Seth Huot, JP Walker and Laurie Heiskari. The zones are kind of an extension of the signature features four of its top team riders created a couple years ago. "Only this time, they'll design entire zones with the boxes and rails they choose," said Chris Riddle of Big Bear Mountain Resorts.

"There will be different terrain featuring different styles of riding on different sections of the mountain," he said. "The goal is not high-end pro stuff—it's for the public to enjoy."

Pros will post videos of their zones on Bear's website and explain what their vision of riding it is. Then the public shreds it, shooting video that will be judged by the pros who designed the zone with prizes awarded for the best riding. Plans call for the first Pro Zone to debut in December with five built during the season.

Also look for more of the popular Skill Builder Parks that debuted last year. "They'll be featured on more terrain and cover very beginning features," Riddle said. Located on Amusement Park and Learning Curve, the areas serve as perfect introductions to freestyle fun for those just getting into rails, boxes and snow features.

Each small-sized feature has a do-it-yourself instructional sign, offering a trick description and tips on getting started, polishing skills, even ski and snowboard etiquette. Plus Park Staff roams through the areas offering tips and pointers.

Skill Builder Parks will also be featured at Snow Summit, where already there's great low intermediate terrain and beginner jumps and jibs along Chair 9 runs in the Family Park. Now there will be signage demonstrating how to do the various features. Of course the Big Bear resorts have plenty of practice at building terrain parks; they've been doing it for over 20 years. It all started in 1989, when Snow Summit cut a halfpipe by hand at the top of its mountain. The first jib was a tree branch. Then Bear Mountain built its debut Outlaw Park and freestyle riding has never been the same.

With a couple hundred different jibs to choose from—old pickup trucks, corrugated pipe, you name it—designers at The Park have a field day laying it all out, putting this jib at Bear and that one at Summit. "Our goal is to build the best park in the world, one that's for everybody, beginner to top pro," Park staff's Clayton Shoemaker said.

Last year on Powder Bowl there was a popular jump and park staff put corrugated tubes on lower Park Run—one flat and one pole jam style. The incredible 100 foot rail is a Bear exclusive and challenges the best riders. Other hits riders are likely to see include "He Stairs at the Rail," Jesse Paul's winning urban-style entry in last season's "Design Unlikely Feature" contest held by Analog with stairs and rail combo.

The previous winner, spaceship jib, is another favorite, along with the creeper ledge on upper Park Run, mini-Seth and its stepdown jump, donkey rail in Street Scene and Seth Huot's custom feature are also popular. While Bear is known for its two side-by-side pipes above the 13,000 sq. ft. sundeck—including Southern California's only competition-quality Superpipe with 17' side walls—it also has a "Minipipe" up the slopes on Amusement Park below Silver Mountain.

The Minipipe is about 100 feet long and 35 feet wide with sidewalls of four to five feet, plenty of room for skiers to learn jet turns and boarders to toss small 360s. "It gives people an introduction to halfpipe transitions and helps them to get comfortable," says Shoemaker. "It's size makes for real mellow transitions. It's been amazing to see how many people have been using it. The location is a good one—it's not under a chair like the other pipes, so beginners feel less pressure. It's their own sanctuary to go and learn." ■

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