

Subject: [Fwd: Big Bear Bans mtb race venues--liability issues]

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Subject: Big Bear Bans mtb race venues--liability issues

Date: Thu, 31 Mar 2005 15:22:27 -0800

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Gravity racing (and riding) to be banned at Big Bear

By Jason Sumner
VeloNews associate editor

This report filed December 7, 2004

One of America's most renowned mountain-bike racing venues has pulled the plug on downhilling. Snow Summit Resort in Big Bear Lake, California will no longer allow downhill bikes on its chairlifts during the summer riding season, and this means no more downhill racing either.

According to Dick Kun, president of the resort, the change in policy stemmed primarily from the amount of liability exposure his resort was facing by allowing downhillers to ride on the mountain two hours drive from Los Angeles.

"Even with the insurance that NORBA and Team Big Bear carried it wasn't enough to protect us," explained Kun, referring to USA Cycling's national cycling body and the outfit that has run the Big Bear NCS races and many others during the last 15 years. "We just don't get enough in return to defray the exposure."

Kun added that, "there's one on-going claim stemming from an accident that happened a couple years ago that put things over the top." He would not elaborate on the case.

Two years ago, at the NORBA national series event, a female Japanese downhiller died from injuries sustained during a practice run.

Kun also pointed to the number of illegal trails being built on the mountain, which he said could be almost exclusively pinned on the downhill/freeride set.

"Guys were just riding everywhere in the woods," said Kun. "The Forest Service was really pissed off with what was going on and it probably wasn't long before they shut it down anyway."

A statement on the Team Big Bear Web site read, "Various methods have been used to inhibit the development and use of these trails including, signage, fencing and ticket revocation, but these attempts have proved futile."

As for the NORBA national series race that's scheduled for Big Bear May 14-15, 2005, the event will go on, just without the downhill or dual slalom.

"We'll have the cross-country and maybe the Super D," said Team Big Bear's Tom Spiegel. "But there will be no gravity events, no downhill, no dual slalom. It's all about the danger factor. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it goes."

As for enforcement of the new rule, Snow Summit's Kun said it would probably be a matter of bike weight restrictions, say no bikes over 35 pounds, though a final decision had not yet been made.

"Frankly we considered stopping [bike riding at the resort] all together," said Kun. "But we decided that we were willing to accept the exposure that came with allowing cross-country riding. We haven't had any serious accidents involving cross-country people and we don't think they're the ones building the illegal trails."



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by Tom Moran (file photo)