



Photo by Michael Wilhelm

Three BMX racers go airborne on giant bumps in the course, ranked as one of the best BMX tracks in Oregon.

giant bumps that send the racers shooting up into the air.

According to Butch Filley, who announces during the races, Eugene's track ranks as the best in Oregon.

If Rich Little did an impersonation of John Wayne announcing the Kentucky Derby, he would sound like Butch Filley. Filley has been announcing for the BMX races for six years. He says he became involved in it through his son who was a BMX racer. Filley's style adds a distinction to the races.

Intermittent downpours turned the April 11 race into an endurance test for the spectators at times. "Little more wind and it'll be perfect out here," Filley announced over the loudspeakers before he shifted back to the action without a skip.

It took years for the local BMXers to find a track to settle into and call their own. The BMXers first raced at the Eugene Speedway, but it flooded during the winter. The owners also would demand half the entry fees when the local racers hosted tournaments,

Snook says.

The BMXers then moved to Pleasant Valley, but farmers complained that the noise of the races and crowds were killing the sheep. Hounded out of Pleasant Valley, the racers finally ended up on a far-flung piece of Alton Baker park in the corner of Autzen Stadium's parking lot.

Volunteers built the present site in 1982 with the help of a loaned bulldozer.

The site faces uncertainty, Snook says, because of a proposed plan supported by county Commissioner Jerry Rust to replace the track with a golf course driving range.

"It would be an absolute sin not to even be considered when they plan a golf course out there," Snook says.

Races are held year 'round, the only break being two weeks in December for Christmas. Bad weather annoys the hardcore racers, but never to the point of cancelling an event. Right now, Emerald Valley BMX holds races twice a week, on Thursdays and Saturdays.

If you do make the journey out

to the track, you'll probably hear the word "nationals" in every conversation you happen to overhear. That'll be the national tournament scheduled here for July. "That's when the big boys get here," Wilson says.

— WILL HOLBERT



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