

FREE-ROAM FROLIC FANS FLAME

Eugene's answer to The Amazing Race

The scavenger hunt is an activity so egregiously underrated by the adult world as naïve or childish that it really sucks the fun out of all that nostalgia. I ask you this: What would a child's Easter be without an egg hunt? What would playing pirate be without an "X" marking the booty spot?

This said, there have been attempts at adultifying the scavenger hunt – CBS' *The Amazing Race*, for instance – but we can't all be on national television, so what about those of us who don't mind feeling "naïve" for an afternoon? Or those of us who want to perform arbitrary tasks at breakneck speed in the name of good fun? The May 19 **Frolic Grand Prix** had the answer, and it will again on Aug. 25, during the Eugene Celebration.

The self-proclaimed "running, thinking, biking, laughing adventure across Eugene" takes the child and makes it wild. Some of the outlandish tasks contestants needed to perform during the last Frolic certainly weren't designed for kids. The race itself found its hub (start line and finish line) at Monroe Park, but beyond the perimeter of that grassy safe house stood five challenges waiting to be conquered: a dinosaur spelling bee, a beer chug/hot wing chowdown, folding a corner sheet, re-creating a photograph and a pop quiz about biofuel.

Beyond the fact that these tasks had potential to be taxing outright, there was another matter facing the 23 teams that signed up to compete: transportation.

With each task occurring at an individual local business, watching contestants voyage efficiently in teams of two was a display of improvisational magic: Tandem bicycles, fanny-pack adorned joggers and folks mapping routes on smart phones and various GPS systems ran wild in the streets surrounding Monroe Park, with each team covered in spirited garb and colorful trim.

Sweat-soaked racers delegated among themselves the chugging of a 12-oz. Ninkasi's *Spring Reign* and the consumption of a single insane sauce wing at Hot Mama's Wings.

"When did it get so hot in here?" remarked one exasperated, purple-wigged fella upon entering the joint. "I'll take the beer."



Frolic Grand Prix

Over at Laughing Planet Café, customers were overwhelmed with mirth and excitement as they held up plastic dinosaurs before the eyes of exhausted contestants. Here the racers battled with language – an admirable foe if ever there were one – as they attempted to spell the names of various prehistoric beasts without the aid of pen and paper. Turns out reciting the word S-T-E-G-O-S-A-U-R-U-S is a lot more daunting without a physical cross-reference.

Back at the hub, Jurassic 5 blasted from a PA, greeting waves of exhausted racers – most of whom saved the photo re-enactment for last.

For the Indie Pop Soda-sponsored task at McDonald Theatre, racers locked up their bikes and set about snapping cell phone pictures (or, for the less technologically advanced, furiously memorizing) a photo. Upon returning to Monroe Park, the teams had to replicate the image. The results of this one were utterly bizarre, but full of salty smiles nonetheless.

After advancing to the finals, three teams made their way down to the Ninkasi Brewery in order to complete their last, furiously competitive task: solving before anyone else a jigsaw puzzle made of blocks. In true scavenger spirit, the first to complete their puzzle raised the flag of victory high for all to see and were proclaimed the winners.

"It all went really well," Frolic-founder Bryan Jensen says. "The sponsors are happy, we're happy. We had a couple lessons learned, but overall it was fairly smooth and a lot of fun."

The good news is that this is definitely not the last you'll hear of Frolic Grand Prix. The next circuit takes place Aug. 25 during Eugene Celebration weekend. Sign up before June 23 to compete. This is a highly recommended stop for your summer – just make sure you bring your game face and a not-so-childish sense of adventure. – *Andy Valentine*

For more information about the upcoming Frolic Grand Prix, visit grinathletics.com/frolicgrandprix

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