

Bucky no stranger to the beach

Jul 14, 2011 | Written by: Scott Muska

Bucky Lasek competes in a half-pipe event at last summer's Las Vegas stop on the Dew Tour.

OCEAN CITY -- Bucky Lasek has been to Ocean City many times, dating back to his childhood, when he would travel to town from his native Baltimore to skate and compete at the Ocean Bowl Skate Park.

He was back again a couple weeks ago for a vacation with his wife and three daughters. They'd scheduled it before even knowing he'd be returning to town weeks later -- this time, on business for the professional skateboarder.



Starting July 21, Lasek will be competing in the skate vert and skate bowl portions of the Dew Tour's kick-off stop. He says having a stop at a beach location for the first time will be a big deal that will set a "whole new standard" for the tour.

"The environment is going to be one of the best settings ever, with everything the ocean has to offer from the food to the rides to the people watching and the water," said Lasek, who has finished first in year-end Dew Cup standings three times since 2005. The cup is awarded to the competitor in each event who has the highest cumulative point total after the four events, one of which will be held each month through October.

Lasek expects a large turnout for the four-day event, and knows for sure his friends and family will be in the crowd.

"I'm totally stoked, because the stands are going to be filled with all my family," said Lasek in a phone interview while visiting relatives in Baltimore. "They're gonna have to get more seating for the fans."

Lasek recently healed from a fractured ankle, and spent some time this week at Woodward West Skateboarding camp in California, where he hopes to get polished up before heading back east for the beginning of the Dew Tour.

He will be going head-to-head with Bob Burnquist, another veteran skateboarder. Burnquist is slated to compete in the Dew Tour's vert contest as well as its inaugural skate bowl contest. The bowl is a concrete structure made of concrete -- essentially, an empty swimming pool -- and the vert is a wooden half-pipe.

It will be interesting to see how the new competition goes, as well as how the handful of competitors participating in both events will hold up, Burnquist said in an interview while he was heading to a physical therapy session. He recently returned from a competition in his native Brazil, and said he'd added the sessions to work out some shoulder issues in the days before the Pantech Open. His shoulder is "upset with him," but he'll deal with it, he said, and will be able to compete.

"If you're doing a bowl and vert event in the same weekend, those are very cardio-intensive sessions where you use your legs a lot," said Burnquist, who occasionally struggles with asthma. "You can have all the tricks, but if you don't have the legs you're not going to last."

The tour will also feature BMX vert and park contests, along with a free concert, specialty surfing competitions and a festival village, where competitors like Burnquist and Lasek will interact with fans. Event sponsors like Toyota and Mountain Dew will have interactive and promotional booths set up as well.

Jeremiah Smith, a BMX park rider from Cincinnati, Ohio, said he's looking forward to returning to Ocean City to get started on his third year on tour. He's been in town a few times to do some recreational street riding, he said, and is confident he'll do pretty well in the competition despite the fact he hasn't been focusing too heavily on ramp riding lately.

"It's a very nice place, and the scenery is sweet, so I'm looking forward to hanging out and riding a little," said Smith, who added he especially likes participating in the Dew Tour because many of his close friends do as well.

Smith admires the Dew Tour because it gives younger, more unknown riders the chance to compete in big contests with some of the sport's stars.

"It's great to give them the opportunity, and it's always nice to see some of them come and make a name for themselves," Smith said by phone from State College, Pa., where he recently relocated to run a Woodward camp.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan is looking forward to an exciting weekend where he will get to watch some of the "finest young athletes" in the world in person, as opposed to on television.

"I just marvel at watching these guys and girls being able to do the things they do on these tracks and halfpipes, but I don't think I'd try a single one of them myself," Meehan said, laughing. He's also been impressed with the way the athletes seem to interact with fans, especially the young ones. "They're very approachable, and very connected," he said.

On July 20, Lasek and some other competitors will check out the Commotion Down the Ocean event at the newly-renovated Ocean Bowl Skate Park, where amateur skateboard competitions will be held. The event will raise funds for Grind for Life, an organization created by pro skater Mike Rogers to help families who need support while traveling long distances for cancer care. The event takes place from 2-9 p.m., with registration for the competitions beginning at 11 a.m.

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