

## ‘PHENOMENAL’

Dew Tour sets attendance record; crowd favorite Bucky Lasek wins big at home  
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OCEAN CITY TODAY/ LISA CAPITELLI

(July 29, 2011) “Phenomenal” might be the best way to describe the Dew Tour’s debut in Ocean City, as the Pantech Open set a Dew Tour attendance record by drawing approximately 73,000 fans during its four-day run, July 21-24.

“This past weekend was a monumental success for the Dew Tour and Ocean City.

We feel proud of the event that was put on, from the record-breaking crowds, down-to-the wire contest action and newly integrated disciplines such as skate bowl and surf [contest], which is unique to Ocean City for the

year,” Chris Prybylo, vice president of events at Alli Sports and general manager of the Dew Tour, stated in an e-mail Wednesday.

“The Dew Tour Pantech Open was one for the books. We can’t thank the town of Ocean City enough for the support they gave us to really take hold of this unique opportunity.”

Workers began preparing for the event nearly two weeks in advance, building a vertical ramp, skateboard bowl and a BMX park, along with a festival village on the beach between Dorchester and Talbot streets.

The resort, the Tour’s first beachfront venue, edged out Virginia Beach for the privilege of hosting the event. The Pantech Open was first of four events on the 2011 Dew Tour.

The July 21 qualifying competitions were free to attend. Tickets sold out for the July 22-24 festivities, but the festival village was free all four days.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan thought everything went extremely well and said the Dew Tour and Ocean City are a “perfect match.” He attended many of the competitions and presented a special award to Brazilian Pedro Barros, winner of the Skate Bowl contest.

“Everything was terrific and went better than expected. It was well attended and very professionally run. [Dew Tour and Alli Sports representatives] were great to work with. I think we worked really well together,” Meehan said. “I was able to meet a lot of the athletes and they were very gracious and happy to be here. They love what they do.”

Professional skateboarder Bucky Lasek grew up in Baltimore and spent much time vacationing in Ocean City and skating at the Ocean Bowl on Third Street. During Sunday’s rain delay, Lasek

handed out popcorn at Fisher's. Talking to many of the athletes, Lasek said they all seemed to enjoy their time in the resort.

"They love the Boardwalk. They love the vibe. The people watching in Ocean City is incomparable to anywhere else. We've got a nice melting pot of people here that come from all over," he said. "I definitely think [the Tour] will be back here. I honestly think they need double the capacity of the crowd and go bigger on the stands and I think we'll sell out for sure."

Jamie Bestwick, the No. 1 BMX rider in the world, grew up in England, but has lived in Pennsylvania for the past 12 years. Bestwick said he often vacations in nearby Rehoboth Beach, Del., but he had only driven through Ocean City a few times.

"Ocean City has been great. The fans have really given us a great reception," Bestwick said. "We had fantastic crowds and the weather, for the most part, cooperated, but we got it done and I can say, hand on heart, every contest has been amazing."

Bestwick said he missed some spots he wanted to see and would love to visit again. He had yet to eat funnel cake, although he said he wasn't a fan prior to coming to Ocean City.

"I see enough people eating it. One of these days I've got to grab one," he said.

BMX rider Ryan Nyquist said he didn't know Ocean City existed until it became a Dew Tour stop. After the BMX Park finals last Saturday, Nyquist said he was happy to be here.

"I lived in North Carolina for a long time, but I live in California. I was born and raised there. The beaches are nice there and when I came here, I felt at home," he said. "There's definitely a lot of cool stuff going on. It feels really nice to be here and you can never get a better setting than the ocean."

Added Barros, "I like [Ocean City] a lot. The place is amazing. I've never been to a place where everyone just hangs out on the beach all day."

According to the Demoflush statistics, which uses wastewater flows to estimate the city's population, approximately 321,323 people were in town over the weekend (Saturday and Sunday average), said Donna Abbott, Ocean City's communication manager. It was a 7-percent increase from the same weekend last year.

Susan Jones, executive director of the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association said at the beginning of last week rooms were still available, but by Wednesday phones were ringing off the hook with guests looking for places to stay.

There are about 108 Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association lodging members (hotels, motels and some apartments) with approximately 9,200 rooms. Friday and Saturday those rooms were close to full.

“Walking on the Boardwalk and seeing the big crowd of people waiting for the event to open [Thursday] was incredible. I think it set the tone for the rest of the weekend. Even with the rain delay on Sunday, people stuck around,” Abbott said.

“I think it brought people to town and the people that were already here discovered it. I think everyone would want it to return. I think it was an event made for Ocean City.”

Abbott has heard nothing but positive comments from people about the event and how great the town looked on national television. The spotlight on the town was very favorable, she said and it will have a lasting impact.

“We’ve been working on this since February and all of the hard work that went into it paid off. When I saw Ocean City on NBC, I was overwhelmed,” said Tourism Director Deb Turk, who presented awards to the Skate Vert winners.

Turk mentioned that Shaun White was on Jay Leno Tuesday evening, talking about his performance during the Skate Vert event where he placed third. Before he joined Leno on stage, a video clip of White skating in Ocean City was shown. In the clip, people could see the crowded venue, the beach and "Ocean City, Md." emblazoned on the vert ramp.

“From a marketing, advertising and promotion standpoint, it’s way beyond our expectations,” Turk said. “It’s too early to tell the economic impact, but hotels pretty much sold out and businesses, especially on the Boardwalk, fared well.”

Added Jones, “The amount of TV coverage Ocean City got was incredible. Every other word out of the announcers’ mouths was ‘Ocean City, Maryland’ and the footage the cameramen shot ... was just incredible. They made Ocean City look the best it could.”

“If you’ve never been to Ocean City before and you were watching on TV, you would think ‘Wow, that looks like a cool town,’” she said. “There were athletes here from all over the world and, hopefully, they’ll go back and tell people how great Ocean City was.”