

Big thumb's up for park

Fresno's new BMX facility draws raves from host of riders.

Published online on Friday, Jul. 03, 2009

By Daniel Lyght / The Fresno Bee

Sweat and smiles.

Those were the two things on most peoples faces at the opening of the Mosqueda Bike Park on Friday.

Council members and organizers cut the blue ribbon to the 30,000 square feet of concrete excitement in southeast Fresno, allowing kids and teenagers to pedal through the gate and down the ramps.

Jesse Washington, an 18-year-old Fresno resident, was the first to drop his bike into the BMX freestyle facility that's said to be the nation's largest. It will open officially in about two weeks.

"It was great," Washington said. "It feels good to have a new park in Fresno. It was tiring but fun."

On hand for the event were several government officials and two professional BMX riders. Daniel Dhers, a two-time X Games gold medalist from Venezue said he agreed with the assessment that this was the country's largest. He said he'd seen only one bigger, and that was in Shanghai, China.

"I don't mind being No. 2 in the world," said Randy Cooper, Fresno's Parks, After School, Recreation and Community Services director.

Two aspects of the bike-only park that stand out to riders are the high ramps and 19-foot cradle -- a half-dome that allows skilled riders to defy gravity.

"This is seriously huge," Dhers said. "I wasn't expecting anything like this. It's not just the biggest but it's done right, that's the most important part. I rode it little this morning and everything feels good. It sucks when you go to a park and it's not built right."

What makes it "built right" to Dhers and other riders are the transitions, or angles of the ramps.

Fresno residents Chad Osburn and Jason Johnson said they've been to parks all over California and "nothing compares" to Fresno's new addition. Before this park, Osburn said he usually made his own dirt jumps only to have them torn down. He said he never thought Fresno would build something like this.

"It was always a dream that Fresno would blow up," he said.

That's exactly what city officials hope happens to Fresno's outdoor recreation reputation. Fresno Council Members Mike Dages and Henry T. Perea both they want Fresno to become the outdoor recreation capital of the world.

Perea, who gave Dages credit for leading the drive for the \$1.7 million project from the beginning, said the park's creation is a step toward Fresno become that capital, a sign the city is changing "with the needs of a new generation" and a show of commitment to inner-city Fresno.

Cooper said nine outdoor recreation facilities are already in place in the Fresno area and there are plans for six others to be added by the end of 2010. Those plans include the opening of a dirt jump and slalom next to the BMX track at Woodward Park and an 11-acre paintball facility in southwest Fresno.