

Bijou Bike Park set to transform SLT cycling



Matt Stuck works to get Bijou Bike Park in South Lake Tahoe ready to open Sept. 19. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

To the uninitiated, Bijou Bike Park doesn't look like it's anywhere near finished. And, yet, it's opening today in South Lake Tahoe.

To the cyclist who is well versed in these types of things, the park looks phenomenal. Some of those riders have been testing the various features.

Matt Stuck, a volunteer with Bijou Bike Park Association, was reshaping one of the jumps earlier this week because on a test run the land was "heavy on the feet." The solution – make it steeper.

He expected the landing to be 8½-foot-tall, with a 6-foot-tall

lip by the time he was done. Cyclists will come off the wood 6-footer, turn about 40 degrees in midair to land on the dirt embankment.



Ben Fish demonstrates the teeter-totter.

If that sounds too gnarly, there are tamer routes to take. This particular feature is on the big line. There are small and medium lines, as well.

Stuck on Sept. 16 gave the group attending the Tahoe Talk a preview of the route. With ease he flew through the air, scooted along the dirt, and played on the cedar obstacles. One is called the Hammock – but this 36-foot structure is no place to be dozing off.

“It’s like a roller coaster,” Stuck told *Lake Tahoe News* of the route.

Pete Fink, a member of the city’s Parks and Recreation Commission, said kids are building more dangerous things in the woods. The park brings a more controlled environment to this type of fun.

The features have a metal frame with cedar on the top and anchors into the soil. Most of the landings are hard, compacted dirt.

Ben Fish since 2011 has been the driving force behind the park. He is president of Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association as well as the nonprofit Bijou Bike Park Association. It is members of the latter who worked with the city of South Lake Tahoe to bring the nearly 5-acre park to fruition at a cost of about \$200,000.



Riders will enter the Hammock from the feature on the right.

The contractor is the same group that has built the last three Olympic BMX tracks – including the one in Brazil.

“The city stepped up and took a chance,” Fish said. When the process started there were 35 such parks in the country, now there are about 100.

But it wasn't easy. Often times cycling is seen as a second-class sport in Lake Tahoe compared to ball fields. Those get built at a cost \$1 million, and hundreds of thousands of dollars have regularly been going into field improvements.

The bike park has a trail around the outside that is one-third of a mile. Near the entrance is a small pump track, with the larger one to the left in the trees. The intent of a pump track is that you don't need to pedal.

The three slopestyle routes are similar to the concept of slopestyle on snow where riders will go over a slew of features.

The BMX track is 1,000-feet long – a couple hundred feet longer than the current one near South Tahoe Middle School that will be coming out this fall. The Bijou track has a slurry seal on it.

All of the attractions are free and open during the hours of the larger park. Everyone, no matter one's age, must wear a helmet.

Fish anticipates daily maintenance will be required. His association is looking for volunteers.

The park opens today after the 50th anniversary parade that starts at 10am at the Y and finishes at Bijou Community Park.