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## Maelle Ricker wins Mount Baker's Legendary Banked Slalom with injured arm in sling

Feb 14, 2011

Author: Dan Kostorzewski

Riding with only one good arm, Canada's Maelle Ricker took home her fifth straight roll of gold duct tape in the Women's Pro Division at the Legendary Banked Slalom this past weekend at Mt. Baker. On a world-famous banked track called "the smoothest in twenty years" by longtime course architect Gwyn Howat, Ricker put up a time of 1:31 on a bluebird, deep-powder finals day, beating second-place finisher and hometown hero Maria Debari of Glacier, Washington by two full seconds. Kelsey Galt of Kelowna took home a respectable fifth place in the women's division.

Squamish's Ricker, the defending LBS and Olympic snowboard cross champion, almost chose not to compete due to an injury January 18th at the Snowboard Cross World Championships in Spain that sent her into surgery and left her with a collection of screws and plates inserted into her left hand and with a dead feeling in her arm. Instead Ricker rode with her front arm in a sling and collected an impressive fifth title, one short of the record six titles won by Karleen Jeffrey, at what is universally recognized as the world's most soulful snowboard contest.

In the Pro Master's division, Nelson's Mark Fawcett showed the Canadian National team coach can still rip, winning his 30-and-over professional class with a clean, smoking run of 1:28.52, a time that would have placed him fourth in the Pro Men's Division. Vancouver resident, Baker local and former Prior demo guy Nate Kewin won his second specially embroidered Carhart jacket, finishing on top of a competitive Older Amateurs division with the category's fastest time, a 1:31.17.

In a surprising upset, 17-year-old Harry Kearney of Norwood, CO beat a stacked field of sixty-three of the sport's fastest and smoothest pros with a finals run time of 1:28.17. Olympic silver medalist Mike Robertson of Canmore, Alberta finished third with a time of 1:28.20 behind longtime LBS competitor Josh Dirksen but ahead of the legendary Terje Haakonsen and Squamish's Rob Fagan who took fourth and fifth respectively in the top-tier division. Longtime LBS legend Temple Cummins fell on his first of two finals runs and would up in 10th place with a time of 1:29.80, but watched a new Cummins learn to stay low and powerful through the banked course with his six-year-old son Cannon competing in the Next Generation division to loud cheers of encouragement from the spectator snowcave above the crop circle portion of the thigh-burning course.

As is the custom, the Legendary Banked Slalom—one of snowboarding's longest running and most unpretentious contests—was marked by chill vibes, serious heritage and unpredictable Mt Baker weather. After suffering a month-long snow drought, the event once again heralded the arrival of legendary Baker storms to the area with ninety-six mile-an-hour wind gusts during Saturday's qualifiers and fourteen inches of fresh, light, bluebird pow on Sunday. The characteristic Baker dump kept both pros and ams occupied freeriding classic backcountry lines out Shuksan Arm, on Hemispheres and in Willows in between their Sunday finals' runs. The relaxed weekend atmosphere incorporated the trademark Salmon barbeque, a packed White Salmon Lodge and evening Glacier revelry that included a rare performance by Wes Makepeace and Scott Sullivan at Saturday night's packed Lib Tech party in the new Chair Nine pub.

The only downside to the positivity was an obnoxiously heavy-handed presence by the law with more than twenty uniformed and undercover officers from the Whatcom Country Sheriff, the Washington State Patrol, The State Liquor Control Board and the US Border Patrol turning the mountain lodge, lot and town into what has now become an annual police state. In an embarrassment to the North Cascades' normally welcoming feel, the officers created a constant weekend hassle for the peaceful snowboard visitors attracted to Mt. Baker from across North America for what is the region's marquee winter tourism draw.

Yet in true Baker spirit, community trumped authority resulting in another legendary weekend for both spectators and participants. Holding true to the culture-over-cash mantra, the LBS staff once again pulled off one of our lifestyle's defining events in challenging mountain conditions. Circle this one on next year's calendar if you've never experienced the LBS, because few elements of shredding are more true to our founding roots than this long-running race. And, if history is any guide, the sky will start dumping, Baker-style, when you land and then crack blue for a crystal clear view of the best event in snowboarding.

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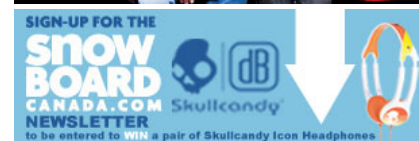
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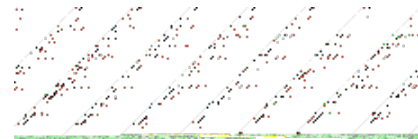


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