
wakeboarding events Rider takes his tricks to the extreme

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*** Rider takes his tricks to the extreme *** CARLSBAD, CA (AP) – 09/04/2003 It was in the middle of the desert, near his home in Las Vegas, that Ricardo Laguna saw some kids playing on a hill in the distance. I said, 'What are you doing?' Laguna recalled. They said, 'We ride BMX.' I was like, 'What do you mean by that?' The kids, who were having a contest to see who could jump the farthest on their bikes, told Laguna a little bit about the sport. Laguna, only 13 at the time, was captivated. I started tagging along with those guys, Laguna said. Before I knew it, I had found a real BMX track where you could practice. I bought a bike and started racing. A few years later, he switched from racing to freestyle events. Today, Laguna is a 21-year-old BMX professional. Laguna recently qualified for the 2003 Gravity Games in dirt jumping. The event, to be held Sept. 10-14 in Cleveland, will feature more than 200 of the world's top action sports athletes competing in bike, freestyle motocross, skateboarding, inline and wakeboarding events. This summer Laguna took part in Legoland's Sports Jam Show, an extreme sports event held daily from June through August at the park's new sports center. Visitors to Legoland may not know Laguna by name, but they would definitely remember his tricks. During one sequence in the 20-minute show, Laguna routinely performed a giant air over the Jammin' Jake mascot and the group of tumblers known as the Chicago Boyz. He's an up-and-coming superstar, said Mark Whitfield, a BMX rider who also performed in the Legoland shows. He has a vast array of tricks and has a really good style. It's not so much what he does out there, but how he does it. Born in La Paz, Mexico, Laguna lived in Tijuana and San Ysidro for a few years before moving with his family to Las Vegas. Laguna, whose home base is still Las Vegas, says qualifying for the Gravity Games at a New York event in July was one of his career highlights. As Laguna remembered standing on the awards podium with Ryan Nyquist, one of the biggest names in BMX, his face lit up. Everything he does, he's the number one – in dirt, street, skate, Laguna said. Him getting first and me getting third. . .it was like 'Whoa, what's going on here?' I never started doing this to be No. 1 or win every event. I've always just done it for the fun of it. Now that I'm making a living out of it, it's mind-blowing. Laguna's love for riding is what made him such a natural for Legoland, according to David Holden, whose company, Wheels of Freestyle, selects the participants. He puts his heart and soul into it every time he rides, Holden said. He has a passion for this and just loves to perform. Laguna, who has been a pro for about two years, has numerous sponsors. He says there is one major negative about competing for a living. It doesn't matter how good or how bad you are, Laguna said, if you make it, you're always going to have people saying you're a sell out. But I feel like I'm pushing the sport and opening doors. At his home in Las Vegas, Laguna has his own dirt jumps that he shares with some of the kids with whom he grew up. I have a lot of underground contests, said Laguna, who hopes to return to Legoland next summer. I like it when it's just the boys in Vegas, your close friends. That's where I have the most fun. Geneb...Wenatchee, Washington-USA All Things Northwest in BMX! ***** Gene`s BMX ***** <http://www.genesbmx.com>

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