

Promote and enhance the sport of slalom skateboarding. (SLALOM IS NOT GROWING)

Well, first of all I disagree that the ISSA is not promoting or enhancing the sport, and I disagree that slalom is not growing. Here is some evidence.

- Yearly list of Slalom events on NCDSA
 - 2001 6 events
 - 2002 26 events
 - 2003 39 events
 - 2004 32 events
 - 2005 39 events
 - 2006 48 events
 - 2007 51 events
- Number of ISSA events sanctioned in 2007 (The introductory year for the sanctioning process): 47 events.

Nevertheless, let's assume that we want to grow it more, promote it more, and enhance it more. Now the question I would have is this:

Does a uniform set of rules and expectations to be applied to all of the races promote, enhance, and grow slalom?

I contend that it does, for the following reasons:

- A) The ISSA spends less time spent arguing about what is the “best” way to do slalom. We do it once a year at the rules update cycle (October thru Dec). The rest of the year we actually run contests and promote the sport.
- B) The race promoters spend less time inventing or arguing about or developing or describing race formats and rules. Instead, they spend more time seeking sponsors, promoting and advertising, developing ties with the community and authorities, providing for racer amenities, etc.
- C) The spectators and racers can actually know what to expect and learn the format and rules to help them enjoy the sport. The ISSA rules could serve as a nice brochure to give away at the races, so the spectators can at least understand what's going on.

The proposed use of unusual rules for this particular contest might make this contest more exciting and interesting. But it might also detract from the overall promotion and enhancement of the sport of slalom skateboarding (the sport that includes all of the other contests too).

Bending over Backwards for Unusual Requests

OK, we got in a huge amount of trouble bending over backwards trying to please both the “run what you brung (6-wheel)” proponents and the “skateboard is defined by 4 wheels” proponents. That sure went well didn't it? (When we allowed each race promoter to decide this for his own race.)

One result of the whole 6-wheel debacle was that we (the ISSA) heard loud and clear from the race promoters and the racers that they wanted the ISSA to make ONE set of rules for ALL of the races. This was requested so the race promoters did not have to be subject to the wrath of the skaters for each little contest rule that they had to invent. We listened, we established the rules -- now let's live with them.

If we start the 2008 racing season with the newly-printed 2008 ISSA rules (with the ink not yet dry) and the 1st thing we do is bend over backwards for a contest promoter and ball up the rules and throw them away – then we will lose all credibility and we might as well close up the ISSA. It will be the death of us. We won't be able to enforce the “good” rules that we want to keep. We will be deluged with wild variations in rules and race format and insistence that each be granted because “you allowed them for the US Nationals”.

I am willing for the ISSA to help any and all race promoters in their efforts **within the rules and guidelines that have been agreed upon by the ISSA members**. We could do a LOT more of this if we didn't have to spend man-hours arguing over each contest sanction because it wants “special” consideration.

Preserving Investments

We have a huge investment of intellectual effort and man-hours in the current rules. Personally, I spent about 20 hours a week on this for a couple of months. Others did too. It was a painful and thankless task and frankly I resent that people who were minimally (or not at all) involved are so willing to torpedo that investment. The ISSA rules won't be worth anything if we immediately allow a contest of this magnitude to run outside of the rules.

We have another investment in the ISSA regional contest coordinators. These people spend lots of time and effort reviewing each contest sanction, seeing how it fits in with the overall schedule, suggesting changes and enhancements, and then making a decision on contest status and defending that decision. We are lucky enough to have found anyone to do this task and it might be impossible to keep the people we have or recruit for next year if their decisions are overturned so easily.

The Proposed Solution

Even ignoring all of the above points, I would have the following problems with the proposed solution:

- A) The race format and rules for the US Nationals would be based on the results of ONE trial of this format. One trial is not enough. We have had several HUNDRED trials of races in the more traditional form of racing and we still had to write, argue, re-write, and vote on the rules to come to agreement. One trial is not nearly enough.
- B) The “it's not a train wreck” criteria for pass/fail of the proposed format in the trial contest is too easy to pass. The criteria should be something like “It shows

- significant advantages, no known problems that cannot be rectified, and is preferred by over 2/3 of all racers attending the trials.” PLUS a majority of the ISSA board of directors to vote in favor. To go around the existing rules should have a much higher burden of proof than “it doesn’t suck”.
- C) The race format and rules would be unfamiliar to the racers, especially those from Europe, S. America, and Australia. I don’t think this format is going to have trial runs in those areas. The “I” in ISSA is for international, and we have to remember that this is not just affecting the racers in the USA or even N. America. The racers in the ONE trial would have an advantage of seeing it in action.

Pat’s Counter-Proposals

Two proposals are outlined. Proposal #1 is workable and can be implemented easily. Proposal #2 has very high risks and requires lots of ISSA manpower for what might be a small reward.

Proposal #1 – Work within the existing ISSA rules and guidelines.

If we at least give some credit to the existing rules and sanctioning processes, the following 4 options are still available for the race promoter to choose from. They are in order of (my) preference:

- A) Re-submit the sanction application without the huge rule deviations, receive a MAJOR status.
- B) Accept the PRIME status for the race, using the proposed format.
- C) Run the race without ISSA sanction, using the proposed format.
- D) Don’t run the race.

Proposal #2 – Work outside of the existing ISSA rules and guidelines by granting the US Nationals an exception to the rules (give it MAJOR status without changing the ISSA rules)

1. Give the US Nationals a MAJOR contest sanction under the existing ISSA rules.
2. Solve the problem with credibility of the ISSA when we go outside of our own rules.
3. Solve the problem of enforcement of the rules for all of the other contests not affected.
4. Solve the problem of potential resignations from several contest coordinators. Re-motivate them to do the job after second-guessing their decisions.
5. Run several trials of this format in PRIME and BASIC contests in N. America and in Europe. Meet the harder burden of proof for acceptance of this format.
6. Submit a sanction application with the new format as a change to be approved.
7. Conduct a vote of the ISSA board of directors to gain approval of this format for this contest. (At least a month ahead of the contest).

Conclusion

1. Are the existing rules and race formats the primary obstacle to slalom race promotion, enhancement, and growth?

- a. No, they are not. There is ample room for promotion, growth, and enhancement within the existing race format and rules.
- 2. Do the rules urgently need fixing? Is now the right time to fix them?
 - a. No. The race rules and format have just been updated by the ISSA members. There is no urgency to fix them.
 - b. A better time to do this is in the normal rules-update cycle in September.
- 3. Is the “fix” worse than the cure?
 - a. Yes. The fix only has the possibility of improving one race. The fix has a high probability of damage to the whole ISSA organization.