

SLALOM GOES GLOBAL

BY MARIA AND RICHY CARRASCO



Petr Matous. Photo: Michal Skavrada

The first World Championship of slalom racing in the modern era was held in Morro Bay, California in 2000. I was there that year and have attended every annual world championship ever since. The first five events were held in the U.S. at Morro Bay until the organizers decided to alternate the location between North America and Europe. So in 2006, the event was held in Brixlegg, Austria, then returned to the U.S. one year later in Statesville, North Carolina. In 2008, it was Gothenburg Sweden's turn, then Hood River, Oregon in 2009, Hradek Kralove, Czech Republic in 2010, Ottawa, Canada in 2011, Stuttgart, Germany in 2012, Houston Texas in 2013, and finally returned to the Czech Republic in 2014. Over the years, each event has offered something unique with its location, culture, venue, and community support. The hosting crew does an amazing job accommodating racers from all over the world.

This brings us to the most recent racing event in 2014. This race was not only a highlight of the year for the over 130 racers who attended, but also a high point for slalom skating. Petr Matous, one of the world's top junior division racers, was the main force in organizing the 2014 World Championship in his hometown of Policka, Czech Republic. This country has a long history of slalom racing and is home to several hardcore racing groups. The hard work from this group in Policka was evident as they presented one of the best world-class events ever.

Right up to the starting of the event, Petr worked overtime to ensure that all the competitors were brought from the Prague airport to the remote medieval village of Policka. He even arranged for low-cost lodging and free shuttle buses to and from the race site every day.

Day One

The Giant Slalom event was held on a 6% grade hill with terrific views of the Czech countryside. After signups and warmups, everyone was treated to an air show with a vintage style airplane dive-bombing and buzzing the racecourse, which got everyone fired up for racing! The single lane course had large offsets with everyone digging in all day trying to keep their traction without reducing their speed.

Day Two

Heart-stopping head-to-head hybrid races were held on the same hill with large offset courses. Just as on day one, wheel traction and body placement were important factors that the skaters needed to move through the eliminations and on to the finals. Each day, LED time displays were set up showing the raw time and cone penalty, then flashed to display the adjusted time for each lane. This information was key for racers and spectators to keep track of what was happening during eliminations. There were awesome battles in every division.

Day Three

Head to head tight slalom races were held on a riverside road just outside the village walls. They offered drag-racing style courses with center cone spacing of less than six feet. Crowds of spectators lined the courses to cheer the racers on. The last event in this three-day marathon of racing had everyone digging deep to go that extra mile.

Joe McLaren of the U.S. won his fifth consecutive overall Men's Pro World Championship title; his teammate Lynn Kramer won her eleventh overall title in the Women's Pro Division. Their victories are unprecedented in the history of slalom racing.



Lynn Kramer charges the course
Photo: Michal Skavrada

Very special thanks to the organizers who kept the events running efficiently to finish on time each day. There were parties held each evening with live bands, cheap food and drink, and Olympic-style award ceremonies complete with fireworks. Every detail was covered, from race site hospitality tents with free meals and wi-fi, to having professional TV crews covering the events. You can see the complete results, photos and videos on the ISSA website listed below.

The resurgence of slalom racing starting in 1999 has been one of the best times in skateboarding for me. Traveling to incredible places, meeting and racing



Slalom legend Richy Carrasco
Photo: Maria Carrasco



Over 130 skaters enjoyed the experience of slalom racing in the Czech Republic. Photo: Maria Carrasco

with people from all over the world, and sharing a special camaraderie with my team and racing family is amazing; it's what keeps me coming back each year. It's great to see more countries and new people getting on board with racing. This is definitely a sport that is fueled by the enthusiasm of the competitors who also organize the events to help keep the racing movement moving forward. The same goes for California. We've started So Cal Racing, hosting regular sessions and five race events for 2015.

Globally, 2015 is packed with events from local outlaws to major championships. The World Championship is returning to

North America, this time to the mountain resort town of Antrim, New Hampshire, from September 18-20. Antrim has much community support and always offers a warm welcome to the visiting racers. Other main events include the US Nationals in Oceanside, California from July 11-12, and the European Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden from August 28-30.

The slalom world is unified by the International Slalom Skateboarding Association (ISSA) that maintains the master calendar and world ranking system for events, and also tracks individual racer ranking stats by division.

The scene is always open to newbies with local racing crews hosting friendly regular events all over.

Find out more at slalomranking.com



RACE RESULTS:

GIANT SLALOM WINNERS

Pro Men – Joe McLaren, USA
 Pro Women – Lynn Kramer, USA
 Masters – Radan Knobloch, Germany
 Amateur – Edijs Jermacenko, Latvia
 Junior (17 and under) – Toms Dreiblats, Latvia
 Junior (14 and under) – Max Thiele, Germany
 Junior (11 and under) – Mare Erika Belta, Latvia

HYBRID SLALOM WINNERS

Pro Men – Joe McLaren, USA
 Pro Women – Lynn Kramer, USA
 Masters – Scott Hostert, USA
 Amateur – Jakub Knettig, Czech Republic
 Junior (17 and under) – Toms Dreiblats, Latvia
 Junior (14 and under) – Lukas Knobloch, Germany
 Junior (11 and under) – Mare Erika Belta, Latvia

TIGHT SLALOM WINNERS

Pro Men – Viking Hadestrand, Sweden
 Pro Women – Lienite Skaraine, Latvia
 Masters – Salvis Skarainis, Latvia
 Junior (17 and under) – Jakub Knettig, Czech Republic
 Junior (14 and under) – Toms Dreiblats, Latvia
 Junior (11 and under) – Max Thiele, Germany
 Junior (11 and under) – Mare Erika Belta, Latvia