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Airtime

The Official Newsletter of the American Coaster Enthusiasts Heart of America Region



ON THE PROWL

Worlds of Fun unleashes a wooden beast of a coaster that will be the star of this summer's Coaster Con.

by Jennifer Lovesee-Mast

By the time you read this **Prowler** will already be open to the public at Worlds of Fun. You or someone you know many have already ridden it, looking towards that future day how will we all remember 2009? Like almost every other Worlds of Fun coaster before it, Prowler will be something different, and from my gut intuition, it will be something truly spectacular.

From the beginning in September 2008 we all knew Prowler would be something unique. First was its location in the African section of the park. It would be the third major addition to this spot of earth, but certainly not the first coaster envisioned for the said location. In fact, in a interview with Gravity Group several years ago, before they had built a single coaster, a discussion was had about another coaster, not surprisingly a **Raven**-like coaster, one that was on the cusp of being built. Permits were filed, layouts were designed and, at the last possible second, the design was scrapped. Another round of budget cuts, another disap-

pointment.

With Prowler we finally have our long lost second wooden coaster, and it would be brought to us by the relatively new face of Great Coasters International (GCI).

Over the last few years GCI had re-envisioned the twister coaster. Twisters coasters derive their name from their very shape, track overlaying track, crossover over crossover, twist after twist. **Ozark Wildcat**, **Thunderhead** and **Evel Knievel** all had the GCI twister trademark stamped onto their design. Then came Prowler. Prowler is unique for many reasons, but the point that stands out in my mind, is that it is not a twister, not even a modified twister like Timber Wolf. It is an out-and-back...maybe not as straight and true as the John Allen and Herbert Schneck rides of the past, but it most certainly not a twister.

An oddball.

It's been a long time since

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Regional Team



JEFF MAST
Regional Representative
jmast@aceonline.org



JASON HAZEL
Asst. Regional Representative
Kansas & Arkansas
jhazel@aceonline.org



MATT LASKOWSKI
Asst. Regional Representative
Publications/Web Site
mlaskowski@aceonline.org



JENNIFER LOVESEE-MAST
Asst. Regional Representative
Western & Southern Missouri
jlovesee@aceonline.org



GREG SCHMITZ
Asst. Regional Representative
Eastern Missouri & Illinois
gschmitz@aceonline.org

New Members

Please welcome the following new members to the Heart of America region:

Amy Bradshaw	Metamora, IL
Jack Bradshaw	Metamora, IL
Jim Bradshaw	Metamora, IL
Alek Bundonis	St. Louis, MO
David Kite	St. Louis, MO

Upcoming Events

Here's a look at upcoming events in our region. For more information and online registration, be sure to visit www.ACE18.org.

COASTER CON XXXII

June 21, 2009 - June 26, 2009
Silver Dollar City - Branson, MO
Worlds of Fun - Kansas City, MO

SCHLITTERBAHN ADD-ON DAY

June 26, 2009
Schlitterbahn - Kansas City, KS

DAREDEVIL DAZE

June 27, 2009
Six Flags St. Louis - Eureka, MO

COASTER MAYHEM

August 15, 2009
Worlds of Fun - Kansas City, MO

COASTER CHRISTMAS

December 5, 2009 (tentative)
Silver Dollar City - Branson, MO

Be sure to visit www.aceonline.org for a complete listing of national and regional events.

TWENTY YEARS OF **TIMBER WOLF**

The addition of Timber Wolf to Worlds of Fun's line-up of coasters in 1989 brought with it plenty of attention and accolades, including the title of number one wooden coaster in the world in 1991.

by Jennifer Lovesee-Mast

It's shocking to look back and realize that two decades have passed since 1989 and that, today, **Timber Wolf** stands as the oldest coaster at Worlds of Fun at only 20 years old.

Unlike other coaster anniversaries we have celebrated in the past, Timber Wolf today is not the star of the park. A ride on Timber Wolf today is certainly not remembered as fondly as say a ride on the **Orient Express** or **Zambezi Zinger** and Timber Wolf certainly has not had the clear sailing like almost every other coaster in Worlds of Fun history. Over time the ride has developed quite a large band of naysayers. Yet, hiding in the shadows of its wooden structure, is the heart of one of Worlds of Fun's greatest roller coasters.

Those of us that are old enough all remember our first introduction to Timber Wolf. It was, and I believe still is,

one of the most and best advertised roller coasters of Worlds of Fun's history. I still remember those commercials that are set in a cold winter forest at dusk. At first you hear the pulsating of paws rushing through the snow and then the panting. What type of creature is this? You see it running, the legs pounding hard past the barren trees, heading for what must be its prey. Then, all of a sudden out of the crisp night air, a clear howl is heard followed by a pair of pulsating red eyes that emerge from the darkness. Timber Wolf has come to claim you. It was pure entertainment in a 30-second commercial. Worlds of Fun would win many awards for its Timber Wolf advertising and, to this day, it's still the best advertising the park as ever put out.

At the time that Timber Wolf was built the amusement world was just coming to terms with new wooden coasters. At the time only 88 or so

wooden coasters operated in the country, with most of them being hold overs from the classic era of amusement parks, the 20s and 30s. When coaster building began again anew in the 70s steel coasters were all the rage. In fact, between 1980 and 1989 only 20 new wooden coasters were built! Compare that to 80 new wooden coasters between 1989 and today. Timber Wolf was something special.

In came the team of Charlie Dinn and Curtis Summers. The Dinn Corporation would blaze into the 90s completely revolutionizing the wooden coaster industry, bringing us such classics as the **Texas Giant**, **Georgia Cyclone** and **Mean Streak**.

Timber Wolf was one of their first creations.

Years of time and effort was put into the coaster's design by the park's owners at the time Hunt Midwest. Park staff

rode coasters across the country for five years before Timber Wolf's final creation, picking elements from some of the best wooden coasters out there. The first half of the coaster is testament to the staff's time and effort as, even today, the ride's trains fly through the course with speed and enormous amounts of airtime. The 580-degree helix was Curtis Summers' first attempt at a reverse helix. The helix became unfortunately the anti-climax to the almost Harry Traver-like beginning but, fortunately for the park, this small speed bump did little to dim enthusiasts' view of what was to become a great ride.

To make Timber Wolf even more unique Worlds of Fun announced its first and only name a coaster contest. Names flew in by the thousands. Traditional names like "Thunderbolt" and

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Prowler roars into Worlds of Fun in 2009 *(continued)*

Worlds of Fun has had one of those, the last one was Timber Wolf. Every Worlds of Fun coaster since Timber Wolf has been the next step from a coaster before it, **Steel Force** became **Mamba**, **Talon** became **Patriot**, and **Boomerang**...well, that's another story. It feels really good having something completely unique built at the park again.

The folks behind Prowler are certainly not unheard of here in the Heart of America, both responsible for Six Flags St. Louis' **Evel Knievel** and Branson's **Ozark Wildcat**. With Prowler the ride starts much the same with a spiraling 85-foot drop, but that's not the entire story. Prowler is a terrain coaster in the fact that it uses the natural hilly, forested terrain to its advantage, and the 85-foot drop turns into an entire 102-foot change in elevation throughout the entire ride. What this produces is constant and consistent speed. If that reminds you of certain other coasters, possibly the **Voyage** and **Boulder Dash**, then its important to remember that while built by three separate wooden coaster firms, the fact that all three are twisting wooden terrain coasters shouldn't be dismissed.

When Prowler gets going, the hills and twists in the outbound run look to provide an ample



amount of not only speed and thrills, but hopefully an abundance of airtime; a request made by the park.

When Prowler opens its only lighting will be on the lift hill and the entire out and back section as it heads back to the unknown no-mans land will be completely pitch black in the dark night. Imagine, sitting in a black leather seat, clutching the bars of a Millennium Flyer train as it flies at top speed of over 50 mph through the darkness? Exciting is hardly the word. Another thought to ponder as our national membership makes plans for Coaster Con this summer? Coaster Con falls on the week of June 22nd which is during a new moon on the lunar calendar. This should offer an even darker trek through the woods.

It offers a pondering thought, we all know Prowler will be a different experience than Worlds of Fun's other woodie Timber Wolf. One aspect of Timber Wolf was its quick rise to fame nationwide. Since Timber Wolf, Worlds of Fun has not had another coaster reach the top ten in any coaster poll. Is it possible that after 20 years that Prowler will catapult Worlds of Fun back in the limelight as its wooden cousin did 18 years ago? Only time will tell, but I believe the potential is there. This summer is going to be one to remember. ■

Outlook not looking good for shuttered Joyland

The future of Wichita's Joyland Amusement Park seems to get more grim with each passing month. 2009 has been an especially bad year for the park.

On April 11 a fire broke out in an abandoned building that used to be part of the Wild West Town. Though firefighters arrived quickly, the building was in disrepair and 25% of the structure was lost.

The park has also been targeted by vandals on multiple occasions this year. In January the famous "Last Warning" sign that greeted riders at the top of

the **Roller Coaster's** lift was stolen and, just recently, vandals kicked in doors, sprayed graffiti and destroyed furniture in at least five buildings.

Joyland closed in 2006 after a drawn out legal battle over ownership of the park and has not opened since. In December it was reported that Stan and Margaret Nelson, owners of the park since the 1960s, have begun to sell some of the park's smaller rides, further adding to the chances that the park will not re-open, at least in its current form. ■



Vertical construction underway at new Schlitterbahn Vacation Village

After many months of preparation and ground work, slides have begun to rise at the Midwest's newest waterpark resort.

by Jason Hazel

Since our last issue the local Schlitterbahn project in Kansas City, Kan. has moved along at a rapid pace. Back in October the **Torrent River** was the only noticeable attraction. Since then the outline for the first phase of the park has started to take shape and several attractions are now completed. The **Kinder Haven** kids play area is up and detail work has started, the **Torrent Cove** is being poured and footers are scattered throughout the park for various slide complexes. Shops and changing areas are starting to take shape and a giant lake has been carved into what will be the front of the park. The lake will connect to a large river that will surround the water park and future retail/resort development. Ferry boats that will soon transport guests around the property are also on site. Shortly after our tour one of the large slide complexes went vertical and the park plans on it being completed quickly with a tentative opening date this summer.

For online updates and more photos, check out the new Schlitterblog at schlitterblog.com or visit schlitterbahn.com/kc. ■



Member Profile



Jason Perez

Kansas City, Missouri
ACE member since 1998

Track Record: 200+ coasters

Favorite Wood Coasters:

1. Boulder Dash - Lake Compounce
2. Evel Knievel - Six Flags St. Louis
3. El Toro - Six Flags Great Adventure
4. The Voyage - Holiday World
5. Excalibur - Funtown Splashtown USA

Favorite Steel Coasters:

1. Superman: Ride of Steel - Six Flags New England
2. Nitro - Six Flags Great Adventure
3. Dueling Dragons - Islands of Adventure
4. Millennium Force - Cedar Point
5. Patriot - Worlds of Fun

Favorite Park Food: Corn Dogs

Other Hobbies and Interests:

Acting, Martial Arts, *World of Warcraft*,
Renaissance faires, Volunteering.

Would you like to be profiled in an upcoming issue of Airtime? Let Matt Laskowski know by sending an e-mail to mlaskowski@aceonline.org.

Ambassadors

Calling all volunteers! Help our region roll out the red carpet as we play host to Coaster Con XXXII in June. Members from across the world will be visiting our region, many for the first time, and we want to make sure they enjoy their stay.

Ambassadors will be identified with a special button and should have extensive knowledge of the Kansas City, St. Louis and/or Branson areas. Members will be directed to look for Ambassadors for help with local driving directions, area attraction info, dining recommendations and more. If you're interested in volunteering, send an e-mail to jlivesee@aceonline.org.

facebook

The Heart of America region now has its own Facebook page! Look us up the next time you sign on. Just search for "Heart of America ACE Region." Once you've found us you can share and view photos from past events and chat with fellow members on our Wall.

Timber Wolf: twenty years of thrills (continued)

"Wildcat" were suggested in addition to a few interesting ones like "Missouri Mule Kicker," "American Lightning Bug," "Thunder Lizard" and even "It." With its name somewhat up in the air its final location was not. The ride would be located on a prime piece of land at the corner of Parvin Road and Worlds of Fun Avenue on the site where the **Extremoroller** stood.

With a name and marketing campaign in place, Timber Wolf opened to the public on April 1, 1989, the first and only coaster at Worlds of fun to open on April Fools Day. A few days later bands of enthusiasts and students from William Jewell College packed together on trains for three days to help the park film b-roll footage of the ride. Even then they knew they were riding something special.

Timber Wolf would again be the star of the show later in the season as ACEs gathered at the park for their annual Spring Conference. The very next year the park was happily stunned when the readers of *Inside Track* voted Timber Wolf as #2 in the world. Then came the year that everyone remembers. 1991 was a banner year for the ride literally as Timber Wolf topped the charts as #1 wooden coaster in the world. Though not the biggest or fastest ride, visitors streamed in from every corner of the globe to ride this terrorizing creation.

For a few years after the shot to #1 Timber Wolf ruled the world. With a re-tracking job in 1994 and no trim brakes, the coaster gave some of the fastest rides it would ever give. Unfortunately, fame would fade and rough times were ahead.

In 1995 Worlds of Fun was purchased by Cedar Fair and, with new management, came a few changes. The most notable change involved the



infamous trim brake on the ride's first drop, slowing the ride's speed significantly. From 1995 to 2006 Timber Wolf just sat there, giving ride, after ride, after ride, sinking in the rankings every year until it was almost a lost obscurity. With each passing year the ride became rougher and rougher. It took even a few years for enthusiasts to realize what was happening and, after the realization hit, we all cried out to the park to fix the ride and to restore it to its former glory.

Finally, it happened. Just three years ago the park management changed and, for the first time in so many years, Timber Wolf would receive more than the absolute necessary work to keep it running. It became more than just "that coaster." Structure work started first, and then just last year Timber Wolf's track bed began to be replaced. Today it is not the coaster it was in 1994.

Since that time a whole new generation of wooden thrillers have popped up across the country with names such as **Boulder Dash**, **The Voyage** and **Thunderhead** and, while it will never sit in the #1 spot again, Timber Wolf is well on its way to a new generation of thrill seekers.

Timber Wolf has gone through 20 very turbulent years but, with hope on the horizon, the future for Timber Wolf once again looks bright. ■



The name "Timber Wolf" was chosen among over 7,000 entries in a name-the-coaster contest sponsored by the park. Other top contenders included Outlaw, Rattler, Mad Dog, Rail Blazer and Lightning Bolt.

Airtime is published for ACE members in the Heart of America region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Southern Illinois (ACE Region #18) and is provided free of charge. Contributions of articles, photos and content are welcome and encouraged and can be sent by e-mail to Matt Laskowski at mlaskowski@aceonline.org.

To ensure that you receive the latest information from ACE including publications, newsletters, event flyers and e-updates, please validate your contact information and e-mail address online at www.AmericanCoasterEnthusiasts.com.