

World Skating Association celebrates 10 years of jam skating

By Susan Geary

The World Skating Association (WSA), which is dedicated to promoting and organizing competitive events for jam skating, has now been around for a decade. This type of skating, which features break dancing on skates, along with shuffle skating, is growing steadily at rinks across the nation and the globe.

History

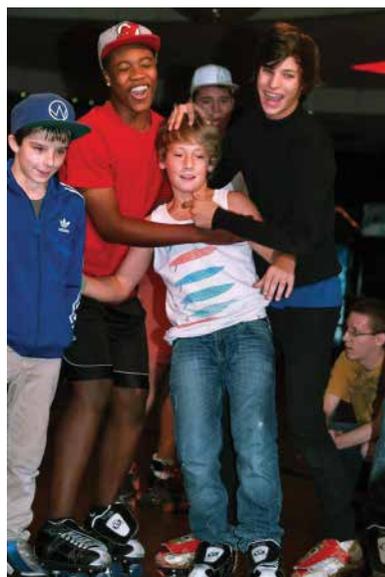
Considered the official sanctioning body of Jam skating, the WSA has grown and changed since its inception in 2003. Founded by Team Riedell member Chuck Best, the WSA holds competitions in more than 20 states in performance, battle and shuffle formats. During its inaugural year, the WSA partnered with USARS to learn how to coordinate competitive events and set up scoring systems. One year later, the Pro Series was launched to determine and recognize the sport's top professionals. In 2007, the "Battle of the Belt" was launched - an event league where Pro Series skaters battle for a \$2,000 cash prize and the belt title for one year.

By 2010, Best offered the leadership position to Kyle Cumper, who was 21 years old at the time. Cumper had been an active member of the WSA from the start, helping out as an advisor and state representative. He had already been organizing his own events. "I moved up the ranks and eventually became a WSA Pro Series skater in 2007," said Cumper. After taking over, Cumper

pushed for bigger events, better prizes and an entirely new judging and tabulation system.

New scoring

Cumper claimed the old judging system was somewhat vague, where skaters could win yet not be well-rounded skaters. Similar to art skating, it focused on technical and performance aspects. "We designed an entirely new scoring system that focused on the actual aspect of the sport," said Cumper. The new system emphasizes the main disciplines of jam skating: footwork, groundwork and shuffle skating. "The system is far more accurate at determining the winners of each



Pictured above are Steve Delany, Jaylon Kemp, Mickail Hollis and Ryan Butler.

event, and is actually geared specifically toward jam skating," Cumper added.

Attracting new skaters

In order to attract new members to the WSA, jam skating clinics, or "bashes," are routinely held in roller rinks across the country. The clinics feature top skaters who are flown in, not only to demonstrate what jam skating is, but provide free lessons and generate enthusiasm for the sport. Plus, there's the 3-day competition. "It's really beneficial to the rink owner," boasted Cumper, "because we typically don't close a rink during their session time." Instead it's turned into a WSA National Bash. That includes a live deejay provided by the WSA with jam skating music all night and small competitions throughout the session such as small battles and shuffle competitions. "We want to get people involved in the sport," said Cumper. It's all about building the sport from the local level and getting into local roller rinks."

Giving back

The latest addition to the WSA lineup is "Skates for Change," a program focused on helping school-age youth become involved in roller skating, and giving skates to those in need. Pro Series skaters continue to work hand-in-hand with children in rinks across the country. "Our Skates for Change program is getting people into the sport who didn't know about it or have the means to get into it," said Cumper. "Skates for Change" provides free pairs of quad skates

to five underprivileged kids (at each rink they visit) to encourage the kids to stay in the sport. Since the program requires no up-front booking fees, it's a very low risk investment for rink owners to generate buzz and build a new generation of customers. According to a media release from WSA, "Skates for Change" events typically boost session turnout by 35-50 percent, depending on location. "Skates for Change" is headed by Program Coordinator and competitive skater Dana Barnes.

Going pro

Cumper proves that it is possible to earn a living as a professional jam skater. In 2007 he started performing with the world renowned Breaksk8 Entertainment Crew, traveling the globe to skate in shows on a regular basis. Recently, the Breaksk8 crew filmed the hit TV show "Beat the Best" in France, representing the U.S. in a worldwide talent competition. "Beat the Best" is reported to have an average of 36 million viewers. There are also opportunities for corporate sponsorships for jam skaters.

Celebrating a milestone

To commemorate 10 years in business, the WSA recently threw a two-day bash at Dazzle's in Douglasville, Ga. Cumper hired legendary electro artists Egyptian Lover and Jamie Jupiter to thank the thousands of jam skaters throughout their tenure.

Backed by Riedell and Vanilla, interest in jam skating is growing. "We've increased turnout every year," stated Cumper, referring to the number of skaters at nationals. In 2012, more than 350 skaters showed up each night during the three-day competition. This year it was projected that 400 would attend the national competition at Dazzles.

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