



# JAY HOOTS

## Old School Values in a New School Era

By Terri Dewar

When speaking with Jay Krantz a.k.a. Jay Hoots one day mid-week in April, he could hardly contain his enthusiasm about how he spent his last weekend. I had called digging for more info on an article I was writing and was intrigued by his excitement. As a professional mountain bike freerider (among many, many other titles), this guy has an incredibly adventurous lifestyle. I couldn't wait to hear the tales of him and some hard-core buddies ripping it up in some exotic location.

"We built a skills park in Merrit," he said. "It was such an amazing experience!"

Oh. You worked, I thought.

Again, he could hardly control his excitement.

"This past weekend I was reminded about what it is all about - about values that often get lost in this progressing society. When we showed up in Merrit in the early hours of a rainy Saturday, we found almost every contractor in Merrit and an estimated three million dollars in equipment complete with top shelf operators ready to start shaping and sculpting at 8 a.m. in the morning, all 'in kind' contribution. Not every operator was a rider but everyone got a grip of the project easily and transformed the once barren area into a fantastic bike playground. Several other contractors came out, embraced a huge volunteer group, and collectively installed most of the parks rideable objects. The locals came out with excellent work ethic, and the youth were prepared with great jump building skills, so shaping went quick and easy. Volunteers from a national youth project as well as a dedicated group from 100 Mile House all contributed to an unbelievable success."

The excitement started to catch on, as well as a clearer idea of who Jay Hoots is what he stands for. I had already known that Jay was actively involved in developing the sport of mountain biking, - skills parks, trail building, and working with youth in particular, but there was more here than building a bike park. Jay was all about the community. The excitement of the weekend to him revolved around the people - riders and non-riders - donating time and material for a cause, a great cause.

For the past four years, Jay has been working with municipalities to design and build skills parks, a cause he feels will not only create increased opportunity for youth to be involved in non/semi formalized cycling, but helps alter some growing trends in our society.

"I have always been compelled by the quote 'it takes a community to raise a child'. National obesity levels are at all time highs and it's proven that there is an increase in youth non-organized sport involvement (i.e. skate boarding). If we can provide a organized safe approach to cycling by installing bike parks, having high level mentoring, teaching and coaching available, and have more community support for our trail associations we

won't have to tear our kids away from video games or sticky buns, they will simply go that way. And the beauty is that a comprehensive bike park can cost 25 percent of the average skate park and bring a portion of mountain bikers out of the skate parks again."

Jay's beliefs on community development are also evident in a nonprofit organization he and Gonzalo Ledezma started called the Dirt Club that identifies and empowers youth by working with them to develop bicycle 'skills parks' in their own neighbourhood. Through the design and build process youths are engaged in all aspects of activity including the finishing touches of the park. Upon park completion the most active youths are recognized and empowered to become park stewards, maintaining and teaching in the park under the mentorship of professional riders and key opinion leaders.

"The overwhelming success of our first skills park located in Myrtle Park is a testament to what we can achieve through the power of youth. Many other communities have adopted bike 'skills parks' deeming them necessary for community development and providing an educational component for all riders within the community."

Presently The DIRT Club, Cycling B.C. and NSMBA (North Shore Mountain Bike Association) are working with the District of North Vancouver to develop a mega park featuring a BMX nationals racing track, progressive jump area and controlled skills / features course. Project management is headed by Jay with the hopes that 'partnerships' is the key word. Combining cycling based companies with local business that want to see healthier communities is key to what Jay feels will ensure the sustainable future for the park.

As for what's up for Jay this weekend, we had to talk quick as he was off a road-trip to Monterey, CA with world-renowned professional mountain bike freerider Wade Simmons. So I guess it's not all work after all! I can't wait to hear the tales of this adventure!

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