



BOG winner Alex Fox passes the handle as boys get the Grinch Winch ready for action.



Organizers and locals get their second wind at the Slingstock parties.



SS's pro wake team lit up the rail jam.



A competitor during the men's heat.



BOG is the longest running event in North America.

# SLINGSTOCKSTOKE

By Gary Reed | Photos Dallas McMahon

Time flows as fast as the wind in the Columbia River Gorge. The year 2000 was when we first gathered in Stevenson, WA, for the initial Bridge of the Gods Kiteboarding Festival. This was before kite loops, handle passes or even twin tips. There were only a few Gorge locals kiteboarding at the time. Most of us were only slightly converted windsurfers who had bought kites for the 'light wind days.' We didn't yet realize where this addiction would lead. We were intrigued with the amount of air that kiting delivered and Floyd Wilkes conceived the first Bridge of the Gods Kiteboard Festival. The vibes were good, the winds were ideal and we had no idea that this event would become the longest running kiteboarding competition in existence in North America.

## HISTORY

As would be expected, the Gorge was producing a lot of quality riders and The Bridge of the Gods Kiteboarding Festival became a launching pad for local amateurs who progressed to the pro scene. Pro riders such as Adam Koch, Sky Solbach, Dave Tyburski, Mark Doyle and Bri Chmel all launched their professional kiteboarding careers from our local event. But that's just a small part of the story. More important than any contest results or tweaked out maneuver is sharing good times with friends. "Attitude is Everything" reads the classic Gorge bumper sticker and that was the festival motto. Whining is not permitted and having fun is mandatory.

When Floyd left the Gorge, Renee Hanks took over organizing the event. She was committed to keeping this a festival and not a contest. She even competed while wearing a fake butt that made her appear half naked on the water. It became a tradition that has been followed by many female contestants who continue to kite in costumes.

Floyd and Renee also made this event about giving back to the community. Renee started a non-profit that funded a local youth kiteboarding program as well providing scholarships for local kids. Britney Todd, winner of this year's event, was one of Renee's students. While Floyd and Renee are now living off the grid, we plan to keep the festival as a fundraiser. Proceeds from this year were donated to the Skamania County Parks and Recreation Fund as well as the Stevenson Volunteer Fire Department.

## EVOLUTION

Seeing the success of last year's Festival, Jeff Logosz of Slingshot Sports had a vision to expand the fun. While the Bridge of the Gods Kiteboarding Festival remains the same amateur kiteboard competition, Slingstock is an added bonus. We rented The Skamania County Fairgrounds where the entertainment could continue after the kiteboarding was over. The Rock Creek Rail Jam was a great success as a mixture of wakeboarders and kites were

**WHAT A GREAT WEEKEND IN STEVENSON, A DAY OF HOT, SUNNY WEATHER WITH LIVE MUSIC AND THE WAKE/WINCH RAIL JAM, FOLLOWED BY AN EVEN BETTER DAY OF 8M KITEBOARDING AND A CLOSING PARTY WITH SOME AMAZING PEOPLE. WISH I COULD HAVE STAYED ANOTHER DAY FOR THE 40 KNOTS AT RUFUS! — ED HOLDEN**

pulled by a winch and wave runners. The Slider Project's Fun Box coupled with some rail slides led to a great time for all both Friday and Saturday evening. There was also music and food at the Fairgrounds. Local band Wrestling Sturgeon opened for the Quick and Easy Boys on Friday

while The Russian Brides opened up for The John Bunzow Trio on Saturday. With the gorgeous views and activities at the campground, the inaugural Slingstock addition to the festival was a great success that we plan to build upon.

## WRAP UP

The wind forecast wasn't overly optimistic for the event day so we were all surprised to wake up to a solid westerly breeze. Contestants enjoyed a pancake breakfast at the campground before heading to the waterfront. The winds were a steady 20-25 mph all day that allowed the contest to run smoothly. The level of kiting gets better every year and this year was no different. We started a new division of mini-groms who were 13 and under and weren't disappointed by the Cohn brothers, Tony and Charlie. The Masters division had some of the closest contests as Steve Sibborn's handlepasses narrowly defeated Wally the Gator's titanic air and Ken Ishida's smooth riding. Britney Todd was the technical expert of the women's division as she defeated Jaz and Rachel Callahan in the finals. The juniors heats were also filled with handlepasses and kite loops as Matt Collins won out over Brandon Bowe and Matt Elsasser. The men's final heat was stacked as the four

**THE BRIDGE OF THE GODS EVENT ONCE AGAIN DELIVERED THE GOODS. EACH YEAR IS GETTING BIGGER AND BETTER WITH THE STOKE METER PEGGED! REALLY ENJOYED THE CROWD ENERGY AS WE THREW DOWN FOR THE JUDGES. GO BIG OR GO HOME! SEE YA NEXT YEAR! — WALLY GATOR**

contestants knew that a trip to Cabarete donated by Dare 2 Fly was on the line. Alex Fox narrowly held off locals Grom, Nate Appel and Nick Stuart and is now trying to decide who he's taking to Cabarete with him!

**THE BOG REPRESENTS EVERYTHING ABOUT KITING THAT I LOVE – IT'S AN AMAZING EVENT. ALL THE MORE AMAZING WHEN SOME OF THE HARDEST RIPPERS TAKE TIME TO RETRIEVE OTHER'S BOARDS, OR JUST HAND-OFF THEIR KITES ALTOGETHER.**

— ERIC COHN

The Bridge of the Gods Kiteboarding Festival and the addition of Slingstock was a great success this year. We learned a lot with the addition of the fairgrounds and next year should be even better. We were very fortunate to get the sponsorship we received in tough economic times. Companies like Slingshot, Dakine, Dare 2 Fly, Providence Hood River, ProMotion, Gorge.net and 2nd Wind all made it possible to hold this event. The Kiteboarder Magazine with the help of Saw.net broadcast a live feed bringing our local festival to the world. Our goal is to keep the festival a fundraiser, an affordable good time for everyone who comes out and to keep offering a venue for amateur talent to showcase their stuff and maybe pick up a sponsorship or two.