

SPORTS

GUNNISON COUNTRY TIMES • 970.641.1414

**WET, WILD
WEEKEND**
► B14


PIRATES CHART NEW COURSE

Two mountain bikers ride the new Captain Jack downhill course at Crested Butte Mountain resort.

Courtesy photo

New downhill course unveiled for race at CBMR

Bobby Reyes
Times Staff Writer

They say pirates chart the best courses.

In this case, that means a course that boasts the most daring terrain. In this coming weekend's Central States Cup Downhill race, Crested Butte Mountain Resort (CBMR) bike park manager Christian Robertson has allowed the pirates to chart the course for the newest addition to the Evolution bike park: Captain Jack.

On a course that'll deliver the most technical and physical test that riders have ever seen at CBMR, it'll be sure to give competitors the adrenaline rush they seek.

"The top is pretty wide open and fast," Robertson explained of the course. "Then it goes into a pedaly section that will max the heart rate just before dropping into a sustained steep and technical zone that will separate the riders."

"There's probably a three-and-a-half minute track that will require skill, daring and

fitness to win on," Robertson added. "It's going to be pretty raw for the first race."

The name, "Captain Jack" pays homage to the fact that this course began as a "pirate" trail. The majority of Captain Jack was carved out several years ago, when bikers would ride lines that were not actually designated trails. Eventually, these pirate lines were closed, only to be re-opened once CBMR received approval from the U.S. Forest Service to build new trails that navigate through the steepest and most technical terrain that the Red Lady Express Lift could access.

With the opening of Captain Jack this Saturday, June 28, the Evolution Bike Park will have added yet another sweet trail for mountain bikers to flock to. Though, the options weren't always this plentiful. It was only a few years ago when — despite the rich history of mountain biking in Crested Butte — mountain bikers didn't have so many technical trails on which to test themselves.

"We started Evolution Bike Park in 2009," CBMR public relations manager Erica Mueller explained. "With the big mountain bike history

Captain Jack ► B15

For more about Crested Butte Bike Week, see B16.

Central States Cup Downhill schedule

Friday, June 27

Track will be closed for practice for all categories.

Saturday, June 28

8 a.m.-noon — Registration open
10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. — Cat 2 & Cat 3 practice
12:30-3 p.m. — Cat 1 & Pro practice
3-5 p.m. — Practice for all categories

Sunday, June 29

Race day
8:30 a.m. — Chair lift opens
9-10 a.m. — Practice
10:30 a.m. — Pro seeding
11 a.m. — Race start

For more information, visit centralstatescup.com.

'Diamonds' opens doors

Softball squads from across state descend on Gunnison

Savannah Nelson
Special to the Times

For many Gunnison athletes, one weekend in June embodies the whole spirit of the summer season — including a healthy dose of tan lines, bracketology and every flavor of sunflower seeds. This past weekend, Jorgensen Park hosted the annual Diamonds in the

Rockies softball tournament.

More than 20 years ago, umpire and Western State Colorado University alum Rich Plankis decided to work with the Gunnison Parks and Recreation Department to create a unique experience within the Gunnison Valley. It was a tournament aimed at combining two key elements of a Gunnison summer — softball and the Rocky Mountains.

Diamonds in the Rockies was born and continues to fill the Gunnison Valley with traveling contenders each summer. This year's tournament, June 20-22,

Softball ► B15

Divide, and conquer

Gunnison's Jefe Branham is blazing a trail through Colorado in the Great Divide Mountain Bike Tour — and leaving other competitors in his dust. Seen here, Branham powers his way out of the Gore Canyon area heading toward Salida. As of press time, he was in the midst of the San Juan Mountains, 2,108 miles into the race, and still holding on to a commanding lead — about 300 miles in front of a handful of riders giving chase.

Photo by Linda Guerrette



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Captain Jack

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in Crested Butte, it was only natural that we evolve.”

With mountain bikes becoming lighter and faster as the industry blossomed, Mueller and CBMR sought to keep up. The Evolution Bike Park boasts 20 trails and more than 30 miles of singletrack. “The mountain used to be dead in the summer,” Mueller shared. “Now, there’s more animation with the bike park.”

Last week, liftopia.com ranked Crested Butte as the fifth-best downhill resort in

North America.

Behind the scenes, helping elevate the park is Robertson.

“Christian is extremely passionate about mountain biking,” Mueller explained. “Our general vision is to cut two to three new trails each year.”

And helping cut these trails is Robertson himself. “He’s been nose-deep in dirt these last few weeks,” Mueller joked.

Robertson has been joined by nearly half a dozen members of his crew in preparing Captain Jack for this weekend’s Central States Cup Downhill race. They’ve cut trees, cleared brush and built bridges and wall rides.

“This new trail is really

unique,” Mueller explained. “Since it’s designed as a race course, it doesn’t have many man-made features.”

With some of the best downhill mountain bikers in the country descending on CBMR this weekend for bike week, Robertson is excited. “It should be sick,” he said.

The Central States Cup includes four stops this year: Crested Butte, Telluride, Taos and Pajarito, N.M. The competition is slated to start Sunday, June 29, at 11 a.m.

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Softball

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included four different age divisions and featured 29 teams from around the state. Between the four local teams and the masses of traveling competitors, the Jorgensen complex was flooded with talent. Try-out and club teams — including players, parents, coaches, umpires, families and fans — were welcomed into the Gunnison community for the three-day event.

Games started on Friday evening and continued until the championship games on Sunday. Games were pool-play and concluded in a round of elimination. The Gunnison teams played each day, placing seventh and sixth for U12, respectively, fourth for U14, and sixth for U16.

Each team played a close game, which depended heavily on their focus on fundamental skills and mental stability. A high caliber of play is expected within every game at the tournament, due to the competitive nature of the teams involved.

“Many of these teams have

been practicing since January or February, and playing in tournaments since early March,” local parent and U12 assistant coach Nick Gallowich offered. “The fact that we are able to compete this early in our own season speaks volumes of the promise within our own program.”

The weekend was filled with numerous learning moments, outstanding plays and dedication both on and off the diamond.

A lot of preparation goes into the Diamonds in the Rockies — ranging from field maintenance to coaching, according to Gunnison Recreation Supervisor Dan Vollendorf. He credits much of the success of the tournament to parents, community members, coaches and city staff for their hard work and understanding.

The tournament not only attracts competitive athletes but also visitors to the Gunnison community for summer. The participating teams were encouraged to enjoy the perks of June in the Rockies. They flooded local restaurants, trails and events, bringing business and enthusiasm.

Leslie DiLorenzo, a longtime Gunnison coach, also sees the tournament as a beneficial

experience overall. “This is an incredible opportunity for our players to be in a local setting and to play competitive softball at a high intensity,” she said.

DiLorenzo was responsible for much of the planning, maintenance and coaching, which contributed to the success of the tournament. She, as well as all of the local coaches and players, are looking forward to finishing their summer seasons with the same level of passion and spirit that was discovered within the realm of the annual tournament.

Final game results

U12 — GJ Rampage defeated Pueblo Stingers, 9-3

U14 — Wheat Ridge Storm Gold defeated GJ Force, 11-10

U16 — Colorado Cardinals 99 defeated Adrenaline White, 8-1

U18 — Colorado Cardinals defeated Colorado Phoenix, 6-0



The Hotchkiss Bulldogs (U14 division) take to the field during this past weekend’s Diamonds in the Rockies tournament.

Photo by Bobby Reyes

Dining

Garlic Mike's

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