

The Quest for Speed

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 Tuesday, 02 October 2007
 Last Updated Friday, 05 October 2007

The Quest for Speed Nearly 80mph on a Speedboard! In speedboarding, there are few absolutes. The "gnarliest downhill", the "fastest course", the "best road" … these are all subjective measurements when it gets down to it. "Highest Speed" is different. The quest for who can and does go the very fastest isn't about finish lines, railing a corner or made-for-tv illusions, but all about using gravity, technique, the right equipment and brass balls to run up the speedometer while standing on a skateboard. On October 20 & 21, 2007, the eyes of the speedboarding world will be on Teutonia, Brasil, where event organizers will setup a speedtrap to "Guinness Book Standards" and Gary Hardwick's record will likely be officially eclipsed on that now famous hill... Colorado's answer to Teutonia.

In the meantime, others pursue speed their own way, and in their own backyards. Recently, Silverfish and the skateboarding world have been blown away by a series of reports, videos and photos sent in by Brent "Dubester" Dubendorff and Kevin "K-Rimes" Reimer as they visited a relatively unknown track in Colorado's high country that may be even faster than the Brazilian road. Dubester recorded GPS data well over 70mph and called up K-Rimes: "Get down here!" was all it took … You may have seen the photos and the videos in the forums (don't worry, they're coming at you, again!), but we thought you'd like to read what Dubester and K-Rimes have to say about the days spent breaking new (unofficial) records, what it's like to skate that fast and what the hell they were thinking …

Tell us about the Quest for Speed! Dubester: I'm from Florida, where I learned to enjoy ripping hairpins and raced down every slope I could find in my otherwise flat environment. Recently, however, I moved to Colorado and got my feet wet in "Real DH", hills that had me going faster on my skateboard than I usually drive in my car. It didn't take long for me to get absorbed with going really, really fast and I started using Google Earth and the telephone to find "Fat hills". One of these hills is called Rist Canyon. {youtube}GHRayAmcMRI{/youtube} The vid that started it all... Within a week of hunting fast roads, I was skating over 60mph and then Rist enabled me to break 70 mph! Believe me, we were as blown away as anyone when we saw the GPS readings and the speedometer on our chase vehicles! I posted pics and vid on Silverfish, then, about a week before the Maryhill Festival of Speed, I convinced Kevin Reimer to come "skate the gnar" in CO with me after the World Cup. ...a few days later, this.

K-Rimes: I heard about Rist Canyon Rd in Ft. Collins, Colorado from Brent when he posted about the hill on Silverfish. We'd developed a rapport with one other when he stayed at my place during Danger Bay and then came back to BC to skate and to race the Sullivan Challenge. He called me before Maryhill and I decided to head down with Brent in his ride back down to Colorado.

We got in the afternoon two days after the finals at Maryhill. Rist was my first stop! The road up to the hill is a long and twisty one for the bottom half and then, when you get closer to the top, there are off camber hairpins and corners heading up to the crest of the valley where the backside of Rist is, the high speed side. Brent showed me the hill by driving up and down it and it was wicked to finally see the hill that shot Brent up to 73mph! We gathered our gear together and I set-up my board with some fresh 81A Alligator Bennett wheels, as they were the freshest set of wheels I had and also the same kind of wheels Brent had achieved his highest top speed on (though his were the original, "Bottle Green" urethane). {youtube}KZCKEkcTsoY{/youtube} This hill is consistently fast. Dubester: Unfortunately, after Maryhill I found myself with a dislocated hip from a non-skating injury and watched Kevin smash my record. It was frustrating, to say the least, to see a good friend skating in my area and not being able to ride to my full potential. I rode Rist Canyon with a dislocated hip, but couldn't tuck well enough to get much over 60mph, so I will have to wait a few more weeks to heal and then hope for some clear weather. I took chase car duty for Kevin. K-Rimes: My first run was excellent and the GPS read 78.9mph... We disregarded that speed, just due to the fact that it seemed a bit high for a first run. There were more and more runs that day, with Rob from Florida spotting the chicane for me. The numbers tamed down for my subsequent rides, but they seemed more accurate and consistent, with numbers going from 73-75mph and being around the same speed on each run. I think the winds were the only variable to change those speeds, since I am very comfortable in my tuck and can replicate it from run to run.

I went to the hill nearly everyday and each time I went, I bettered my speed until I reached a top speed of 77.9mph, or 125.3km/h! These speeds were checked by having a chase car which, on many occasions, was well over 75mph with Brent doing the driving due to an unknown injury (which was later found out to be a dislocated hip [GNAR!]).

{youtube}uNHkoEvyTOg{/youtube} K-Rimes pushing frontiers of speed. I skated the hill with Brent, Josh "Skatekook" Weisfeld, and another skater that Josh brought along whose name escapes while I write this, but is just at the tip of my tongue. Brent was unfortunately unable to tuck, but still managed some fast runs with a modified light bend-over and would have definitely kept up had he been able to tuck fully, I'm sure. Josh and I did some bump-drafting and some "train" action, where the rider behind the first links up and gets in the draft of the lead rider, thus making a longer aerodynamic shape with more weight behind it. Those runs I was able to pull or push Josh up to around 70mph and it was wicked rad! Only the best in high-tech equipment: Dubester's "video gear". What are you guys skating on? Dubester: I am riding a foam core Chicago Longboards Foamcore Topmount with Confederate trucks and Bennett

Alligator wheels. I love the setup and wouldn't change a thing! K-Rimes: I'm on a Rayne Hellcat, which was more than low enough to keep me stable, and using Maguns. My Maguns were stable, the Alligators were fast and sticky on Rist, and the Oust Bearings were spinning fine. The first run, I left my trucks as loose as I would ride on Maryhill, which meant that they were loose enough to rattle and had a few small wobbles dropping down from the chicane section which is around 12% into the steepest part of the hill that feels like 15%. After tightening the trucks, I was good to go and felt no wobble on any other runs. This, it turns out, was not such a great idea. I also tried some inline skate wheels, thinking that they'd roll really fast. They do roll fast, at first, but I never got to go much over 60mph/100km/h with them. The thing was, at those speeds the wheels were drifting and sliding all over the place, even as I was essentially rolling a straight line, and it was totally unsafe and stupid. I won't be doing that again! Tell us about going that fast, and how do you stop from 70mph? Dubester: Going down this hill, the acceleration is such that a car can't keep up, especially around the curves on the way down. Once I get up to the high sixties (mph)(approx 110 km/h), the board feels as though it is part of the ground. It's hard to describe, but all you're trying to do is to break as little air as possible and to keep the board under foot. I've never had much issue with speed wobbles, and haven't at these speeds, either. The way the board acts is however you act on top of it! High speeds require an absolute fixed and rigid position, If you start moving around on your board, It's gonna do the same, and be difficult to control. Everything comes to almost a standstill; the board no longer feels like its moving. My vision centers and I'm left with a little "tunnel" to skate down. Slow as can be. Seriously, you have to move slowly and to anticipate far more response than happens at low speeds. As it gets faster, you start to have to "push through the wind", rather than just break it. You have to fight against the wall holding you back. The faster above 65ish I go, the quieter it gets when I'm in a solid tuck. No more violent or turbulent wind is going on, simply because if I create any turbulence, I just won't get anywhere near 70mph. It's not quiet like a library, though. The wind gets to be a whistle; oftentimes, I find ears ringing at the bottom of the run! Another thing about a good tuck: without one, I think I'd be separated from my board by the wind! Slowing and stopping is a trick from these speeds and I think about it as a process of steps. To airbrake carefully, you simply think about it at first. Your body loosens up and you just start catching air all over, then hands come out and chin comes up. By now, 1-second has passed and you've gone over a hundred feet! At this point, I open my chest a little from my knee. By now I've scrubbed close to ten mph and this is about the first chance a slide could be performed/ attempted. With knees still locked in place, can now straighten my back, nearly upright, and I could footbrake if I needed to. Of course, on a grade this steep, airbraking really just arrests acceleration rather than slowing me to a stop. K-Rimes: The speeds I reached on that hill were something that I had always wanted to experience and was happy to finally reach a speed that no one else has hit yet. We downhill skateboarders talk about "aero" but, when it comes down to it, we are not very aerodynamic at all! What's truly needed to better that speed is a speed suit, an aerodynamic helmet, and fairings if you're planning on going fastest!

This hill is definitely not for everyone, and even the best may not be able to skate it safely. I truly want to see more riders getting to insane speeds like these, but it takes lots of practice or a rider who has been riding for years on end. I am interested to see whether anyone can better my speed, and I hope that someone can do it. I feel that I was able to hit my top speed for the aerodynamic equipment that I had with me, but with a better helmet, a true "speed suit", and some fairings, it would be even faster! Final thoughts? K-Rimes: This was, in some way, training for Brazil. I went to see the hills in Colorado and see the scenery and I definitely did that. Being able to hit high speeds was just one of the pluses! I'll be back next year with skaters from Vancouver, B.C. who love top speeds, crazy corners, and gnarly downhill. Watch out Colorado, we're coming! Dubester: Go Skate!!!! Thanks to Brent and Kevin for some inspiring posts, vids and replies to our questions! Keep in mind, what these guys are doing is inherently dangerous, regardless of their skill levels and experience! You may want to be fast like they are, you may be faster now. Either way, note that neither of these guys roll without full gear, including leathers, helmets, pads and pucks, and they're racing on roads without cross-street intersections and that are either closed or with spotter vehicles front, and rear. This is banzai stuff, and these two are at the top of their games right now. Well, Dubester is a helpless invalid with that hip, but K-Rimes is heading down to Teutonia, where he'll compete alongside the Rogers Bros. and a host of gravity athletes that have been down the hill there at speeds over 73mph (Siegrist). Everyone on the 'Fish is pulling for ya, guys! Go Fast, Don't Crash.