

No endo for BMXers

By ANN KORNUKA

What is Endo? In BMX jargon, it's the term used when a rider is stopped suddenly and is propelled over the handlebars. It's a situation many BMX riders in the Milton area found themselves in this past year when the town removed the old ramps to make room for the new skate facility on Thompson road. In Halton you have hockey arenas, you have skate parks and you have the local mall. But no BMX park? Halton is famous in the BMX world for sporting some of the best jumps and having good terrain for this extreme sport. Yet in Halton 2004 seemed to be the year the bicycle was a taboo subject. With the elimination of ramps, in what bikers have decried as poor planning decisions by Town Council, the fight for the BMX biker just got a whole lot more interesting.

BMX or "bicycle motocross" is an active sport for young people that started out as simple races with extreme jumps and

tricks built into the tracks. The appeal of BMX biking took off in the early 80's and soon the sport branched off from local races to full out competitions focusing on the style and difficulty of jumps and tricks. The bike is typically rugged with 20-inch wheels outfitted with a small frame and no gearing or extra gizmos. They're built to take the abuse they get from jumping and landing.

Problems started in Milton in July of 2004 when the Town closed down the old skate park after five years of weathering and abuse made them "unsafe". Another reason they were taken down was to make room for the new concrete half pipe in Lion's Park off Thompson road. For five years the BMX riders had a safe environment in which to practice in the old facility that was built just off Thompson Road between Milton Hydro and the Milton Memorial Arena. The old skate park was built by and for community members and one man in particular was there from start to

finish. Matt Burger from Spokes and Slopes invested \$6,000 into materials for the old park and strongly felt that the BMX bikers in Milton lost out when the old ramps were taken away.

The new skate park opened officially this September with a sign posted at the entrance to the park saying "NO BMX BIKES ON RAMPS".

Bike wheels do damage the smooth surface of the ramps. Therefore, BMX riding is forbidden in Milton's new skate park. Kids chased off the park by parents and police, go on to the next best option: Trespassing on loading docks and private property.

"The town has neglected to think about the bikers with the new skate park," Mr. Burger said. "We need to promote active events for kids"

Nicky Pearson of Spokes and Slopes talks about Track 2000, an exciting BMX track built in 1982 just off Trafalgar line in Drumquin Park. This year the track was relocated in the park to provide better and safer jumps.

The track is 1,500 feet long and the first jump is 32 feet. It's safe. Children as young as four years old are able to manage the jumps and come out to these tracks to get a feel of the sport. This track is the most technical track in eastern Canada. BMX as a sport is now in the Olympics and Track 2000 will be a training ground for athletes in the Southern Ontario region. The official grand opening will take place June 11th and champion Curt Harnett of Olympic cyclist-racing fame will challenge Bob Rowley who is Milton's answer to the sport. Bob was voted Ontario Athlete of the Year for BMX this year. "I believe the kids need to be someplace safe and the track is a place where they can go," Nicky said.

Employees from Spokes and Slopes and other BMX riders in the community are hard at work designing new jumps and ramps for the sport in Halton. Building parks provides a safe location. Will the sport die in Halton? There is no sure sign of the BMX bikers endo-ing any time soon.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

About 50 BMXers converged at the front of Milton's Town Hall on July 22 to protest the recent closure of a BMX facility. The facility, which had been open for five years, was located between Milton Hydro and the Milton Memorial Arena. A new park south of the arena was opened recently, but BMXers are banned from using that park.

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