

Rolling Library and Robot Unicorn at Junkyard Derby 2010

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Daniel Kane

Energy, excitement and screaming rose above a eucalyptus grove on the University of California, San Diego campus last Friday, April 14. But it had nothing to do with the 20,000 people coming to campus that night for the Sun God music festival. Instead, the vibe was coming from Junkyard Derby 2010. (Four Junkyard Derby videos are on the Jacobs School You Tube channel and linked below...so keep reading.)

For the uninitiated, Junkyard Derby is exactly what it sounds like. In less than 48 hours, derby participants turn piles of junk and abandoned bicycles into themed boxcars, and then race them down a four-foot-wide track on Peterson Hill, at the foot of Geisel Library.

While derby organizers do provide welding assistance, the design, construction - and art direction - is left to the teams themselves.

Many of the derby cars offered an impressive mix of engineering and flair. (The managers from the flair-obsessed Chotchkie's in Office Space by UCSD alum Mike Judge '85 would be proud). A first glance up straw-bale-lined Peterson Hill offered views of a three-wheeled replica of Geisel Library, a rolling unicorn with a mane of streamers, and a speedy black lounge chair.

Junkyard Derby is organized by the Triton Engineering Student Council (TESC) and is open to the entire campus community.

One of the teams was a group of fifth-year seniors from the Jacobs School of Engineering who called themselves "the super seniors". They lamented waiting until their fifth year to participate in Junkyard Derby. Meanwhile, two teams of freshman with very low expectations couldn't quite believe they advanced as far up the tournament bracket as they did.

But in the end, it was "Mad Max," a team of seasoned graduate students and veteran Junkyard Derby participants that won. They had built a secret weapon: a gravity drive that provides a burst of propulsion at the start of each race. (The gravity drive managed not to break official Junkyard Derby rule #4: "All cars must begin the race unassisted.")

Watch the Mad Max Junkyard Derby 2010 video to see how their gravity drive works, and to find out why Mad Max was desperately looking for duct tape just moments before the final race against One Bar.

The excited freshman, some of the derby's super seniors, and a dragon belly populate the Junkyard Derby 2010 "voices" video.

Watch the Junkyard Derby 2010 Geisel library video to see a boxcar version of Geisel Library and to understand what it means to "handle pretty well for a library."

Finally, learn how a wheelchair and pieces of what might have been a structural engineering student bridge went into the making of a three-wheeled unicorn. Bonus points if you remember the unicorn's name.

The organizers of Junkyard Derby 2010 thank all of the event sponsors:

Yahoo! UCSD Associated Students The Triton Community and Tournament Competition Funds Junk King UC San Diego Facilities Management University of California Police The Campus Research Machine Shop UCSD Transportation Services UC San Diego Alumni Association JUNKMD+ The Triton Engineering Student Council

Media Contacts:

Daniel Kane dbkane@ucsd.edu, 858 534-3262

