

AT RANDOM: DEREK BALL

Riding the path to success

Pro bike rider aims for the big time

BY KARA RAMOS
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — Professional BMX bike rider Derek Ball has the drive and dedication to make it to mainstream riding.

At the age of 25, Ball has been actively riding for the past nine years.

"I have a dedication for something I picked up and couldn't stop," he said. "I try to ride five hours a day every day expect Thursday."

For more than two years, Ball has been a professional BMX bike rider with Dirty Shirty and Monster Energy Drink as his professional sponsors. Valdosta Bike Centers, Team Pluto and Down Industries are his local supporters.

"It's not like any traditional sport," he said. "(There's) no rules. You kind of do what you want."

Traveling is a big part of being a professional BMX bike rider. For competitions, Ball usually travels up and down the East Coast. He has also been to Indiana and Texas.

"I hope to get to the West Coast this year," he said.

So far this year, Ball has 15 competitions scheduled, as well as other smaller grassroots competitions.

"It's really fun to see the personalities of different people," he said.

He also likes to see the different styles of riding from contestants.

Ball said he has tried stunts at competitions that he would never attempt during his daily practices.

"It pushes you way beyond your limits," he said.

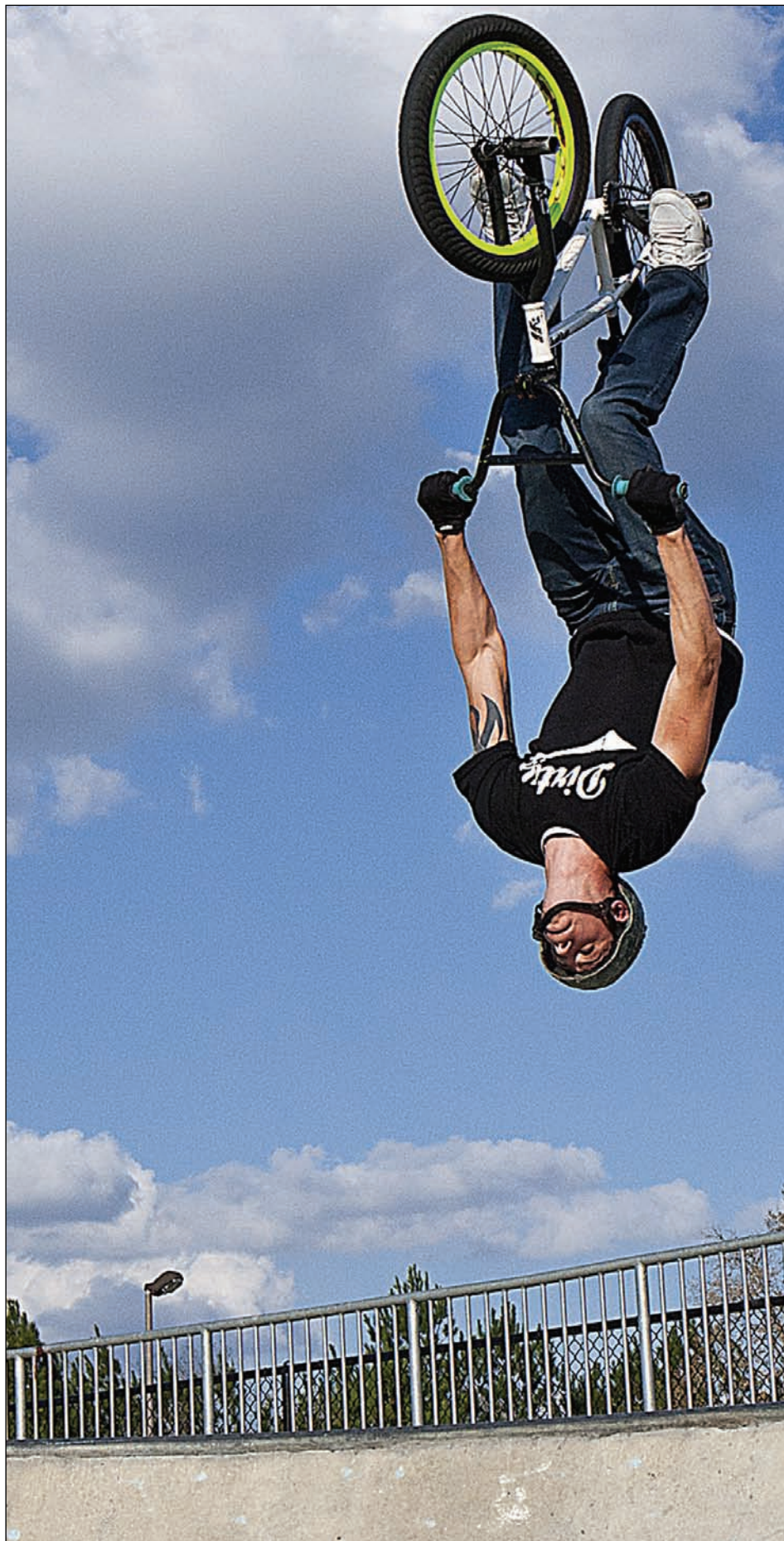
This year, he was chosen as an alternative for the BMX Mega Tour, which includes the 25 best riders in the world. Since no one dropped out, he wasn't able to perform.

'It's nice to get out and ride with some of my friends ... It helps me progress and stay motivated.'

Derek Ball

However, Ball said, "I have certain goals that I hope that I reach," which include going on the BMX Mega Tour next year.

Ball attends "pretty much every competition I can afford to make" and said he wouldn't be able to make it to many without the financial support of his



Derek Ball does a back flip out of the bowl in the skate park at the North Lowndes Sports Complex.

parents, father Ronny Ball, mother Susan Lark, and step-father Keene Lark.

"My mom and stepfather have been there the whole time but didn't understand it (riding)," he said.

Ball's mother doesn't like to attend his competitions, where he has been hurt in the past but, he said, "she'll come to my demos (and) she's the one who puts the pieces back together" when he gets injured.

When he's not competing, Ball drives to Atlanta or Florida to ride with his friends.

"It's nice to get out and ride with some of my friends," he said. "It helps me progress and stay motivated."

When riding, Ball often helps beginning riders learn new tricks and improve their skills. He said he enjoys helping out and "seeing somebody progress

BALL | 4A



Derek Ball performs a footjam tail whip on the wedge in the skate park at the North Lowndes Sports Complex.

Early voter turnout dismal

All precincts will be open Tuesday for E-SPOST voting

For a list of voting precincts, please see Page 7A.

BY JESSICA POPE
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — Voters will have one last chance to cast their ballots in the 2011 Special Election.

Appearing on ballots in Lowndes County is the question asking voters whether or not they would like to continue the one-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for education.

On Tuesday, March 15, all 12 precincts in Lowndes County will be open for 12 hours, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Any United States citizen who is at least 18 years of age and a legal resident of the state of Georgia not serving a sentence for a felony involving moral turpitude, who registered to vote by Feb. 14, and who has not been judged mentally incompetent by the court will be eligible to cast a ballot.

Supervisor of Elections Deb Cox noted that, as of March 1, Lowndes County has 48,558 active voters, plus additional inactive ones, meaning she has not heard from them in two general elections or their mail has been returned, etc.

As of Friday at 7 p.m.,

ON THE WEB

Visit www.sos.ga.gov/mvp to view a sample ballot, poll locations and more.

a total of 704 voters had already cast ballots in Lowndes County, representing 1.45 percent of active registered voters.

The remaining 47,854 active registered voters in Lowndes County are expected to cast their ballots on Tuesday, which could mean long lines and long waits.

Voters are encouraged to be patient and not get discouraged as they exercise their right to decide whether or not both the Valdosta City and Lowndes County school systems will, over the next five years, be able to continue raising additional revenues through the special tax for construction and renovation projects, the purchase of new buses, technology, textbooks, and more.

Contact the Lowndes County Board of Elections by phone at (229) 671-2850, by e-mail at elections@lowndescounty.com or in person at 2808 N. Oak St. between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday to learn more.

Answering the call

How law officers decide jurisdiction

BY DAWN CASTRO
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — Recently a Times reader posed a question concerning which law-enforcement agency should respond when a call requesting assistance is made.

Typically, a citizen would call the Valdosta Police Department if he or she lives within city limits or Lowndes County Sheriff's Office if the citizen resides outside of the Valdosta city limits.

Valdosta Police Cmdr. Brian Childress said, as policy states, "We have the responsibility to the citizens in this city. If a citizen calls 911 for law-enforcement service within the city limits, they (911) are to, and know to, dispatch a city officer. If the citizen requests a

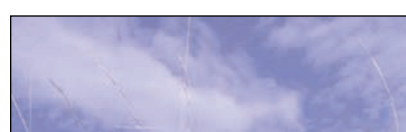
Lowndes County deputy for whatever reason and the citizen lives in the city, 911 can dispatch a deputy, but we ask that we are still notified.

There have been people who've requested deputies in the past, and that's fine, but we will still send out an officer."

Childress also added if people are unsure or have any doubt as to which agency should be handling their emergency issues, 911 will dispatch law enforcement and an officer or deputy will later determine who works the case.

"What I care about the most is saving lives," the commander said. "In an emergency, we don't have time to try and figure all that out."

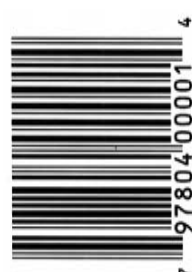
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Partly sunny
High 78 | Low 50

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CLASSIFIED.....1-8C LOTTERIES.....3B SPORTS.....1-3B
COMICS.....5B OBITUARIES.....5A TELEVISION.....4B
CROSSWORD.....4B OPINIONS.....6A WEATHER.....2A



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