World Barefoot Center Invitaional

Last Updated Sunday, 30 October 2011

WBC Invitational

The first WBC Invitational was held on the 7th and 8th of October 2011 on Lake David located in Groveland, Florida. There were 10 competitors, including some of the world's best, as well as the up-and-coming "young guns" that were competing for the largest cash prize this sport has seen-with up to $20,500 being paid out. Countries included America, New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, South Africa and Holland.

This wasn't just a traditional barefoot competition. This tournament used a new format of head-to-head competition. Also being trialed was the instant scoring system, where there was only one judge and one scorer in the boat, meaning the skiers knew their scores straight away. There was a lot of very positive feedback and both the viewers and the skiers loved it. We also had the live broadcast on the website for everyone to view. There were around 1000 viewers from all over the world, on both the 7th and 8th.

The competition kicked off around 8.30am on the Friday after interviews with both the skiers and officials were broadcast live to the world, and the American Anthem was played. The weather was looking a little average, however it held out for most of the day and the skiers were able to get some good results. The first day consisted of 2 rounds of each event - tricks, slalom and jump. After the 2 elimination rounds the group was cut down to just 8 skiers.

Saturday was the beginning of the head-to-head competition; this is where it was going to get interesting. Conditions were not looking too good and they weren't expected to get any better as the day went on, so the competition had to go on. The wind was howling and the rain had set in. The trick event kicked off, first on the water was Ashleigh Stebbeings (AUS), up against 2 Time World Champion Keith St. Onge

(USA). Lucky Ashleigh. The big upset came later on in the bracket when Brendan Paige (AUS), faced St. Onge in the Semi Finals of tricks. Paige stood up two solid passes and put the pressure on St. Onge. Keith went down early, and was nudged out of the Tricks Finals by 2050 points. The Tricks Finals were held later that day, and resulted in Paige taking 2nd
place to Current World Champion, David Small (GBR), with Ben Groen (NZL) picking up 3rd place.

With
the Slalom event underway, the wind was really going hard now. Athletes were pushed to their limit to fight the conditions, with a couple of skiers going down as they entered the course due to the chop down one end of the lake. Ben Groen (NZL), gave the crowd a show as he went down entering the course on his second pass, and simply refused to let go. After falling out the front and bouncing on his stomach and back, he tumbled back up and completed his second pass, knocking out Brendan Paige (AUS), and ending up with 4th place, after a loss to David Small (GBR) in the Semi Finals. Florida Southern Student, A.J Porreca (USA), grabbed the 3rd position, and

Small
went on to battle it out against, Keith St. Onge (USA), later that day and managed a close 2nd, with the Slalom Titan (St. Onge) living up to his name and taking 1st.

With
only one event left before the tournament was all wrapped up, the weather decided to let up a little, and the skiers were graced with some nice conditions for jumping.

David Small (GBR) was up first on
the water and his natural, cool, calm self, going up against "young gun", Cody Ebbert (USA). After flying over Ebbert, Small had a slight challenge with A.J Porreca (USA), who kept the "Jumping Guru" and 5-time, undefeated, World Jump Champion on his toes, right to the last jump. With Small now in the Finals, it would come down to Ben Groen (NZL), who had jumped a New Zealand record of 25.1m the day before, against Keith St. Onge (USA) who had jumped 25.3m the previous day. St. Onge stepped up and planted a sweet 24.9m jump on the board, which was enough to knock out Groen by a meter, giving his 3rd place. With yet another clash of the titans in the Finals, Small proved his worth and pulled one back over St. Onge, picking up 1st Place, and 2nd Overall for the tournament, with Ben Groen coming in behind him at 3rd, and Keith St. Onge, taking out 1st place Overall.

Tricks

David (1st)

Brendan (2nd)

Ben
(3rd)

Slalom

Keith (1st)

David (2nd)

AJ (3rd)

Jump

Keith (2nd)

David
(1st)

Ben (3rd)

Overall

Keith (1st)

David (2nd)

Ben (3rd)

We would like to give a huge thank you to all the skiers, officials and organizing committee for this event. Without the help and support of everyone involved, this competition just wouldn’t have been possible. We hope that this tournament is just the first of many to come.

The World Barefoot Center teaches first timer's to advanced Barefooters and can be reached at (863) 877-0039 or email wbcbarefoot@gmail.com