

American Yo-Yo Association Newsletter

September 1994

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AYYA News

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MEMBERSHIP

It's just three more weeks until the 1994 National Yo-Yo Competition in Chico, CA and the AYYA is almost one year old. Our membership is over 90 and growing monthly which is a promising start. The next membership meeting of the AYYA will be held in Chico on Saturday morning, Oct. 1st, which is the day of the national competition. The location for the meeting will be announced at the competition banquet on Friday night.

Modern

Maturity

, the magazine that is number two in national circulation, is publishing an article on Yo-Yos in their December issue that includes information on the AYYA. Great publicity! That should help a great deal in increasing our membership as there a lot of older yoers in that age bracket. To date, no manufacturers have agreed to contribute financial support to the association but two have expressed interest in the possibility of doing so in the future and efforts to accomplish that end will continue.

YO-YO COMPETITIONS

The interest in Yo-Yo competitions continues to grow. The newest entry was the East Coast Regional held at Cameron Elementary in Arlington Virginia in June. That contest was organized by Bonnie Matthews, a gung-ho P.E. teacher who is also the coach of the YO-COBRAS, a school based Yo-Yo club. She intends this competition to be a regular annual event. There are now twelve AYYA sanctioned competitions:

The U.S. National in Chico, CA. (Oct. 1st. for '94)

The International Jugglers Association (IJA) International Pro/Am Competition, held in a different location each year (Las Vegas on July 20th in '95)

The NW Regional in Seattle (Oct. 22nd this year)

The NE Regional which will be a joint effort of Bill Alton and Bob Baybrook (Time & place not set for '95)

The SE Regional organized by Greg Cohen of Infinite Illusions in Tallahassee, FL (no date for '95 yet)

The East Coast Regional in Arlington, VA.

Existing state and local competitions are:

Utah, Dale Myrberg

Louisiana, Jim Johnson

California, Steve Speegle

Northern California, John Stangle

Spokane, WA, Chris Cook

The Las Vegas Open (Bob Baab will run this one in '95. End of 1st week in Jan.)

Arizona, Scott Edwards (Planned)

There are a few other contests that have been held this year whose organizers have not contacted the AYYA so the details of how they were conducted and if they are going to be held on an ongoing basis is unknown.

If you want more information about any of the competitions listed above, contact the contest organizers. Their numbers can be found in the AYYA roster included in this issue. Encourage anyone you know to contact us as we are here to help all interested yoers.

Would you like to organize a contest in your area? The AYYA will supply Gold, Silver and Bronze awards for each division as well as send you information on how to run a contest and put you in contact with other Yo-Yo enthusiasts in your area.

The 1994 IJA International Pro-Am competition (Aug. 13, Burlington, VT) was the best to date for that venue. There were 24 contestants (no locals) coming from all over the U.S. and one from Yokohama, Japan. The humidity was terrible. For those of you who live where high humidity is common, you know what havoc it can cause with the play between your fingers and the string. The purpose in mentioning this is to introduce you to a great device found by Bill de Boisblanc. He came to the competition wearing a billiard glove. The billiard glove has two fingers (the first two) and a thumb. It is tight fitting and made of thin nylon. This allowed the Yo-Yo string to slide over the fingers without a hint of drag. Bill said that most billiard parlors should have them but he cautioned to not buy the one with the Velcro fastening as the string will hang up on it.

The winners were as follows:

Pro/Am Division;

1st - Bill de Boisblanc, S. F., CA

2nd - Jon Gates, Lincoln, NE

3rd - Tom McCoy, Westfield, NJ

4th - Mike Taylor, Northville, MI

5th - Mark Hayward, Madison, WI

Advanced, Seniors;L

1st - Mike Taylor Jr., Northville, MI

2nd - Bonnie Mathews, Mannassas, VA

3rd - Josh Kavanagh, Waterloo, WI

4th - Bill Alton, Portsmouth, NH

Advanced, Juniors;

1st - Warren Korpanty, Arlington, VA

2nd - Thai Nguyen , Arlington, VA

3rd - Liubo Yepez, Arlington, VA

4th - Patrick Jefferies, Arlington, VA

Novice, 11 & under

1st - Chris Grundle, Arlington, VA

2nd - Joe Hout, Kettering, OH

3rd - Marshall Whanam, Arlington, VA

COLLECTORS CORNER

For the next few issues of the AYYA News the Collectors Corner will be in two parts. Lucky Meisenheimer will continue to write articles on particular selected subjects of interest to our readers, like the one included in this issue. The second part will be lists of Yo-Yos that have been manufactured since the 1930's. The first list, Duncan Yo-Yos, is included in this issue.

I am soliciting everyone's help with this endeavor. Is the list complete and accurate? Please let us know. Can you give us feedback on what you think each of the listed Yo-Yos is worth? What have you paid for them? How much would you pay for them if they were offered to you? What have you sold them for? Several people have lamented the lack of any kind of collectors guide, so if all of us cooperate on this, we'll have a guide that we can all use.

FREESTYLE YO-YOING

Various competitions over the last three years have included a freestyle event, either as part of an advanced division or as a separate division.

The National Competition in Chico will have a separate freestyle division this year. A guide for developing and judging a freestyle performance is included in this issue. I personally feel that the freestyle is the

ultimate in yo-yoing because it requires superior skill and it frees the player to develop new tricks, maneuvers, and styles of play that are uniquely their own. It is the only opportunity for a player to show their skill, imagination and style in a competition. With freestyle there are no restrictions, no boredom, no "I've done it all" and it is a blast to watch!

There is an opinion shared by many that the freestyle is only for the top elite rank of professional players. I feel that once the fear of judging a freestyle has been overcome that a 30 second freestyle would be a much better demonstration of skill for breaking ties in the intermediate division than the present boring, loop, loop, loop, ad nauseam. I saw two great things in at the IJA Pro/Am competition last month. First, Bill de Boisblanc (a featured player in Helene Zeiger's 'World on a String') entered his first contest since he was a kid in California and his first ever freestyle and he won! Second, Four different young members of the YO-COBRAS got on stage and performed an exhibition of impressive freestyle routines that they originated on their own. So, get out your music, tune your brain to 'create' and start practicing.

THE AYYA STORE

At the present time, there are only limited quantities of 'T' shirts and

sweatshirts in three AYYA designs. As time goes on the AYYA would like to offer more in the way of Yo-Yo products, i.e., patches, pins, holsters, watches, collectors display carriers, etc.. Let us know If this sounds like something you would like to see or if you have an idea about a product you would like to see us offer or if you have a product you would like to make available to our AYYA members. An inventory of what is presently available, with prices, is included in this issue.

TRANSAXLES

Transaxles, for those of you who might not have experienced them yet, are spinning (freewheeling) Yo-Yos that do not spin in the open loop at the end of the string. Rather, the string is locked around a ball bearing or slick plastic bearing that encircles the central shaft of the Yo-Yo. This allows the Yo-Yo to spin on the bearing, greatly reducing the amount of friction, resulting in incredibly long spins. "UNFAIR!" are the cries. "THAT'S CHEATING!" insist the Yo-Yo purists. One of the critics of the transaxle is Bill Alton, editor of the Noble Disk. He has offered his objections to the transaxle and I have given my observations and arguments in support of their use. These arguments are being presented to give all AYYA members a chance to think about the question and to have a vote in how the transaxles are going to be handled in future AYYA competitions.

There are four possible outcomes:

Transaxles are an abomination
and have no place in the land of YO.

Transaxles will have their own
separate division.

Transaxles will be allowed in
selected divisions only.

The choice of Yo-Yo will be left to
the contestant.

Transaxles, Dale Oliver

My major contention is that there is no substitute for competence. There is no denying that a transaxle will spin easier and longer than any fixed axle Yo-Yo. An incompetent player will have an easier time doing spinning tricks with a transaxle than an incompetent player with a regular Yo-Yo. The transaxle player will conversely have a harder time with loop tricks than the player using a normal Yo-Yo. At low levels of play, I give the nod to the transaxle player unless there is a loop-off. Is this fair? I am a Yo-Yo coach. I teach upwards to 40,000 youngsters a year how to Yo-Yo and I use transaxles in my Yo-Yo classes for beginning spinners. I have found that the average child (or adult) will learn three to four times faster with them. Having more and easier success, their interest is maintained and the more eager they are to learn. When I conduct contests, the participation in the novice division increases dramatically when transaxles are allowed. As to the question of fairness, they all have a choice of what Yo-Yo they want to compete with. In the upper levels, I have seen little

evidence that the transaxle is of substantial benefit. A competent player can throw a spinner consistently with either type. There is no contest trick that takes more than an eight second spinner which is easily done with any good Yo-Yo. There is often a response problem with transaxles, that is, they don't always return with the positive action that one would like. One of the most telling things that I have observed is that none of the players that I have coached up to the championship level have continued using a transaxle in competition even when it is allowed. Finally, transaxles engender a different style of freestyle play. They expand what is possible. I look forward to the upcoming freestyle competition in Chico. Transaxles will be allowed for that division only and I expect to see some routines that will add a new dimension to the idea of Yo-Yo 'Play'.

Transaxles, Bill Alton

The most recent significant innovation in the world of yo-yo throwing has been the introduction of the transaxle yo-yo, and they have also been rather controversial.

Many of the purists detest them with no reservations whatsoever. There is something innate in the soul of many people who have spent decades learning an art form that abhors any innovation which allows someone to apparently "master" their art form with a few hours of practice; and who can blame them.

I have better than a ten second sleeper with a No Jive. I devoted hundreds of hours to developing it. I am extremely proud of it. And I don't like seeing some neophyte (who doesn't even know what string maintenance is) doing 20 second sleepers with \$100 worth of equipment and two hours of practice. That I can make that same yo-yo sleep for a minute is a small consolation in the face of so much "instant talent".

Granted, there is the intellectual side of us which does realize that though the appearance of mastery is there, in reality these over-night wonders are restricted to a narrow range of tricks in which they will be able to simulate proficiency (most notably picture tricks). Our mind knows that these over-night wonders lack the depth which makes advanced string tricks possible till they have devoted a few more hundred hours to the basics; but still, the heart rebels.

Even the existence of the transaxle is a minor form of blasphemy to the true purist, but the issue cuts across right to the bone when the question arises of whether these unholy items should be allowed in competitions. And here it gets hard to separate the mind from the heart. I don't fear that anyone with less than a few hundred hours of practice is going to beat me in a competition. I don't care if they're using a million dollar titanium yo-yo with an electric motor and navigational quality gyroscope bearings. Equipment does not equal talent, and we know this; but it is still a potent equalizer.

As an example: I recently competed in a competition where transaxle yo-yos were legal, and two of the competitors were using them.

One of the competitors was using a \$100 transaxle yo-yo, and she beat me by a narrow margin. This competitor, however, has had about as many hours of practice as I have (possibly more); and even beat me (by almost the same margin) with a standard axle yo-yo a year ago. Losing to a transaxle under these circumstances does not hurt my pride a bit.

The other contestant, though they didn't perform well enough to be a threat to me, was obviously competing well above his level of talent (and even admitted that he couldn't even use a non-transaxle yo-yo). This contestant probably only had one or two hundred hours of practice (if that); as compared to my few thousand hours of practice. As could be predicted, he lost big points on looping tricks, and did quite poorly on string tricks.

Like I said, I'm not worried about any joker with less than a hundred hours of practice: They're not going to beat me no matter what they are throwing. I'm worried about the guy with 500 hundred hours of practice and a transaxle. Now there I could get beat, particularly if the trick list was heavy on picture tricks.

It's a given that transaxles don't perform equally well with standard axles for every class of tricks. If they did, there would have been no rational for their development in the first place.

And that is what transaxles are, a specialty yo-yo developed to excel in a narrow range of tricks. But they are not designed to compete directly against standard axle yo-yos, nor should they be allowed to.

If someone wants to open a separate division just for transaxles, that's fine by me; but I don't care to see cars and motorcycles competing head to head in the same race, and there are good reasons why they don't.

YO-YO HALL OF FAME

This idea was presented in the first AYYA Newsletter. I thought it was a terrific idea. Everyone I asked about it told me it was a great idea. The newsletter asked for nominations and/or information, articles, pictures involving any of the famous yo-yoers from the past. So far there have been Z E R O responses with the sole exception of the write-up on Barney Akers that I requested from Don Duncan. I want to continue to encourage participation from the AYYA membership on this endeavor and I'll probably threaten to hold the board members hostage and take away their Yo-Yos until there are some nominations forthcoming. Cereally folks, give me some help.

PLEASE! Perhaps someone can provide me with some of this information:

How can I contact the children of:

Joe Radavan

Gus Somera

Pedro Flores

There must be thirty or more deceased Yo-Yo pros. We need to put together some information about them before it gets lost forever. We are looking for things like media articles, pictures, tricks they invented, their favorite Yo-Yos, their favorite tricks and personal histories. If you can help

locate any of these things, please get in touch with me at AYYA, 14534 Wallingford, Seattle, WA 98133. Materials that you desire to keep can be copied and returned.

The Yo-Yo Hall of Fame will be part of the Duncan Family Yo-Yo Museum that is opening this month at the new facilities of Playmaxx, Inc. (makers of the Pro-Yo) at 2900 Country Club, Tucson, AZ 85716. (602) 322-0100 - FAX (602) 325-1614.