

SPOKE TALK



Transitions in cycling

Transition, by definition, is the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

Transitions are something we encounter in many forms as riders. Takeoffs, landings, corners and drops are all transitions where we change from one direction of travel to another.

This is a constant element we navigate in life and just one of the exciting challenges we are required to adapt to as cyclists. To me it's one of the primary reasons I ride, the challenge of adapting to change.

Steamboat Resort or "Mountain Resort," as I like to call it, arguably endures more change and transition than any other business or high-use land area in the valley. It's perpetually in transition from winter to summer with an abundance of guests seeking a "mountain experience."

When you stop and think about it, it is truly incredible the number of mountain experiences that are brought into people's lives via Mount Werner over a 12-month time frame.

In order to maintain and continually enhance these experiences, Steamboat Resort must maintain its current infrastructure and continually invest in the many areas that bring the experience to life, making it the world-class destination it has become and that we've grown to be passionate about.

This means that sometimes infrastructure improvements and projects will affect short-term experiences for the benefit of long-term goals.

That being said, the 2019 season is probably one of the most transitional seasons we've had to date at the resort, especially relative to summer operations. After 33 years, the gondola is finally getting a complete upgrade.

This transition has opened the door for new operations such as the Christie Peak Express chair, a lower elevation lift which has provided a much friendlier experience for riders both young and new to downhill-specific bike park riding.

With a much more welcoming introduction to the sport, the transition from zero to hero is much more attainable for riders that were often overwhelmed by the 2,200 vertical foot drop and 40-plus minute descents that Thunderhead required of new riders.

Considering the opportunities to focus on this entry-level experience, the resort has added two new green trails, a new bike carrier system and enhanced Steamboat Bike School programming.

For the more intermediate and advanced riders, the Bike Park Trail Crew is also



Racers push off from the starting line during the 2018 Steamboat Stinger.

DANIELLE TRUSZKOWSKI/COURTESY

The Stinger returns

Annual endurance race brings 1K athletes to Steamboat Springs

Shelby Reardon
Steamboat Pilot & Today

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Course marking leads Rob Peterson and Nate Bird will traverse Emerald Mountain on today, planting trail markers, arrows and wrong way signs along the course of the ninth annual Steamboat Stinger, which takes place Saturday and Sunday.

The Stinger, which is hosted by Honey Stinger, is a staple in the Steamboat Springs community, drawing endurance mountain bikers and runners. On Saturday, riders will take off on a 50-mile race, and Sunday, runners will compete in either a half- or full marathon using the same route.

"It's really popular in the bike world," race organizer Katie Black said. "It's growing popularity on the running side. The bike race always sells out, and this is the highest number of runners we've ever had."

More than 1,000 athletes are expected to compete over both days.

The course, which winds through single-track on Emerald Mountain, has no major changes. Bikers will pedal two laps of a 26.2-mile course, which will also serve as Sunday's marathon course. The

half-marathon course won't see the backside of Emerald, descending as soon as they hit Ridge Trail.

As runners reach the top of Emerald before heading back down or running along the backside of the mountain, they'll meet Peterson, of Big Agnes, and Bird, of Honey Stinger, at the Ridge Aid Station.

The pair will hand out Stinger products, snacks, water and more throughout both race days.

"Us, as racers, know what endurance athletes kind of need, so it's fun to give back," Peterson said.

The top aid station sees bikers four times over two laps and marathon runners twice as they reach the station and then return from the backside of Emerald. For the half-marathon runners, they just breeze by before running downhill. Peterson said some of those runners just need a high five and some water.

For the second straight year, the race will feature a Bumble Bee race, where two bikers combine to complete the mountain bike race, making it a slightly easier version of the competitive Queen Bee and King Bee races. For those, a competitor must compete in both events, the 50-mile bike race and the marathon.

Helping runners through the forecasted 80-degree heat will be water sprayers

throughout the course.

Like most Steamboat events, not only does the Stinger attract locals, but visitors looking to race and spend the weekend in town.

“For our community, it’s just another event that stands out by the amount of people that come for it. They’re here for the weekend. They’re not here to race and get out.”

Rob Peterson
Steamboat Stinger course marking co-lead

"For our community, it's just another event that stands out by the amount of people that come for it," Peterson said. "They're here for the weekend. They're not here to race and get out."

Waiting for finishers at the line is a post-race party, with a beer garden, food, vendors, live music and prizes.

All race proceeds will go to two local causes, Partners of Routt County and the Trail Maintenance Endowment Fund.

A new addition to the Steamboat Stinger is a block party, open to all locals, participating or not. The event will take place at the start/finish area at Howelsen Hill from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday. Those who show up in any type of Steamboat Stinger gear will receive a free beer.

"It's a super fun race. We take a lot of pride in putting it on," Peterson said. "We hope that one year, if you haven't done it, you try racing with a partner and check it out. Maybe one day you do it as a solo. If racing isn't your thing and you want to give back to your community, being a volunteer is huge. We need a ton of volunteers to help make this happen."

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SPORTS

NEWPHER

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working hard on a new blue trail named Huckleberry that will allow riders to access the top of Buckin' Bronc more easily from Lower Rustler's Ridge. This new trail is slated to open later this season.

As the manager of the Steamboat Bike Park over the past seven seasons and having been in the mountain resort industry over the past 17 years, there are a few things that will always be constant. Summers will always be construction season. Winters will continue to be the life blood of the ski area. Summer business will continue to grow and mountain biking will continue to be the most congruent summer crossover sport to skiing.

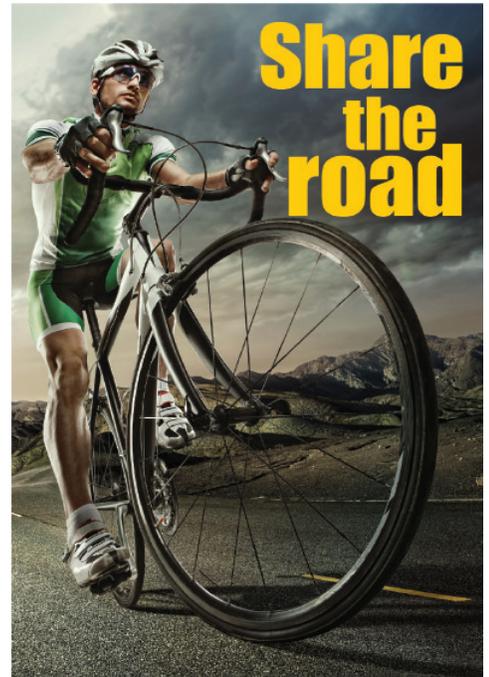
I'm confident that participation in the sport will continue to increase and the family aspect of it will grow as current participating

generations get older and share their passion for the sport with younger generations.

Equipment advancements will continue to evolve and resorts will open doors to proper terrain progression for new and growing riders. From "never ever" to Olympic level terrain, a diverse offering of trails is paramount for the future of Steamboat Springs as a cycling destination and as a town that celebrates our athletic heritage so proudly.

I'll admit this is long-term thinking and something I try to stay optimistic about. But in the short term, hopefully you can join me in being excited to have a fresh gondola in the 2019/20 season and a solid foundation for Bike Park operations for many years to come.

Trevyn Newpher is the manager of the Steamboat Bike Park at Steamboat Resort.



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