

Sanding for Speed

Belt Sander Racers Compete for First National Championship at AWFS Fair 2007.

BY BRAD WALSETH



Move over NASCAR, there is a new breed of racers who are out to win the hearts and minds of racing fans around the world: belt sander racers. Engineered for speed, and sporting brilliant racing stripes and aerodynamic spoilers, these souped-up belt sanders hurtle ferociously down the track, accompanied by the cheers of the crowd, before reaching a heart-pounding climax at the finish line.

And they're off!



This year, the Belt Sander Racing Association (BSRA), will hold its first annual national championship event Friday night, July 20 at the AWFS Fair in Las Vegas. Entrants from around the country will compete on a 75-foot, custom-built, computerized track for the right to be called the National Champion of this new sport.

Belt sander racing has been around for several years, with active groups in places like Cleveland, OH, and Richmond, BC, Canada. Perhaps the most well-known races are those sponsored by Kenyon Woodworking and the New England Belt Sander Assn. (NEBSA). However, this is the first time that a national

champion will be crowned, and the first time these races will be a part of the AWFS Fair, due in large part to the efforts of one man.

"I was asked to be on the trade show committee, and they asked me if I could come up with something new that would create some excitement for the show," says Jamie Goodwin, Accuride International's Western regional manager, and an experienced belt sander racing enthusiast in his own right. "They probably expected me to come back with a turning demonstration or something fairly conventional, but I thought this would really be a fun event for people from both the hardware and equipment side of the fair, and the committee really got excited by the idea and got behind it."

Racers can be entered in one of two classes. The Stock class requires that the sander be an unmodified standard sander built by a conventional power tool manufacturer, while the Modified class allows performance enhancements to increase speed. Both classes encourage decorative additions and themes to the tools, and there will be prizes given to the most creative.

Intense thrills and chills are in store for the crowd, as these hard-charging sanding machine dragsters careen wildly down the long wooden track. But as the pit crews know, sudden danger lurks when you least expect it out on the racetrack. Without warning, a powerful machine may lose control and flip off the track, or overheat and burst into a

cloud of smoke. Clearly this is no sport for the faint-hearted; but this rugged sport is not merely for the big and brawny either. Goodwin points to an all woman team who attached hummingbirds to their racer and, "they beat us three times in a row," he says with a laugh.

The popularity of this sport is growing daily, and Goodwin believes there will be considerable media coverage of the event, including television. He believes the final number of entries will be between 25 and 50, and he encourages anyone interested to enter. "We would like to invite all cabinet shops to build a racer and enter in this event," he says. Entry forms, rules and regulations are available at www accuride.com/bsra/. +



Sanders can compete in two classes: Stock or Modified, and decorations are encouraged.

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