

# Los Angeles Times

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### Off-road bicyclists stage Fat Tire Fest

October 26, 2009 | 2:35 pm



Hundreds of mountain bikers, from professionals to toddlers, descended upon Castaic Lake State recreation Area Sunday for the 2009 iteration of the Fat Tire Fest, put on by local bike trail advocacy nonprofit [CORBA](#) (Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Assn.).

The event featured group rides led by professional mountain bikers [Ned Overend](#), [Brian Lopes](#) and [Sid Taberlay](#); demo bikes from companies including Cannondale, Giant, Ibis,

Specialized and Trek Women; a skills clinic; poker ride; wheelie contest; a bike limbo contest; a silent auction; and a raffle drawing. The festival is CORBA's biggest source of funding each year and all proceeds go to help the group advance the cause of mountain biking in the greater Los Angeles area, said association president Jeff Klinger.

"We get probably 50% of our operating budget from just this event," Klinger said. The group has held the festival every year since its inception in 1987.

In addition to maintaining trails in L.A. and parts of Ventura counties, Klinger said CORBA advocates for greater trail access for mountain bikers; runs a [youth-outreach program](#) that brings inner-city kids ages 8 to 17 on mountain biking trips in the Santa Monica mountains; and provides free skills clinics and group rides for cyclists of all levels, including those new to the sport.

The big draw of the day was the chance to ride with pros Lopes, Overend and Taberlay.

Dozens of riders followed the trio on a nearly 11-mile ride around Castaic Lake that included plenty of fast descents and steep climbs. The ride gave bikers, many of whom tried out a high-end demo bike, a chance to compare their skills to the pros. Despite strong gusts of winds on the trails, recent rains and clear skies made for great riding conditions.

The event was a first for each of the pros, who all expressed an appreciation for CORBA's cause.



Lopes, a downhill and slalom rider with multiple national and world titles, lives in Laguna Beach. He said he wasn't familiar with CORBA until recently, but was glad to accept the group's invitation to attend this year's Fat Tire Fest. "Any kind of group that supports trails and mountain biking, I'm there," Lopes said. After traveling around the world to ride, Lopes said he's come to appreciate the year-round access to great trails that Southern California provides.

Overend, a Durango, Colo., resident, echoed Lopes' sentiments about the quality of mountain biking the region offers. "I feel like a lot of people don't understand how good [the riding] here is," he said.

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Outposts' primary contributor is veteran L.A. Times outdoors and action sports reporter Pete Thomas. Also contributing are Kelly Burgess and other Times staffers.

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Overend is a former racer with national and world titles to his name from mountain biking's early days, and now works in R&D for longtime sponsor Specialized. He said it was important for riders to practice trail etiquette and to be responsible, philosophies he said CORBA promotes, to avoid the conflicts that sometimes arise when mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians share trails. "You've got to have trails to ride on," Overend said. "That's the key to the whole industry."

Taberlay, World Championship medalist and five-time Australian national champion who now calls South Pasadena home, said he was there to give back to the mountain biking community and was thrilled at the enthusiasm of the festival's attendees. "I'm still trying to get my head around all this," he said. "There aren't festivals like this in Australia. It's been quite a learning experience."

-- David Undercoffler



**Photos:**

(Top): Riders rest at the top of a climb during the advanced group ride with Ned Overend, Brian Lopes and Sid Taberlay.

(Second): Pros Sid Taberlay, left, and Ned Overend, right, look on prior to leading a skills clinic.

(Third): Pro biker Brian Lopes, left, signs a fan's bike.

(Bottom): A pair of young riders survey the landscape.

Photos credit: David Undercoffler / Los Angeles Times

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