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**What's Old is New: Suzuki 24 Hour Points Series Returns to its Roots**  
**Veteran Solo Racer Tinker Juarez Tackles Big Bear for the First Time**

**Davis, West Virginia**--The third round of the **Suzuki 24 Hour National Points Series** of endurance mountain bike racing comes home to **West Virginia** at **Big Bear Lake** on **June 7th and 8th**. What began seventeen years ago as the **24 Hours of Canaan**, the brainchild of Davis' own **Laird Knight** and his event promotion company **Granny Gear Productions**, has grown into a nationwide series with worldwide participation and a major corporate sponsorship.

The six-race series, sponsored by **Suzuki Automotive**, includes a full complement of destination venues for serious mountain bikers who want to be able to say "I've experienced the best courses out there," when they finally hang up their racing shoes. For a state whose tagline is "Wild and Wonderful", the pristine wooded setting of the event at **Big Bear Lake Camplands**, near **Hazelton, West Virginia**, fills the bill.

"Mountain biking is a great symbol for West Virginia because it is a clean, sustainable tourism activity that contributes to local economies through tourism sales, income, jobs and tax revenues," says **Justin Gaul** of the **West Virginia Department of Tourism**. "By attracting participants from out of state and providing fun and memorable experiences, **Granny Gear** events exemplify why West Virginia is and shall remain wild and wonderful."

Fun is big business, too, and it explains why companies like **Suzuki** have joined the party. **Gaul** states that outdoor recreation is the second most popular activity pursued by visitors to West Virginia, and it's part of a **\$77 billion market nationwide**. "With the **Suzuki** sponsorship and expansion of their **24 Hour Race Series** to other national venues, the **24 Hours of Big Bear** puts West Virginia on the map alongside top mountain biking destinations such as **Moab, Utah**, and **Killington, Vermont**," says **Gaul**.

West Virginia's history with quality mountain biking venues, plus **Granny Gear Production's** long-standing reputation for excellent courses, has drawn the presence this year of a world-famous legend of mountain biking. **Tinker Juarez** plans to race **Round #3** of the **Suzuki Series** at **Big Bear Lake**, a debut **24 hour** effort in the Mountain State. "I'd always wanted to do the **24 Hours of Canaan** or **Snowshoe**, but never had the chance during my pro career. I'm excited about coming to **Big Bear**, and I've heard it's a fun, great course," says **Juarez**. The Southern California native feels more at home in the arid conditions of California courses than the sometimes-wet, wooded and technical east coast courses exemplified by **Big Bear Lake**. "It's true that I've held back coming in the past because the conditions often don't suit me, but at the same time I'm looking forward to the challenge. Toward the end of the **24 hours**, those technical sections could get really interesting and be a real challenge."



Mountain Biking Legend **Tinker Juarez** is ready for the **Big Bear** challenger

The **12.2 mile, 3,100 ft.**, wooded course at **Big Bear Lake** deserves its hallowed place in the pantheon of mountain biking venues. The loop includes gradual climbs, abundant singletrack, large embedded rocks, tight slaloms and challenging rock gardens, all hallmarks of a classic east coast course. "It's tremendously fun and a super popular course", says **Laird Knight**, **Granny Gear CEO**. "It's rolling - without any huge, steep climbs - and almost all singletrack. With the shade from the beautiful rhododendrons lining the course and the altitude, it remains cool in the heat of summer."

**Juarez** regards the throngs of racers, fans and support crews that come to **Big Bear Lake** as some of the biggest benefits of competing there. "I always like to race where there's a good crowd. My wife is coming along with me too. Both of those things keep me motivated throughout the long race." Another benefit not lost on the rider who was a major figure in the international XC scene back in the 1990s is the prize money offered by the **Suzuki Series**. "Laird does a great job giving back to the racers, and respects our presence by offering a quality prize list," said **Juarez**, who noted the near dearth of prize money at major XC races in the U.S. currently; a far cry from the halcyon days of the 1990s. "[Knight] charges a fair entry fee and he understands the costs involved with bringing a support crew." **Juarez** has previously raced **Granny Gear 24s** at **Vail Lake** and **Moab**. "Granny Gear does a great job of producing quality events," he concludes.

Perhaps the highest praise from the veteran competitor with the long, curly locks is the fact that no sponsor obligations or financial imperative compel him to come to West Virginia. **Juarez** has found a second career as an endurance specialist after retiring as an international pro rider, even competing on the road in the **Race Across America (RAAM)**. "I get to cherry-pick my races these days", he says. "One of the ones I put to the top of my list was **Big Bear Lake**."



Getting to the race course at **Big Bear Lake** is easy. Located 4 miles off **Interstate 68**, it's a drive of under four hours from the major cities of **Washington D.C.**, **Baltimore** and **Philadelphia**, and a short, two hour jaunt from **Pittsburgh**.

You can also pre-ride the course before the **June 7-8** event, or relive the glory of your performance after the race: the course is permanently set up during the season (**April - November**), and open to all cyclists for a modest **\$5** user fee.

The **Suzuki 24-Hours of Big Bear** begins at **Noon Saturday, June 7**, and concludes at **Noon** on **Sunday**. It is part of a six-race series that visits premier mountain bike destinations around the USA.

**About Granny Gear Productions**

**Granny Gear Productions**, a sports marketing and event production company, has earned a reputation as mountain biking's most innovative and successful event organizer. With more than 26 years as a mountain bike race promoter, **Granny Gear President and CEO, Laird Knight**, created the 24-hour racing format in 1991. In 2001, Knight became **West Virginia Tourism's Person-of-the-Year** and in 2002, Knight was inducted into **The Mountain Bike Hall of Fame**.

In 2000, GGP created its unprecedented and unrivaled **RealTime™ Scoring System**, that tracks every rider and every lap, posting results for every team in real-time on the web. [www.grannygear.com](http://www.grannygear.com)

**About Suzuki**

The Brea, Calif.-based Automotive Operations of American Suzuki Motor Corporation was founded in 1985 by parent company Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC) and currently markets its vehicles by the United States through a network of approximately 500 automotive dealerships in 49 states. Based in Hamamatsu, Japan, SMC is a diversified worldwide automobile, motorcycle and outboard motor manufacturer with sales of more than two million new automobiles annually. Founded in 1909 and incorporated in 1920, SMC has operations in 187 countries. For more information, visit [www.media.suzukiauto.com](http://www.media.suzukiauto.com).

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