

# Campers get a taste of X Games at ATX Action Sports Camp

PARENTING By Pam LeBlanc - American-Statesman Staff



1

Posted: 12:00 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 25, 2016

---

## Highlights

At the ATX Action Sports Camp, kids get some life skills while they learn to skateboard and ride BMX bikes.

---

Bryan Fiese, 44, founded the camp five years ago.

---

The camp has seen a surge of interest since Austin hosted the X Games in 2014 and 2015.

---

The camp draws mostly boys, but organizers say the girls typically learn the skills more quickly.

Skateboard in hand, Preston Christy peers over the edge of a 3-foot halfpipe with a look of concern on his face.

“You’re not going to hit it fast at first. You’ve got to do it over and over and over,” encourages camp counselor Colton Perry. “The more you do it, the better you’ll get.”

Preston, 12, is trying to perfect a tricky maneuver called a “sweeper.” “I’m just scared I might do the splits by accident,” he says.

And yes, that’s a legitimate worry. But Preston manages to avoid such potential disaster. With a whoosh of air and a clatter of tiny wheels, he zips down the halfpipe and up the other side on his skateboard, looking every bit the future X Games contender.

Here at the ATX Action Sports Camp, located about 30 minutes west of Austin near Dripping Springs, kids ages 5 to 15 whirl skateboards over ramps, ledges and halfpipes, sail BMX bikes over dirt humps and wooden ramps, practice rapping skills, demonstrate air guitar prowess and pelt each other with globs of gooey color during paintball battles. All the while, music — a punk rock version of “Walking on Sunshine” one moment and a classic rendition of “Old Time Rock and Roll” the next — pumps in the background.

Sometimes they hit the dirt, too.

Owen Racis, 9, zooms down a wooden ramp at the beginning of the BMX bike course, then wipes out



At ATX Action Sports Camp in Dripping Springs, children learn skateboarding, BMX and life skills. Max Woodruff, 8, flies through the ... [Read More](#)



At ATX Action Sports Camp in Dripping Springs, children learn skateboarding, BMX and life skills.



At ATX Action Sports Camp in Dripping Springs, children learn skateboarding, BMX and life skills. Graham Waltuck (right) watches the action ... [Read More](#)

when he hits the second of two successive, armchair-sized dirt mounds.

“You OK?” someone shouts.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” he says, admiring the fresh dirt ground into his once-clean blue T-shirt.

That’s because campers here also learn the art of properly falling. While Owen recovers, he explains why he likes rambling around this 30-acre outdoor playground.

“You can learn so many things, and since I already do soccer, I wanted to do an individual sport,” he says. “Skateboarding has a different feel than any other sport. When you land a trick it feels so encouraging. It feels great.”

The camp, hosted by the Texas Skateboarding Club, is open to boys and girls ages 5 to 15, who are grouped by ability. Besides the action sports skills, they get a healthy dose of life skills.

Founded five years ago by motivational speaker and skateboard buff Bryan Fiese, 44, ATX Action Sports Camp operates in association with the Texas Skateboarding Club, created with the belief that kids should have options other than traditional sports. The camp has seen a surge of interest since Austin hosted the X Games in 2014 and 2015, but it’s about more than biking and skateboarding.

“It’s about self-esteem,” Fiese says.

Learning to do something like “dropping in” — plunging off the lip of a steep ramp on a skateboard — can give kids confidence that spills over into other aspects of life.

Just ask Bry Peters, 13, who says the toughest thing he learned at camp was how to drop in. “It was pretty scary,” he says. “But when I did it, it felt like I got a 100 on a test.”

Fiese says 42 kids learned to drop in at the camp last year.

“Your mind can’t grasp the concept of going down,” Fiese says of the skill. “There’s a point you’ve got to say, ‘I’m going to take that risk.’ Once you do that, the doors open up.”

The camp draws mostly boys, but organizers say the girls who do participate typically learn the skills more quickly. All campers are required to wear helmets; elbow and knee pads are optional. They can bring their own bikes and boards or borrow those owned by the camp.

The experience offers ample opportunity to unplug and get outside — something that’s increasingly rare in a world of nonstop connectivity.

“We help them get the basics down, meet some friends and have fun,” says Perry. “If there’s something they’ve seen in the X Games, they can start here. These kids ease into it and learn the right

way.”

Camp runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Campers rotate between coached BMX and skateboard sessions in the morning, then get some free time in the afternoon. They bring their own lunches but can purchase snacks and drinks for a small fee. On the last day, they show off newly learned skateboard tricks at an afternoon demonstration for parents.

Enrollment is capped at 30 kids per session, with a camper to counselor ratio of 5-to-1. A Dripping Springs doctor is on call when camp is in session, and counselors have first-aid certifications.

---

## IF YOU GO

ATX Action Sports Camp is located at 4150 U.S. 290 East near Dripping Springs. Camp hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Cost is \$350; \$275 for members of the Texas Skateboarding Club. For more information, call 866-465-7073 or go to [texas skateboarding club.com](http://texas skateboarding club.com).

---

---

## About the Author



**PAM LEBLANC** Pam LeBlanc  
writes about fitness and travel for  
the Austin American-Statesman.



## SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTERS

Want more news? [Sign up](#) for free newsletters to get more of the Statesman delivered to your inbox.

---

---

## Reader Comments 1

---

---

## Next Up in Lifestyles

### Ben Harper sees 'open road' ahead for the Innocent Criminals

by Elysa Gardner, USA Today

NEW YORK — Go ahead, call Ben Harper a protest singer. "I'll take it," the 46-year-old singer/songwriter says of the well-worn term.



### Quirky 'raindrop cake' becoming a new food trend

by Cox Media Group National Content Desk

Darren Wong is responsible for bringing the latest food craze to America. Like the cronut and rainbow bagels before it, the raindrop cake comes from...

### Officers help make birthday special for woman with Down syndrome

by WJAX-Jacksonville

When a mother asked the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office for a birthday card for her daughter who has Down syndrome, officers from two...



## Amy Schumer Slams Glamour for Including Her in "Plus-Size" Issue. Here's One Former Editor's Take

by Sunny Sea Gold, Greatist

In case you haven't heard on Instagram or Twitter, Amy Schumer called the editors of Glamour "not cool" this morning for including her name in a list...



## 'American Idol' originals celebrate a phenomenon

by Bill Keveney, USA Today

Ask Simon Cowell about his favorite American Idol performance and, true to form, the judge famed for his withering observations...

### More Stories

NEWS ▶

CUSTOMER SERVICE ▶

MARKETPLACE ▶

SOCIAL MEDIA ▶

TOP ▲