

X Games

Dhers embraces challenge at hand

By Victoria Sun
Special for USA TODAY

here's no telling what new tricks rising BMX Freestyle Park star Daniel Dhers will unveil when he competes in **ESPN X Games 14**.

A year after captivating fans and judges by hitting multiple tricks, including a double and triple whip, to win his first X Games gold medal in the BMX Park competition, Dhers is aware he'll need to do even more to distinguish himself from his competitors at the four-day event that started Thursday.

That's because the 23-year-old will be competing in the new BMX Freestyle SuperPark discipline, one of five new events making their debuts this weekend. Skateboard SuperPark, BMX Street, women's motocross and Moto X Best Whip and Moto X Speed & Style are the other competitions added to keep up with the evolution of action sports.

"This new event is good," says Dhers, from Caracas, Venezuela. "It's a whole different design of a park, so it's going to be a new experience.

"I think the most challenging will be the jamming with the five guys competing for 12 minutes. There used to be breaks or commercials. Now it's back-to-back with live scoring. So it's going to be harder because you're going to need more tricks than usual."

Instead of contending against just other BMX Park specialists, including X Games gold medalists Scotty Cranmer and Dave Mirra, the SuperPark event will test the all-around skills of BMX Park and BMX Vert experts, matching them against each other. The unique course will feature a variety of terrain and smaller obstacles covered in skatelite material to simulate a public skate-park setting.

Riders will be judged on several criteria, including aggressive execution of maneuvers, degree of difficulty, variety, continuity of run, originality and style.

For five-time X Games BMX Vert gold medalist Jamie Bestwick, 37, the SuperPark discipline will be extra challenging and demanding. It'll be the first time he will compete in a park event at the Games.

"I just have to adapt my style of riding to this course," says Bestwick, from Derby, England, who made his X Games debut in 1996. "You have to be very quick to act on direction changes.

"It takes a couple of practice sessions just to get used to it and to figure out a map of where you'll be going. There's no elements to vert, so I have to completely reconfigure the way I ride. For me it's about getting used to the course, finding a rhythm and just using my own style of riding to try to benefit me."

Dhers is interested in seeing how he will fare against vert masters, including his friend Bestwick and former BMX Vert gold medalists Chad Kagy and Kevin Robinson.

"I think it's good because I'll get to compete against people I've never competed against before," Dhers says. "I'll be with all of my friends, and I'm looking forward to enjoying the weekend."

Both Dhers and Bestwick train at action sports haven Camp Woodward in Woodward, Pa., where they developed a bond.

When Dhers arrived in the USA several years ago to start his career, Bestwick encouraged him not to give up. Dhers has often thanked Bestwick for his support, while Bestwick is just glad to have had a positive impact on a budding young rider.

"I'm just pretty proud that he kind of looks to me for advice, even though he's at the top of his game," Bestwick says. "I kind of reassure him the same way I did when I first met him that everything is within his power.

"He is one of the most naturally talented persons I've ever seen."



By Reed Saxon, AP

Popular guy: Daniel Dhers was a fan favorite in last year's X Games as he won his first gold.

