

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Don Smeraldi (202) 268-6524
Horace Hinshaw (415) 536-6492
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X GAMES ATHLETES 'STOKED' ABOUT NEW XTREME SPORTS POSTAGE STAMPS

Four New Stamps Help Launch ESPN Summer X Games

SAN FRANCISCO – Extreme sports got “big air” today when four new commemorative postage stamps recognizing BMX Biking, Inline Skating, Skateboarding, and Snowboarding were issued by the U.S. Postal Service to help kick off the ESPN X Games in San Francisco.

The Xtreme Sports stamps are available at San Francisco-area post offices today, and at post offices nationwide beginning June 26.

“These exciting stamps are representative of the Postal Service’s ongoing effort to offer contemporary subjects and designs to the public and collectors,” said John Ward, Postal Service Vice President, Finance, Controller, who dedicated the stamps.

Joining Ward at the ceremony were Chris Fowler, host of the ESPN X Games; George Bodenheimer, president, ESPN; and four athletes representing each sport depicted on the stamps: Donna Vano, Inline Skating; Mat Hoffman, BMX Biking; Barrett Christy, Snowboarding; and Tony Hawk, Skateboarding.

Bodenheimer added: “We are thrilled that the USPS has embraced our event by celebrating the spectacular efforts of X Games athletes. The launch of these new stamps represents an ideal way to kick off our fifth annual X Games in this exciting, new venue.”

The Xtreme Sports stamps capture the speed and action of four competitors yet the athletes depicted in the designs are a figment of the imagination.

While the design process for most commemorative stamps begins with a painting or sketch, these four stamps honoring BMX Biking, Inline Skating, Skateboarding, and Snowboarding are photographs of actual athletes, with certain facial characteristics morphed beyond recognition by computer technology.

For more than 30 years, the Postal Service and the Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Committee have followed production guidelines that state, “No living person shall be honored by portrayal on U.S. postage...sooner than ten years after the individual's death.” The only exception is the issuance of stamps honoring deceased U.S. presidents. Luckily,

the Xtreme Sports athletes on whom the stamp designs were based could not appear as themselves.

The design process began when art director Carl Herrman, of Laguna Niguel, Calif., under the direction of Terry McCaffrey, creative director, Stamps and Stamp Products, reviewed hundreds of photographs of Xtreme sports athletes in various positions, heights, and maneuvers in an effort to select four photos that best represented the uniqueness of each sport.

Herrman's final selections were the work of four photographers: J. Grant Brittain (skateboarding), Keith Mulligan (BMX Biking), Scott Spiker (Snowboarding), and Mike Powell (Inline Skating). The photographs were scanned into a computer, and each athlete's facial characteristics were digitally morphed, except for the snowboarder, who is wearing a mask.

In addition to the changes made to the reproduction of each athlete's face, clothing colors were matched to ensure continuity on the sheet of stamps. To be true to the sport's explosive and exciting nature, each image was formatted to appear three-dimensional and to appear to jump off the page and over the stamp border. All apparel and equipment were kept intact, while all product names and logos were removed.

The only other commemorative stamp in recent years to use the same design technique was the Ballet stamp issued in September 1998.

152 million of the 33-cent, action-packed self-adhesive stamps were printed. The ESPN X Games run through Saturday, July 3.

For more information on stamps, or to see images of the Xtreme Sports stamps, visit the Postal Service Website at www.usps.com and click on "Stamps." To order stamps or stamp products, go directly to www.stampsonline.com.

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BMX Biking

BMX (Bicycle Motocross) began in the 1960s as an attempt to emulate traditional Motorcycle Motocross on regular bicycles. As the popularity grew, bikes were manufactured with specifications suited for BMX: smaller frames, large, knobby wheels, and a high seat post. These alterations provided the speed and maneuverability necessary for racing on dirt tracks. The sport gained recognition from the American Bicycle Association and other organizations in the mid-1970s and has since spread in popularity.

Inline Skating

Inline skating has quickly become a popular sporting activity. Introduced in 1980 as a training tool for ice hockey players during warmer months, inline skating is now popular as an individual form of exercise and recreation. Inline skates are similar to roller skates, but have been modified with thin wheels placed in a row, rather than side by side, that create a "rolling blade." Overall, the total number of inline skaters in the United States has dramatically increased from 12.6 million in 1993 to 29.1 million in 1997.

Skateboarding

Skateboarding first gained popularity in Southern California in the early 1960s and by 1965 close to 50 million skateboards had been sold in the United States. With the introduction of polyurethane wheels and more flexible boards (decks) the sport experienced a resurgence in the early 1970s. These innovations sparked the trick skating which is at the core of the sport today. More than 8.2 million U.S. residents skateboarded in 1997 either on the street, or on half pipes and ramps which are specially designed to facilitate the gravity-defying tricks performed as part of the sport.

Snowboarding

The modern snowboard originated with the Snurfer, created by Sherman Poppen in 1963 by binding two skis together. In the 1970s, larger boards with metal edges and footholds, similar to skis, were designed to give the rider more control and better stability. The popularity of snowboarding continues to grow. In 1993, there were an estimated 2.2 million snowboarders and by 1997 the number had grown to 4.2 million. The sport received worldwide attention in 1998 as part of the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan.

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TECHNICAL DETAILS

Issue: Xtreme Sports
Item Number: 448400
Denomination & Type of Issue: 33-cent Commemorative
Format: Pane of 20
Issue Date & City: June 25, 1999, San Francisco, CA 94188
Designer: Carl Herrman, Laguna Niguel, CA
Photographers: J. Grant Brittain – *Skateboarding*; Keith Mulligan – *BMX Biking*;
Scott Spiker – *Snowboarding*; Mike Powell/Allsport U.S.A., Inc. – *Inline Skating*
Engraver: North American Roto Engravers Inc.
Art Director: Carl Herrman, Laguna Niguel, CA
Typographer: Carl Herrman, Laguna Niguel, CA
Modeler: Avery Dennison (AVR)
Manufacturing Process: Gravure, with scrambled indicia ®
Printer: Avery Dennison (AVR)
Printed at: AVR, Clinton, SC
Press Type: Dia Nippon Kiko
Stamps per Coil/Pane: 20
Print Quantity: 151.975 million stamps
Paper Type: Pre-phosphored Type II
Gum Type: Self-adhesive
Processed at: AVR, Clinton, SC
Colors: Yellow, Magenta, Cyan, Black
Stamp Orientation: Vertical
Image Area (w x h): 0.840 x 1.410 in. / 21.336 x 35.814 mm
Overall Size (w x h): 0.990 x 1.560 in. / 25.146 x 39.624 mm
Full Pane Size (w x h): 5.950 x 7.750 in. / 151.13 x 196.85 mm
Plate Size: 160 Stamps per revolution
Plate Numbers: "V" followed by 4 (four) single digits
Marginal Markings: "© USPS 1998 • Plate Position • Price • Selvage Text
Catalog Item Number(s): 448440 Pane of 20 w/plate no. and header - \$6.60
448430 Block of 10 - \$3.30
448420 Block of 4 - \$1.32
448463 First Day Cover (Set of 4) - \$2.16
448484 Uncut Press Sheet Top - \$26.40
448486 Uncut Press Sheet Bottom - \$26.40

HOW TO ORDER FIRST DAY OF ISSUE POSTMARK

Customers have 30 days to obtain the first day of issue postmark by mail. They may purchase the new stamp at a local post office, affix the stamp to envelopes, address the envelopes (to themselves or others), and place the envelopes in a larger envelope addressed to:

XTREME SPORTS COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS
POSTMASTER
PO BOX 880066
SAN FRANCISCO 94188-0066

After applying the first day of issue postmark, the Postal Service returns the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. Requests for first day of issue cancellations must be postmarked by July 25, 1999. Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first day covers for new stamp issues and postal stationery items postmarked with the official first day of issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by writing to: INFORMATION FULFILLMENT, DEPT 6270, US POSTAL SERVICE, PO BOX 419014, KANSAS CITY MO 64141-6014, or by calling 1 800 STAMP-24. First day covers remain on sale for at least one year after the stamps' issuance.