

## XTREME JUGGLING

I've been staring into my comp screen wondering if whoever is reading this is even *ready* to jump on my boat. I mean how badly does juggling currently *not* fit into popular youth culture? Where's the rebellion, danger, edginess, *sex*? Where's the *Mountain Dew*?! If juggling were a shape it would be square. If it had a spokesperson it would be Mister Rogers! If it were in a circus it would be...well...*juggling*! Okay, you get the point. I'm not saying wholesome is a bad thing necessarily, but in the age of video cell phones and Wi-Fi, juggling has some "catching" up to do... if we want to actually *increase* its popularity. Wait... can we all agree that *increased* popularity in juggling would be a good thing? Whether it be for artistic, sport, hobby, or whatever's sake, the more people that like it and understand it, the more people will appreciate that thousand hours of practice you put in last year. Yes, I realize some of you shun anything that goes mainstream and want juggling to be your own private club. For the rest of us, it's time for "juggling fever" to have a massive outbreak!

Jason Garfield's WJF on ESPN is introducing juggling to millions more people as a sport. Pretty cool, right?! But hold on...something is still missing. The format of these juggling competitions is still not pulling in the masses. Something is getting lost in the translation. It's the same thing that is lost when you make a hard trick look too easy for a non-juggling audience. They don't fully appreciate how difficult it is or feel the excitement in the same way as when you *barely* pull it off. In fact, most non-jugglers can only judge how hard it is by *what* you are juggling (like something dangerous) or how hard you make it *look*. Anything else averages out as mildly interesting. And that is what most juggling competition looks like to most non-jugglers.

Juggling innovation and standards in competition have risen considerably since I started juggling. Hell, back then, doing a run of five clubs meant you were a juggling pimp... but somehow the routines in competition still seem somewhat constrained. People are just trying harder stuff and they're as uptight and tense as ever, (except for Thomas Dietz ...I *want* what he's taking). The biggest thing I notice killing my buzz is ***fear of dropping***. Even if you rock some crazy tricks in the gym, you can't perform them unless you have them *solid*. Hmm...So you've made up that bitchin' trick and you're in the gym about to get some street cred from the one juggling bro who lives in your town when you realize that no matter how much you practice, it might never be solid enough to go into your competition routine. After all, every drop deduction is like a shot through the heart of several thousand hours of practice you've spent for this one moment. You think, "*No big deal, I just won't compete this year. I'll chill in the audience; I don't need the pressure anyway.*" Fine. But then a weird phenomenon takes place as you watch the competitions...

In the audience I am feeling bad for myself *anyway* because I'm *empathizing* with some *other* dude I'm *watching* who's being penalized for dropping 12 more times than he meant to on a trick he could almost nail every time in the gym. I'm looking into his eyes, reading his mind as clearly as a billboard: "What the \*%\$###. I nailed it ten times today in

the gym perfectly and NOW I have no muscle control?! I'm NOT EVEN NERVOUS! Crap. Can't let them see it's bothering me. CRAP! This SUCKS SO BAD!...Okay, as long as I don't end up making it even worse! Oops. CRAP! I have never dropped on that trick IN MY LIFE until tonight *in front of 500 people!* Can't you all see from the look on my face that this has never ever, EVER happened before?!" This inner monologue seems to repeat itself with a few more people until I *realize* that I just experienced the *entire* personal *trauma* they went through without any chance at the public *glory*. Now I feel half miserable and most of the competitors are *wholly* miserable because they know we got miserable having to watch their misery. Am I exaggerating? I think not.

What if juggling wasn't about "not dropping" and you could get credit for that killer trick you've been working on? Oh and what if quantitatively larger audiences were drawn to juggling and how exciting it really *can be*?

Time to pull juggling into 2006! Bring in image consultants, Ben Tolpin and Jack Kalvan to give serious juggling an irreverent face lift. Inspired by Jason Garfield's success with introducing juggling to the masses and the late Sean McKinney's radical spirit we bring you Xtreme Juggling! Transport juggling into NOW! That's right, something that might actually be *interesting* to non-jugglers. Why do I watch skateboarding on the X games? The lingo sounds cool and the rules are simple. I can understand what's going on without being on the inside skate track. And I know something cutting edge and exciting will happen. They're either going to land that huge trick or fall spectacularly but no apologies either way.

Introducing juggling's NEW competition! Here's the ad:

What is Xtreme juggling? It's not stage, circus, or birthday party juggling. You don't even have to have your tricks mastered. All that matters is the biggest, baddest, most extreme juggling tricks you've ever seen. If you can rock a trick every time it's probably TOO EASY! Watch the best jugglers in the world pull off huge tricks, gnarly moves, or just crash and burn! This is all about radical, cutting edge tricks; pushing the limits of creativity and possibility! And all you gotta do is pull it off ONCE! (within the time limit of course.) Xtreme juggling! Coming to a convention near YOU!

Did you just read that! You don't have to be able to do your best trick every time. You just have to pull it off ONCE! I'm already excited about it! For one, it's freeing, like *freestyle*. What does today's youth want? More freedom and less constraint! In Xtreme Juggling, dropping is expected because we want the impossible attempted. And trust me; it will be more exciting than watching some polished routine. We encourage the competitors to risk an explosive dropping mess if they might possibly pull off that killer trick. Be like Sean McKinney was and make those exciting, spine tingling saves on one knee, fully stretched out, and just barely clutching that club with two fingers. If you catch it...it counts. Maybe you've even made it better, harder and gnarlier *trying* to save it! Enough trying *NOT* to drop!

Rules for the Xtreme Juggling Best Trick Competition:

The Best Trick is not necessarily the hardest trick, the best looking trick, or the hardest looking trick. It is somewhere where all those things meet. You only have about a minute to bust out your groove. Don't waste it with just *good* tricks. If they're just good then they probably aren't the BEST. Only one trick can win, but having more than just one trick can only help. Drops are not penalized. Someone could drop twenty-eight times and nail the winning trick.

The props are balls, rings, and clubs. Three balls, four balls, five balls, etc. and three clubs, four clubs, five clubs, etc. will all be separate events. But each event will be quick. Here is the format for each event:

All the competitors will line up waiting for the clock to start. When the clock starts each competitor will take a turn of *twenty seconds* in the stage area. Then they will go to the back of the line and the next competitor's turn will start. This will continue for *four rounds* so each competitor gets four turns, or a total of one minute and twenty seconds. There will also be a bounce section of the floor for bounce tricks and a gymnastic mat if you want to do something that would be dangerous on a hard floor.

Music will be played to get competitors in the mood to shred. When it's not your turn, you're expected to watch and even cheer on your fellow *Xtreme* competitors. After all, who appreciates a rocking hard trick more than you?

The order of the competition events will not be 3 balls, 4 balls, then uh... *five!* Kalvan and Tolpin, thinking outside the box once again, will be mixing numbers and objects to keep the audience from counting themselves to sleep.

After four rounds, the competitor with the gnarliest, most awesome trick, wins that Xtreme Juggling event. There will also be the Overall Xtreme Best Trick which exemplifies the difficulty, creativity, spirit, and excitement of juggling. Keep in mind that the image of this competition is the Xtreme image and so the feel will be more like MTV than Barnum and Bailey. Find your inner Sean McKinney. Rules are subject to change as we work out any kinks. Not to worry though as we are committed to getting the most adrenaline and giving competitors the best opportunity to show their stuff.

[www.Xjuggling.com](http://www.Xjuggling.com) will have more detailed rules and explanations for the competition.