

what's up IN SPORTS

PROP 1 TO DELIVER MORE SKATEPARKS

BY STEVE ESCAJEDA

The days of skateboarders being chased from storefronts or dodging oncoming traffic are long gone due to the increased number of skateparks in the El Paso area.

And thanks to the recently approved quality-of-life propositions, more are on the way.

There are currently 11 public skateparks in the city of El Paso, with seven more in the county and three in Doña Ana.

Playing an essential role in establishment of the parks is the El Paso Skatepark Association.

"The association was formed to improve the number and quality of skateparks in the El Paso area," said Paul Zimmerman, association president. "We've sat down with city representatives about the parks and they've been very receptive to our suggestions, especially with the establishment of concrete parks."

Many of El Paso's original parks were built above ground with modular ramps.

"The modular ramps are attached to the ground by nuts and bolts, and after a while, when they are ridden on as heavily as skaters ride them, the screws start to loosen and they fall apart which now creates a potential hazard," Zimmerman said.

But concrete skateparks are now considered the norm, and skateboarders will soon have more options.

"On the three-year roll-out plan in Proposition 1 that was passed last November, there will be two new parks built and one will be refurbished," Zimmerman said.

"The first one will be built at the Northeast Regional Park that is near I-54 and McCombs. It will cover about 25,000 square feet, which would make it the largest public skatepark in El Paso.

"The other new skatepark (that) will be built is at Hueco Regional Park, which is basically near Montana and Rich Beem.

"The third park in the plan is a facelift to Dick Shinaut Skateboard Park on Saul Kleinfeld. That was the first ramp park that was built in El Paso, and it will be converted to a concrete park."

Zimmerman said the skateboard phenomenon exploded about 20 years ago.

"Skateboarding hit a lull in the early 1990s and then something called the X Games happened and we saw the interest

grow along with a rebirth of skateparks," he said.

The establishment of public skateparks has done a lot to change people's minds about the average skateboarder.

"The public perception of skateboarders has changed a lot. It used to be, 'Hey look at those punk kids,' and now almost every kid has a skateboard in his closet," Zimmerman said. "With these parks popping up all over the city, now you even see an abundance of families who go out and ride together."

"These parks give the kids of El Paso a safe place to practice their sport," he added. "Not all kids are into the basic sports here like football, baseball, basketball and soccer. This is something they can do by themselves without a coach or a team, that can build self-confidence and self-reliance."

Another advantage of the concrete-style parks is their uniqueness. "The beauty of building a concrete skatepark is that you can pretty much design it any way you want," Zimmerman said.

The UTEP senior was named to softball's All-Midwest Region second team. She finished the season with a .323 batting average, eight RBI, a career-high nine stolen bases, 23 runs scored and led the Miners with 53 hits.



Local skateboarder Diego Martin Renteria

said. "It's really like a canvas, like a piece of artwork or a sculpture that can reflect the culture or the area."

Things certainly look good for the skateboarding community and it appears the trend will continue.

"We feel so lucky to live in a city that embraces the value of skateparks and is willing to invest in them," Zimmerman said.

"A lot of cities really struggle to build anything. We're grateful that the city is willing to listen to us and take our input seriously."

SPORTS STAR OF THE WEEK

KAYLA ORANGER

MINI AND PARK CASINO

NEW CASINO HO

KAPPY'S CORNER

On Thursday, May 30, a much-anticipated official groundbreaking ceremony will take place at downtown ballpark. Members of the El Paso Sports Group, the El Paso Minor League Baseball team, the El Paso Coast League and the El Paso League Baseball players will be in attendance for the groundbreaking ceremony. Cook said, "This is a momentous occasion for the city and much to be proud of. Now we have a new symbol of the city."