

Local

BOARDWALK The thrill is gone



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

After 20 years, the Jet Star roller coaster carried its last load of riders Sunday at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

Popular ¹⁶⁻²¹⁻⁹¹ coaster to be replaced

By PAULINE HALAJIAN
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Craig Schott put in his earplugs, loaded the yellow Jet Star roller coaster car with a father and two children, and pushed the "go" button — just as he had so many times before.

Veering from standard operating procedure, Schott then pulled out his camera and began taking pictures of his two fellow operators as they worked the ride together for the last time.

Schott, who has helped operate the popular ride the last five years at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, was recording a historic moment. After 20 years, the compact, steel roller coaster carried its last screaming thrill seekers Sunday.

The old ride is being replaced by an even bigger and better roller coaster named the Hurricane.

According to a Boardwalk official, the Hurricane holds more

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— *Kathy Keely, director of Boardwalk sales*

riders while reaching a maximum gravitational force of 4.7 Gs. In addition, the new ride will have at least one banking angle of 80 degrees.

The Jet Star will be torn down today and a new steel platform will be built for the \$2 million, German-designed Hurricane, which is expected to be operational by late spring.

The Hurricane will have two trains with three cars each, carrying 12 people per two-minute ride.

"We've been getting a lot of

calls because people think we're taking out the Giant Dipper," said Kathy Keely, director of Boardwalk sales. "We are not. The Jet Star is being replaced with the Hurricane, which is a larger, more exciting roller coaster with greater gravitational force."

Keely said that Boardwalk representatives went to New York to ride the Hurricane and found it exciting.

"There is only one ride like it in the U.S." she said. "The Long Island Adventure Park in New

York has had the ride for less than six months."

John Flegal and his friend Russ Haines, both 13-year-olds who live in Aptos, spent Sunday at the Boardwalk. When they heard they had just ridden the Jet Star for the last time they didn't seem to mind.

"It's fast and has sharp turns, but we like the Giant Dipper too," said Flegal.

"Yeah. It's on a wood track and it makes a better noise," added Haines.

The two boys were as excited as 11-year-old Cody Sprano of Santa Cruz to hear that the Jet Star would be replaced by the Hurricane.

Sprano, who jumped off the Jet Star for the third time in a row, said he loves the steepness and the speed of the ride but would really like something even steeper.

"I'm looking forward to the Hurricane if it's steeper, but what I'd really like to have is one that goes upside down," he said.