

Times of sand

Begonia
fest



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Lisa Kona, top, finishes runner-up sculpture "Caesar's Rome." At right, thousands flock to Capitola Beach for festival and some cooling off.

Sculpture ruins rivals at Begonia Festival

By KEITH MURAOKA
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CAPITOLA — Its builders didn't exactly plan it that way, but the "Ancient Ruins of Capitolum" entry proved appropriate Sunday at the evercompetitive sand sculpture contest opening the Capitola Begonia Festival.

Just before the judges arrived, an elaborate dome of the "ruins" collapsed.

"It was strange," recalled chief-builder Kris Vasser of Aptos, whose group had been building the sculpture since 7 a.m. "Everybody just let out an 'ooooh,' when it happened. We couldn't do anything about it, so we just left it."

Despite the near-disaster, the sculpture was named grand sweepstakes winner among the more than 100 entries. Besides the "ruins" of the dome, the entry included a castle, bridge, river and a wall. It was built by the veteran team consisting of the Vasser, Johnson and Maloney families. It was their second sweepstakes trophy, Vasser said.

The win proved an upset, of sorts, as another castle-themed entry called

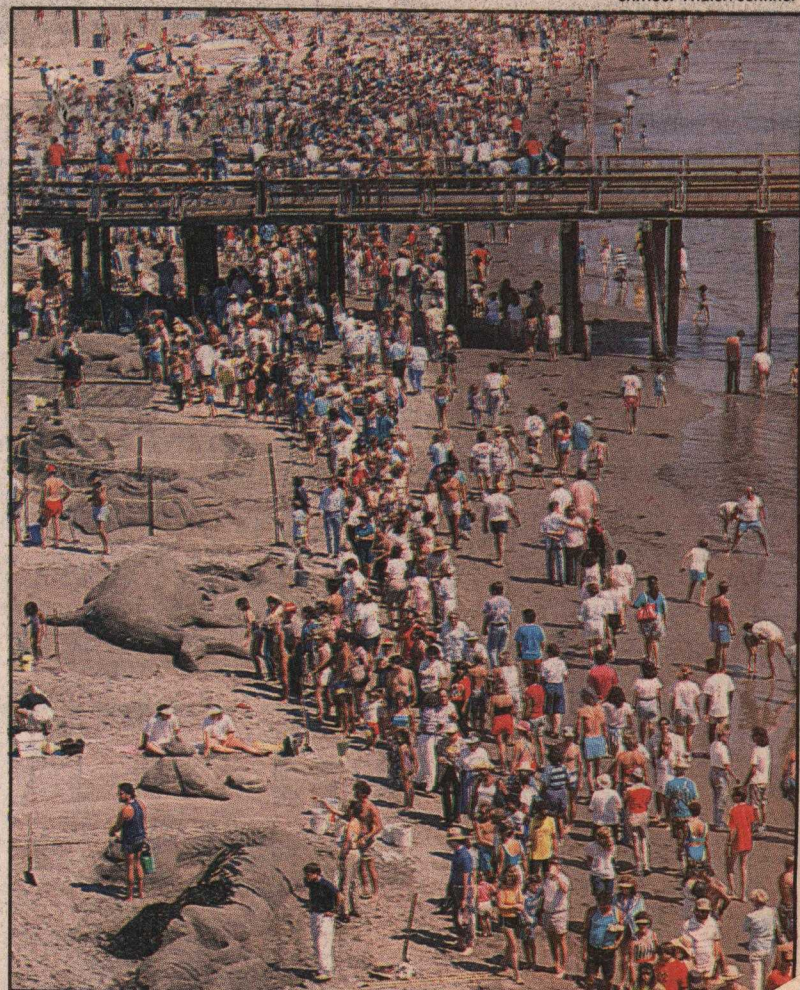
■ Warm weather greets the
Labor Day weekend — Page A2

"Caesar's Rome," placed second in the tough senior group division. Built by the Pease and Dalmasso families of Berkeley, the group was coming off a grand sweepstakes entry at last year's event, as well as a best of division in a national sand-sculpting contest held in San Diego in July, said head sculptor David O'Brien. Their group was made up of 11 — nine to haul water to keep the sculpture wet and two "master sculptors."

The contest highlighted the first of the two weekend-long 35th annual festival on this say-goodbye-to-summer Labor Day weekend.

The director's choice award from festival director Janice Burrell went to "Lying on the Beach," by Schuah and Associates of Aptos.

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First-place in the senior division went to "Marilyn 1953," a sandy calendar pin-up of Marilyn Monroe, built by the Nifty 50s of San Jose. The final winning sculpture in the division went to "Mermaid with Triton," by Allen McGettigan of Santa Cruz and Manuel Cruz of Aptos.

Of course, there were plenty of other less elaborate entries including some cute ones in the children's division. Lauri Rushford of Saratoga was busy with "Cat in a Basket." She and co-worker Sara Jenson captured third place in the age 10-13 division.

In a non-related Begonia Festival event Sunday, Karen Gysin of Capitola and Kathy Gregory of Santa Barbara teamed up to win the Northern California Women's Beach Volleyball Championships. They defeated Roberta McGann of Soquel and Charlotte Mitchel of Santa Barbara, 15-4 in the finals. The men's championships will be held next weekend.

Getting a close-up view of all the action was Gary Perry of San Jose. He and a group of friends hauled a couch, television and portable generator right onto the beach so not to miss the 49ers' game.

"We started doing this last year," said Perry, laughing. "We just didn't want to miss any of the game since we're all couch potatoes."

The festival continues today with a 6

a.m. fishing derby and 10 a.m. rowboat races on Capitola Beach. The premiere Begonia Festival event — the nautical parade — won't be held until Sunday.

The city's free shuttle bus will again operate today at 15-minute intervals from the lot at Park Avenue and McGregor Drive, adjacent Highway 1.

Here are the results of Sunday's sand sculpture contest:

Family: 1. Plain Airplane by the Rushford, Shapiro, Durfman and Miller families of Sunnyvale; 2. Out of Africa (giraffe) by the Landers family of La Selva Beach; 3. Sand-Filled Sneakers by the Vatuones, Souzas and Jaffes of San Jose.

Ages 14-17: 1. Junkyard Dog by Jeff Heck and Brian McBeth of Gilroy; 2. Snoopy by Leia Regan and Millie Nelson of Capitola; 3. Capitola Raisins by the Zermano, Doeher, Ingram and Anaya families of Gilroy.

Ages 10-13: 1. Maddisen the Mermaid by Baker and Mastropietro of Aptos; 2. Back to School by the Woodside and Anderson children.

Ages 6-9: 1. Turtle Hiding in a Rock by Lisa Wohnoutka of Reno; 2. Octopus Oxy by Danielle Talbott of Huntington Beach; 3. All Creatures Great and Small by Brandon Hamilton of Soquel.

Ages 1-5: 1. Two-Headed Turtle by Christin Boylan of Capitola; 2. Seaweed Monster by Keith Wohnoutka of Reno; 3. Cooper's Castles by Scott and Marie Cooper of Capitola.