

Beach Street dragsters snarl traffic

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The Beach Street Revival — that nostalgic Santa Cruz tribute to the days of low-riding street cruisin' — erupted into a rowdy snarl of traffic and illegal drag-racing which kept police busy for seven hours Saturday night.

At one point, the scene on Beach Street along the Boardwalk was reminiscent of Pamplona's "Running of the Bulls" except in this case the "bulls" were hopped-up cars.

Drivers of the thick-tired vehicles (a Ford LTD seemed to be a favorite among the crowd) burned rubber at the corner of Beach and Third Streets where someone turned on a fire hydrant to make the rubber burning all the easier and smokier on slick pavement.

The Santa Cruz Fire Department was called in at 9:30 p.m. to shut off the hydrant, but it did not stay closed.

Shortly after 10:30 p.m. — with the street newly wetted down from the spraying hydrant — a trio of fast cars circled the block and raced backwards

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and forwards, coming dangerously close to a crowd of 200 cheering onlookers.

"Burn! Burn! Burn!" shouted the crowd as the drivers whirled their vehicles into double and triple spins within a few feet of onlookers who had to jump back to avoid being hit.

The fun ended, however, when a city truck arrived with a load of sand to pour over the wet pavement. The city crew — greeted by jeers from the crowd — was flanked by police officers.

Even while the sand was being poured on, someone again turned on the hydrant.

This time, though, the perpetrator was quickly turned into police by two young men whom some people in the crowd labeled as "jerks."

The unidentified young man who was quickly placed into the police car.

At about 11 p.m., police told the crowd

to disperse, which it did, leaving behind a trail of broken bottles.

Earlier, police had blocked off the main streets leading into the Beach Street area so that the steady stream of cars leaving the Revival could make its exit.

One woman was heard yelling out of a car as she left the Revival scene, "You gotta rock around the clock tonight!"

A parade was held from 6-8 p.m. as part of the "Blast From the Past" activities in which cruisers went back and forth from the wharf to the merry-go-round in a show of 50s and 60s nostalgia.

The problem, however, was that the parade never really ended until close to midnight when the last of the cars left the Beach Street area.

No injuries were reported, however, and no other arrests were reported.

Police did hand out citations for open containers.

"There was alot of bad driving," commented one bystander.