



# NEWS

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**Event brings out best in bus operators, mechanics**  
**WINNERS OF MTA BUS ROADEO EMERGE FOLLOWING HOURS**  
**OF FIERCE COMPETITION ON SUN-DRENCHED ARENA**

The MTA bus operators and mechanics who participated in Saturday's 1999 Bus Roadeo at Santa Anita Race Track in Arcadia were not intimidated by what awaited them on the *dreaded* obstacle course and grease pits, after all, impediments in the real world fast lane can be somewhat more formidable.

Still, the participants did everything humanly possible to win the 24th annual event. On the line were bragging rights for one year, the honor and respect that went along with it and the chance to advance to the international championships in Florida this Fall. Cheering them on in temperatures well over 90 degrees were their spouses, kids, friends, co-workers and supervisors.

The operator and bus maintenance team that won the grueling tests of navigation and diagnostic expertise have tasted the fruits of victory before and are looking forward to competing at the internationals on October 8.

Held in the parking lot of the race track, 18-year veteran operator Mark Holland of Ventura, California was declared best driver of the obstacle course in front of an estimated crowd of 350 people.

Following his victory, the 39-year-old Holland, currently a Metro Red Line subway operator hailing from MTA Division 20 in downtown Los Angeles, already was wearing his game face for the American Public Transit Association-sponsored world championship. Besides luggage, he'll be brining along a new and improved attitude.

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"In 1995 when I advanced to Orlando my goal was just to finish, this time, however, I believe I have an excellent chance of bringing back the championship," said the ever confident Holland who steered his mammoth "doggie" through a network of impediments that included orange cones, 55-gallon drums and tennis balls.

Holland, surprisingly, barely made the finals after a sub-par preliminary performance, upsetting, he says, since his practice scores were near perfect.

For the second consecutive year, a mechanics team from MTA Division 2 in downtown Los Angeles, this time represented by John Tena of Bellflower, Juan Villalba of Colton and Andrew Filimaua of El Monte sauntered to the winners circle.

The team was modest in its assessment of the big triumph and hope to replicate the success of the 1997 mechanics team which swept to the international championship .

"The win could have gone to any team, it was pretty tight," said Filimaua. "It feels good to win. The training we received in the last two weeks at Division 2 and the support of management made a huge difference.

Finally, Filimaua could no longer contain his enthusiasm.

"I'm going to Disney World!" he exclaimed with a wide grin.

The bus maintenance team competition involved three events: brake inspection, bus inspection and engine inspection. Contestants raced the clock to troubleshoot, solve and repair implanted mechanical defects.

Enjoying his first roadeo and there for the entire event after arriving in his vintage 1966 Corvette was the MTA's executive officer of operations.

"This is a great way to show people how good we really are," said Tom Conner, a self-described "closet mechanic" whose wife Carol expressed an interest in driving a bus on the obstacle course. "I hope the public, especially our passengers, will realize how highly skilled our operators and mechanics are."

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Conner's management team was equally effusive in its praise.

"The mechanics that are competing here are without doubt the best in the country. They are working on the latest state-of-the-art equipment," said Richard Hunt, MTA deputy executive officer in charge of bus maintenance. "This gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their professionalism. I'm very proud to be working with a group like this."

His counterpart expressed similar admiration.

"The 30 operators who competed at this event are the most skilled in the Metro Bus system based on their skills and overall employment record," said Dan Ibarra, MTA deputy executive officer for Metro Bus transportation. "This is the single, most positive event bus operations has all year.

These drivers are the best of the best," continued Ibarra, encouraged that this year a crop of relatively new operators also participated. "Anyone who can steer these buses through the streets of L.A. are doing something very few can do. They are amazing."

Holland and each member of the bus maintenance team received stainless steel watches with the bus roadeo insignia inscribed on the face. Attendees also enjoyed a barbecue, children were entertained by clowns and there was a classic car show. In addition, members of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's special weapons team were on hand to man an information booth next to a rescue vehicle.

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