

# 'Ice King' Suchanek sets new motorcycle record on ice

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FORT ATKINSON—Milton stunt motorcycle rider Ryan Suchanek fought snow and a punctured motorcycle radiator to top his own world record for the fastest motorcycle wheelie on ice Saturday on Lake Koshkonong.

109.5 miles per hour. On one wheel. On ice.

It took the 32-year-old Milton resident about 50 runs on a 200-meter ice drag strip on the north side of frozen Lake Koshkonong to break his 2013 ice wheelie speed record of 108.5 miles per hour.

His record ride came shortly after 1 p.m. Saturday in front of a crowd of about 200 people.

Suchanek topped his record even as his bike, a modified 1000 cc Kawasaki ZX10 sport bike outfitted with metal-studded tires for traction on the ice, was hemorrhaging green radiator coolant and smoking like a banshee.

The strain of riding on snow-covered ice Saturday knocked loose some of the bike's screw-like tire studs, which flew into the radiator, punching holes in it.

“Oh man, it was a blast,” Suchanek said Saturday after he topped his old record. “I was battling. My tire studs were flying out of my front tire left and right. There's so many holes in that radiator right now.”

Suchanek's friend, Joe Beavers of Fort Atkinson, also rode on the ice Saturday, using a borrowed motorcycle. Beavers hit 104 miles per hour, a new high for him. The two are members of the Vertical Mischief motorcycle stunt team. The team has been run speed wheelies on the ice at Lake Koshkonong the past several winters.

Guinness World Records has established a framework of rules for motorcycle speed wheelies on ice: A rider has to sustain a wheelie for 200 meters between two markers set in the ice. A person with a radar gun measures speed toward the end of the run. Like many Guinness World Records, the ice speed wheelie is an obscure feat. In fact, Suchanek and Beavers are two of just a few riders worldwide who attempt the ice rides. "It's kind of building up every year with interest from people, but we're the only guys that do this. There are guys out east trying to figure out how to do it, but it's not really taking off for them," Suchanek said.

The ice was far from ideal for a fast wheelie ride on Saturday. Organizers had prepped a smooth base of ice on the lake Friday night by flooding the with water, but about 3 inches of snow fell on the ice overnight, and snow continued to filter down on the ice Saturday as the pair began riding.

Suchanek said it took five plow trucks to clear the ice Saturday, and during his and Beavers' runs, crews on plow-rigged ATVs continually clear snow.

On some runs, the two riders appeared to struggle keeping traction on the snow pack, wobbling and fluttering on the ice at speeds of over 100 miles per hour. Beavers and Suchanek predicted the snow would be a problem.

"The tire studs fill up with snow, and you lose a lot of traction," Beavers said.

Did that scare the two riders?

"We'll talk about that later," Beavers said. "Right now, we're feeding off adrenaline. We live, die and eat that stuff."

The spectators at the ice ride had no fear either. They crowded along the ice track, watching Suchanek and Beavers blow past on one wheel at break-neck speeds. Along the sidelines, where rows of snowmobiles and pickup trucks were parked, dozens of spectators drank beer and burned a pile of old couches and mattresses on the ice to stay warm. One Illinois resident in the parking area spun circles in minivan to entertain the crowd.

Suchanek said it takes months of work on a motorcycle to get it ready for the stress of running a wheelie on ice, to say nothing of the hours of practice he puts in. He said his bike is basically trashed from Saturday's feat, and he'd need to build a new one if he wants to top his new record.

In an interview last week, Suchanek said he'd consider stepping away from the ice-wheelie game for a few years if he set a new record Saturday. But now, he's not so sure.

On Saturday, he and Beavers said they were hoping they'd hit 120 miles per hour on one wheel.

"I'll have to sit back and think about it now. I don't know. Maybe I'll go back at it again," Suchanek said.

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