

REGAN
COMMUNICATIONS
GROUP

telegram.com | TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

February 5, 2023
Print Circulation: 27,608
[Page D1 + D4](#)

Sunday Telegram | SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2023 | \$8

ACT ARTS, CULTURE, TRAVEL



GOING INTO OVERDRIVE

Monster Jam champ Linsey Read looking to 'wow the crowd' at DCU Center

Richard Shukert / Worcester Telegram & Gazette / USA TODAY NETWORK

WORCESTER -- Linsey Read took a Monster Jam truck-driving party naturally, winning an event in her first weekend of competition in 2016. • The Texas and former Monster Jam freestyle world champion instinctively knew to wow the crowd. "Every time I hit that track in freestyle, I'm gonna go big if I can," she said. • A little schooling has also helped. Read is an alum of Monster Jam University in Pacon, Illinois. She obviously took to her studies and impressed. "I passed the test," she said. Monster Jam asked her to drive *Booby-Doo*, a highly popular truck. • Read will be one of eight Monster Jam truck drivers competing at the DCU Center Feb. 27-28 as the Monster Jam Arenas Championship Series takes them into town.

The 12,000-pound trucks are capable of big speeds, up to 70 mph, but they have a relatively slow engine to operate in all the different conditions. • To demonstrate their durability and control during maneuvers such as backflips and mid-air spins, drivers like Read.

Monster Jam is now 30 years old, and the DCU Center has been a popular Monster Jam stop-over the years. Read has been there before.

"I think we did pretty good. My family got to see it, so it was super fun," she said.

The other drivers that will compete are Monster Jam drivers Kristin Hines and Amanda Coulter in El Tico Loco. An Orange stand-off of the time of getting this story. Read, in *Booby-Doo*, was in third place behind Hines and Coulter as the

See READ, Page A6



Monster Jam truck driver Linsey Read. (Courtesy photo)

Top: Linsey Read, the 2019 Monster Jam freestyle champion, drives the *Booby-Doo* truck.

Read

Continued from Page 1D

Arena Championship Series East, which got underway Jan. 7-8, visits cities mostly in the Eastern seaboard each weekend. Drivers vie for points, with the top point-getter at the end of the tour going on to the Monster Jam World Championships which will be held July 1 in Nashville, Tenn.

"It's been going wonderful so far," Read said during a recent telephone interview in between pit stops.

"It's my first time with this group of drivers and they are intense. I think I've learned a lot seeing what they've done. I'm sitting third overall so we are not too far back."

In 2009 Read won the Monster Jam World Finals 20 Showdown championship, and the Freestyle championship.

The current Arena Championship Series East is her first tour since having her second child last year.

Monster Jam has different categories of competition and regional tours running simultaneously.

Monster Jam also has a Stadium Championship Series, divided into Red and Blue, and Arena Championships in Central and West as well as Eastern sectors. Drivers who don't win their divisions can still qualify as what might be called a wild card based on their consistency in the competitions.

"As long as we stay consistent, I think we have a good shot," Read said.

There will be four separate competitive events when Monster Jam Arena Championship Series East is in Worcester, at 7 p.m. Feb. 27; 1 and 7 p.m. Feb. 28; and 1 p.m. Feb. 29.

Two pit parties — where fans can see the monster trucks up close, meet their favorite drivers and crews, and take pictures — will be from 10:30 a.m. to noon Feb. 28 and 29.

If you go:

Monster Jam

When: 7 p.m. Feb. 27; 1 and 7 p.m. Feb. 28 (Pit Party 10:30 a.m. to noon); 1 p.m. Feb. 29 (Pit Party 10:30 a.m. to noon).

Where: DCU Center, 50 Foster St., Worcester

How much: \$20 to \$95, www.ticketmaster.com

Within each event there are four competitions: speed; skills; donut style (where drivers spin the monster trucks in circles to create a donut-like impression on the dirt); and freestyle. The audience gets to do the judging for the skills, donut and freestyle. The top overall point winner from the four competitions wins the event, which in turns gets the driver points toward qualifying for the world championships.

"My strongest element is freestyle," Read said of the category that won her a world championship in 2009. The competition is "75 seconds to do anything we can and wow the crowd."

It's important to impress, since the audience votes in the donut, skills and freestyle competitions.

Read is originally from El Paso, which also has a big Monster Jam event every year, and she said she grew up as "a huge Monster Jam fan."

For a halftime show, the El Paso event would have locals racing "street legal trucks." Read raced in that show two years in a row, and nearly won the second race. Monster Jam truck drivers who were watching were impressed and suggested she should try out for Monster Jam.

"I never got the opportunity to do it, but I was always interested in dirt track driving. I crewed for a team, but Monster Jam was my first experience driving," Read said.

Read sent in her resume, and was invited to Monster Jam University. Tom Meents, a multi-world champion, is the "professor" there, Read said.

"It teaches you everything," including how to get in the truck and about safety equipment, Read said about the university syllabus.

But there were some things she already implicitly knew as a fan.

"I watched it so much growing up I knew the things that wowed me, so I knew what I wanted to do to wow the crowd," she said.

She made a successful debut in 2010, took time out the next year to have her first child, then roared back on the track leading up being a world champion in 2009.

She credits her mother with being her biggest inspiration.

"My mother plays a huge part in my life. I would definitely have to say she is my main role model. She works so hard to achieve her goals even though she is a single mother of four kids! She has taught me everything I know. As far as a Monster Jam goes, I look up to the older generation of drivers. They are the ones I grew up watching and the ones that have made me want to be a part of this wonderful sport. It's amazing to see how far Monster Jam has come."

For all the experience she now has, "I still get nervous. I have the butterflies." But then, "All of the nerves go away. I know what I've got to do when I go out there," she said.

At an event, "The first thing I do is check out the track to see where all of the hits are and to have an idea of what I might want to do. You can't even plan out exactly what you will do in a show. No matter what you will always end up somewhere you didn't think you would be and have to hit a different jump. What's why it is good to know exactly where everything is. Then, I always belt in and put on my safety equipment to make sure everything is perfect before going out to tear it up," she said.

"My favorite memory would have to be Oklahoma City in 2006. That was the first show my family was able to watch me perform at. That was the most nervous I have ever been. I wanted to make them proud. I ended up taking home my first-ever donut win! And it didn't end there, I also pulled off a freestyle win! Being able to give my family trophies to take home was an unforgettable experience."

As for any accidents or injuries, "There's been some failed attempts at things but I never got hurt."

Monster Jam track drivers are "always seen" after a competition, but "our safety equipment is top notch. We're as safe as we can be every time we roll out on the floor."

Monster Jam is a sport that prides itself for having men and women competing in the same events and competitions.

Scooby-Doo had originally been driven by Nicole Johnson.

She said there is usually "at least one female at every event." Right now there "about 10 female drivers, which is wonderful."

Asked how she's been treated by male drivers, she said, "They have been so helpful all the time. They treat me just like one of them. But as soon as the helmets go on they're not so helpful. We all want to get that championship at the end of the day."

Read has two daughters and is also a stepmom to two daughters. She and her husband and children like to be together at her driving events but things can get hectic.

Read isn't slowing down, however, and believes she can offer some inspiration to her daughters. "Want to wait for my youngest to watch me and have these memories," she said. Her 5-year-old daughter has just started racing go-karts and is doing well at it. "I like that she's at such a young age and succeeding so well."