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Crash dims streetcar race fun

They arrived ready to race in negligees, fishnet stockings and boxer shorts. It was supposed to be part competition, part street theater...

By [Nick Perry](#)

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Costumed runners, cyclists and skateboarders head north after a group start at Fifth Avenue and Olive Way in Thursday's whimsical race against the South Lake Union streetcar. Co-organizer Colleen Robertson said she came up with the idea for the event while running in the Lake Union area.

They arrived ready to race in negligees, fishnet stockings and boxer shorts.

It was supposed to be part competition, part street theater and loads of fun. Who could beat the streetcar — known in some circles by its more suggestive acronym, the South Lake Union trolley (S.L.U.T.) — on its 1.3-mile journey from downtown to the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center?

But the cheeky "guerrilla" event — advertised on Internet social-networking sites and encouraging racers to dress, well, racily — didn't go according to plan.

Before the 30 or 40 runners, cyclists and skateboarders could even reach the "first base" that had been chalked out by organizers on the pavement, one cyclist, wearing just boxers and no helmet, got his front wheel caught in a groove of a streetcar rail.

He tumbled over his handlebars and was knocked out cold for a short time. The race stopped for about 45 minutes — as did the streetcar — while emergency vehicles rushed to the scene. The rider was taken to Harborview Medical Center with a mild concussion and a dislocated shoulder.

The race continued, as did the after-race celebration at — where else? — Hooters restaurant, but the bubbly crowd had become more than a little subdued.

In fact, the race highlighted a more serious issue with the streetcar.

Cyclists have protested the streetcar's alignment from the day it opened last December, saying it poses a danger to them. The Cascade Bicycle Club earlier this year said there have been at least a dozen bicycle crashes requiring medical attention, with injuries ranging from cuts to broken bones.

Seattle City Councilmember Jan Drago has urged that future streetcar lines be built in the middle of the street — rather than the side — to prevent further problems.

Colleen Robertson, a co-organizer of Thursday's event and who came decked out in a bright pink negligee, said she got the idea while running around Lake Union. With time to think as she ran, she said she often wondered if she could beat the streetcar.

So Robertson, who has run a marathon, sent out the message to her friends who were either runners or exhibitionists. Mostly, she joked, it was the exhibitionists who showed up.

So who won? The streetcar. But it wasn't exactly a fair race. Because of the delay due to the accident, law-enforcement officers escorted the streetcar to the end of the line without its making any more stops.

Material from Seattle Times archives was included in this report. Nick Perry: 206-515-5639 or nperry@seattletimes.com