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Livonia

Wednesday, February 4, 2004

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## Unicyclist breaks world height record

Livonia man rides 115-foot bike, waits to hear from Guinness

By Santiago Esparza / The Detroit News

For many, riding a bike can be a way to get to work, exercise or relax.

Not for Sem Abrahams. He uses unicycles to set Guinness world records.

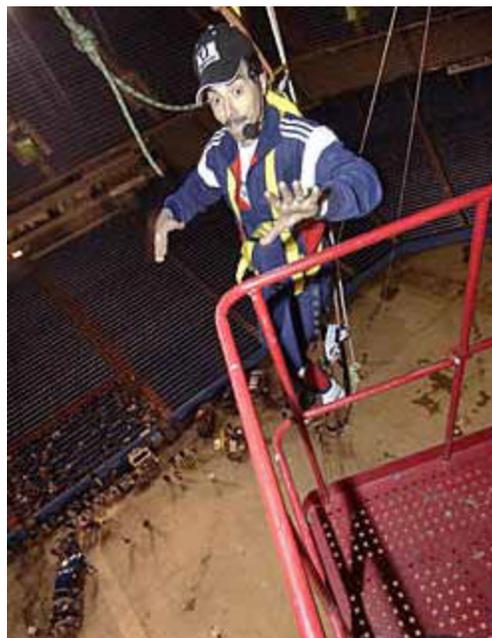
The soft-spoken Livonia man on Jan. 29 thrilled a crowd of about 200 relatives, friends and unicycle enthusiasts from as far away as Holland, Mich., by riding a 115-foot-tall unicycle in the Pontiac Silverdome. It appears to have set a record for height.

Guinness takes as long as six weeks to verify a new record. If verified, it would be the third such unicycle height record Abrahams has shattered. The first was at 45 feet when he was 17 and three years later, at 72 feet.

"That feels good," the 41-year-old Abrahams said after riding the swaying unicycle. "I feel awesome."

Abrahams wanted the record because Steve McPeak had set the record with the previous height of 101 feet and nine inches in 1980 in Las Vegas.

But many in the unicycle community believe McPeak received unfair help in balancing the cycle because safety cables connected to his



Daniel Mears / The Detroit News

**Sem Abrahams of Livonia lets go and heads for the record books in his bid to break the run for the tallest unicycle ride in the Guinness Book of World Records by riding a 115-foot-tall unicycle in the Pontiac Silverdome.**

#### What's next

Sem Abrahams is submitting videotape and media accounts of his 115-foot-tall unicycle ride to the Guinness World Records to verify that he set a new height record. It can take Guinness six weeks to examine the items and make a determination.

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unicycle were drawn tight and could have helped balance the bike.

So, Abrahams made sure that all lines connected to his unicycle were slack and there were no lines close to him.

Teresa Abrahams, an accomplished unicyclist, was more concerned about her husband's safety than the slack lines as he was lifted to the unicycle via a hydraulic hoist, like the one used in the construction industry.

Although she said before the event that she was not worried, she said afterward she was frightened.

"I have been on board from the beginning and knew he could do it," she said. "It was just a matter of when. Now was his time."

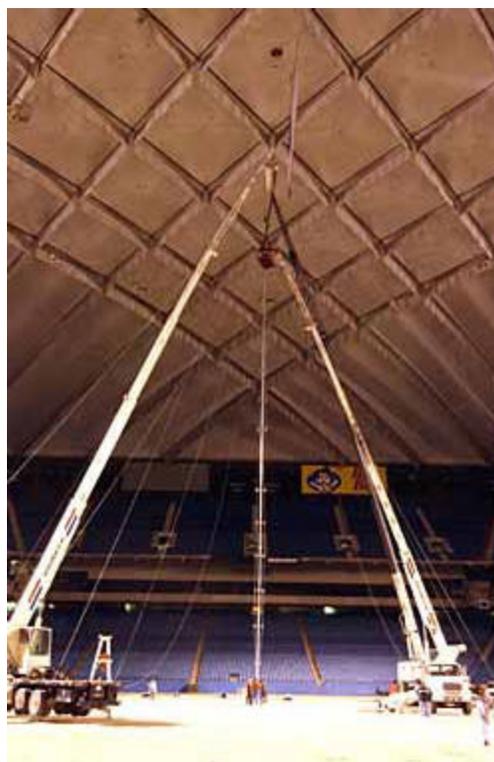
That feat was not an easy one. In addition to balancing himself, Sem Abrahams had to pedal the hefty, 208-pound cycle.

The one-of-a-kind vehicle was created by Kriewall Enterprises, a Romeo-based company that creates prototype parts for the auto industry. The company's owners are unicycle riders and were happy to help create Sem Abrahams' unicycle.

"We are a unicycle family," Ed Kriewall said. "They (Abrahams family) have been a wonderful group of people to know."

Setting the record was not cheap. Sem Abrahams paid about \$20,000 to create the cycle. He is trying to recoup the money through the sale of clothing and other items marking the event.

Sem Abrahams, an engineer,



Daniel Mears / The Detroit News

**The vehicle was created by Kriewall Enterprises, a Romeo-based company that creates auto prototype parts.**



Daniel Mears / The Detroit News

**Lifted by a hydraulic hoist, Sem**

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credited his father, Carlho, with inspiring him to set the record. After Sem Abrahams set the record, his father danced and applauded.

“He has stuck with the record idea for more than 20 years,”

Sem Abrahams said of his father, a Livonia resident. “He has been great.”

Sem Abrahams had wondered what it would be like to ride such a tall unicycle with no practice. An outdoor practice was set up for Jan. 19, but bad weather scrubbed that plan.

But Sem Abrahams said the unicycle rode like a dream and felt good to handle.

“It had a nice rhythm,” he said. “It bent and came back. It was like riding a wave.”

Now, Sem and Teresa Abrahams will continue their performances during halftimes at Detroit Pistons games, their visits to Metro Detroit schools and libraries and their newest challenge, appearances at Space nightclub in Pontiac. The couple appears at the club three times a week.

“They are going to run a high-wire across the club for Sem to ride,” Teresa Abrahams said. “He will ride his bike right across it.”

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**Abrahams rode a 115-foot-tall, 208-pound unicycle. The Guinness World Records takes as long as six weeks to verify a new record.**

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