"WHAT'S A COOL YOU ARE?"

Snowboarding's Carving & Bonking into the 1998 Olympic Games

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> *The staid old Olympic Games, it seems, are in for a culture shock. Originally consigned to the arena of so-called extreme sports, snowboarding has its own language – freestyle maneuvers have names such as Canadian Bacon, McTwist and the Flying Squirrel, and boarders falling "cratering" or "bailing". Riders also have their own style – bicycle courier chic – that makes once-roguish freestyle skiers look positively conventional. Grunge appearances aside, the sport has exploded on recreational slopes, where it is regarded as the hip sibling to alpine skiing.*[1]
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> "Boarding comes of age: The Olympics welcome the wild child of the ski slopes," *Macleans*, 8 February 1998.

When snowboarders arrived in Nagano to compete at the 1998 Winter Olympics they were the outsiders – the odd, resistant, in-your-face distant cousins – of the Olympic family. Their perceived disregard for the values of the Olympic Movement and insistence toward segregation from the mainstream, formalized sporting domains served to highlight their philosophical and social differences from the other athletes. Yet, like the defiant mavericks that captivate public attention on myriad global stages, the snowboarders of Nagano mesmerized audiences in Japan and television broadcasts around the world. Now a decade later, it is possible to propose that their youthful spirit, cool styles, and rebellious natures brought life and vitality to the production and future of the Olympic Games.

The entrance of snowboarding into the Olympics was not immune from the afflictions of growing pains – both within the snowboarding culture and between snowboarders and the auxiliary organizations prior to and during the Games themselves. From Terje "The Legend" Haakonsen's refusal to participate in the Games, to the FIS-ISF controversy over snowboarding's organizational representation, to the stripping of Rebagliati's gold medal by the IOC for marijuana consumption, to the "old man" (FIS-IOC) versus "punk" (snowboarders) media dramatization,[2] snowboarding's immersion into the Olympic Movement was not a smooth – albeit exciting – journey. To truly grasp the essence of this historical episode, it is essential to understand the standpoint from which snowboarders based their views of the Olympic Movement specifically and sport in general.

At the snowboarding venue in Nagano, a large message was spray painted in the snow underneath the Olympic rings insignia that stated: "What's a cool you are?"[3] What stands out initially is the term "cool," as snowboarding and snowboarders brought with them a certain variety of popular, youthful hip-ness to the Olympic scene. However, at second glance, this statement is more revelatory of the dynamics of their presence. The sound of the phrase alludes to "school," hence asking observers what school or philosophy do they belong to: the snowboarders or the Federation International du Ski (FIS) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC)? The purpose of this paper is to show on why such a clash of values and cultures took place around snowboarding's emergence into the 1998 Games. First, it will reveal the historical and cultural foundations of snowboarding to illuminate why snowboarders held contrasting perspectives from traditional athletes about the Olympic Games. Subsequently, the the depiction of the events and dissonance surrounding the Games themselves, with particular emphasis on snowboarders' perceptions, will be discussed. The primary intention of this paper is to expose the unique school of ideals that snowboarders brought with them to the Olympic Games and how their philosophical diversity from conventional sports provoked the inevitable collision between the differing schools of sporting thought.

Shredding the Roots of Snowboarding[4]

The earliest snowboard arrived on the market at the genesis of the new leisure movement during the 1950s and 1960s. Initially intended to be a winter toy for his children, Sherman Poppen tied two pairs of children's skis together with some doweling and fashioned a surfboard for the snow. He licensed his idea to Brunswick Manufacturing and his evolutionary board received its product launch in grocery and sporting good stores at the beginning of the 1966-67 ski season. In an attempt to cash in on the surf-boom sweeping the United States, Poppen dubbed the board the 'Snurfer', a mix of the words 'snow'

Magazine advertisement for Poppen's Snurfer

and 'surfer'. Over the next decade, upwards of one million Snurfers were sold across the country; however, in part because of its low retail price and instant popularity, the board was considered to be more of a gimmick than a legitimate sport.[5] In addition to their fad-like identity, Snurfers were difficult to maneuver because the boards lacked edges and bindings and they were steered and stopped with a hand-held rope attached to their front end. Due to its primitive design and mediocre image, Snurfers were banned from most commercial ski hills because they were deemed "too dangerous."[6] As Snurfer popularity increased during the late 1960s, Poppen recognized the potential for this new recreational tool and organized an annual Snurfer competition. Snurfers, as the new implement enthusiasts hailed themselves came from the United States and Canada to hike one-and-a-half kilometers through the back country snow to the competition site on a hill near Poppen's hometown of Muskegon, Michigan. While the invention of the Snurfer officially sparked the popularity of snowboarding, it was not until a decade later that the sport of snowboarding crystallized.

Sticking Snowboarding's Blueprint: Burton & Sims[7]

From its official inception in the 1970s, a philosophical dichotomy existed *within* the sport of snowboarding. Jake Burton and Tom Sims are considered to be the pioneers of modern snowboarding and these two forefathers of snowboarding possessed opposite viewpoints on the future direction of their sport. Ultimately, two streams of snowboarding consciousness emerged in the late 1970s and percolated throughout the development of the sport over the next two decades.

The positions of Burton and Sims arose from their contrasting sport and leisure backgrounds. Burton was a competitive ski-racer and he insisted that competition between participants was imperative in order to establish snowboarding as a legitimate sport. He was shocked that the development of the Snurfer had not progressed since it was first marketed a decade before and, in 1977, he founded Burton Snowboards in Manchester, Vermont. Working around the clock and leading his employees on snowboard "Safaris" across the United States in the company van to promote his boards, Burton strove to have his boards surpass the Snurfer aura. Burton lobbied vigorously for local ski areas to open their lifts to snowboarders and in 1982, these efforts were rewarded when Suicide Six Resort in Pomfret, Vermont became the first resort to allow snowboarding. In addition to pioneering the admission of snowboarding to resorts, Burton's company was influential in providing constant technical product innovation as his company developed the first board with such technology as a P-tex base, metal edges, and hi-back bindings to handle the difficult terrain.[8] The desire for discipline and structure was pervasive among many riders who initially followed Burton; this competitive mentality had a significant impact on a sport that was composed predominantly of 'backwoods' racers.[9] Prior to Burton's influence, early competitions were very loosely organized; one competitor recalls that *"everyone was drunk and disorderly, and really just there to revel in the rarity of the occasion that made snowboarding seem like a real culture with more than two or three members."*[10]

In 1983, Burton helped organize the first national competition, the U.S. Open, at Stratton Mountain (VT). While Burton's vision for the sport incorporated a conservative East Coast mentality, the 1980s West Coast skateboarding advocates provided scene nurtured a radically different philosophy nurtured by Tom Sims.

While Burton cultivated his business and snowboarding paradigm on one side of the North American continent,

Jake Burton (far L) and Tom Sims (far R) at the 1983 US Open of Snowboarding (as known as the National Snowboarding Championships)

the 1970s skateboard magnate Tom Sims also recognized the great potential for the activity and the industry of snowboarding on the on the Pacific coast. Raised on the New Jersey shore, no less than one hundred kilometers from Burton, Sims' early obsession with skateboarding enticed him to develop a winter substitute for his favorite pastime. After graduating from high school, he left for sunny Southern California with pal Chuck Barfoot and the two became obsessed with modifying skate and surfboards. In 1971, they opened their first shop, Sims Skateboards and, as skateboarding increased in popularity during the decade, Sims was at the forefront of innovation. The new design of skateboards and higher production standards influenced the emerging leisure activity. Sims patented the 'ski board,' coined the Flying Yellow Banana, and launched it into the market in 1977.[11] By the early 1980s, the skateboarding industry had grown for over a decade and the mentality surrounding this activity carried over to the embryonic sport of snowboarding. In 1984, only one year after Burton's inaugural contexts, Sims organized his own World Championships in Soda Springs, California. A halfpipe, usually fabricated out of wood or concrete for skateboarders, was his unique addition to the sport that paralleled the pipe or pool medium in skateboarding. For the first time, competitors 'dropped in' and performed non-rational airs, rotational airs, and inverted tricks[12], being judged on the degree of difficulty,

control, and originality.[13] There was an entire cohort of snowboarders who felt that Sims was "an egomaniac with a grand marketing scheme to get all skateboarders to embrace his version of boarding and make a trillion dollars."[14] For many riders on the East Coast, the halfpipe was considered to be skateboard plagiarism and they believed Sims drove the focus within snowboarding from racing toward a new, unwelcomed direction.

The divergence between Burton and Sims foreshadowed the clash between snowboarders and FIS/IOC at the 1998 Olympic Games. The paths carved by Burton and Sims formed the historical foundation of snowboarding culture and drove the development of the sport itself. Their philosophical differences inspired riders to reflect upon their involvement and to choose the style that represented their values, while their premises within competition itself established the basis of alpine and halfpipe snowboarding events. Within two decades, snowboarders would have evaluate the future directions of their sport and negotiate the conflict of interests regarding competition, riding styles, and control within and over their sporting domain. Before discussing the Olympics situation, it is important to understand several key subcultural tenets infused within snowboarding historical blueprint.

Hucking the Historical Foundation[15]

The sports of surfing and skateboarding had tremendous influence on the early evolution of snowboarding subculture, ethos, and identity. During the early 1960s, the general public labeled surfers as 'wasteful, selfish, and irresponsible', and portrayed devotees as 'itinerants' and 'louts'.[16] These negative images arose from the popular perception that surfing and skateboarding were undisciplined, hedonistic activities and lifestyles.[17] Ironically, as part of the new leisure movement, many of the participants subscribed to anti-establishment countercultural values and philosophies. Within the area of physical activity, the new leisure movement developed as a platform for social expression and discontent. Supporters experimented with different forms of leisure that did not conform to the prevailing sporting genres.[18] One major premise involved a transfer of the 'abstract art' of leisure into the physical realm of the world. Since 'true art' was believed to be representative of creativity, innovation, and freedom of expression, these activities were thought to recognize and follow the brilliance of artistic 'geniuses' that led the way through originality and innovation.[19] The movement welcomed games and sports that were individualistic, expressionistic, and co-operative activities. This fresh philosophy of leisure rejected non-playful, overly rationalized, technologized, and bureaucratized forms of sport and celebrated sport as a forum for the assertion of individual values, norms, and beliefs.[20]

During the 1970s and the early 1980s, members of the punk subculture embraced the sport of skateboarding and indirectly they influenced the development of snowboarding subculture. Punks adopted the principle tenets of the counterculture philosophy and they promoted the idea of 'artistic sensibility' within the new leisure movement. They celebrated countercultures' democratic philosophy; however, whereas past countercultures promoted universal free expression, punks emphasized individuality based on truly original expression. Thus, in addition to their do-it-yourself philosophy, punk inspired a search for personal identity. Punks initially found allegiance in skateboarding because the activity embodied punk views of non-conformist innovation and original expression. It was considered an ideologically 'pure' physical activity that was far removed from the much-despised tainted institutions; however to outsiders, skateboarding seemed to be a chaotic activity with the sole objective of offending everyday sensibilities.[21]

Many snowboarders note that their original connection with the activity was through their involvement in skateboarding.[22] Often early skateboard riders were drawn to snowboarding simply because "you can't skateboard all year around so the next thing you know you were getting a snowboard."[23] Popular niche magazines such as *Transworld Skateboarding* even promoted snowboarding through the use of dynamic photography and they provided the consumer with product availability through the presentation of mail-order marketing by emerging snowboard companies. People attracted to snowboarding experienced a unique connection and a sense of camaraderie with those who shared similar leisure interests. As *Snowboard Canada* editor Matt Houghton described the early days, *"if you went to the hill and you saw another snowboarder, you'd go over and say hi. That's literally what it was like and you probably knew every rider on the hill. If you didn't you'd be like 'who are those dudes?'"*[24]

At the time it was rare to see other snowboarders on the hill because of the arbitrariness of the riding community: *"If you actually saw another rider you were freaked out – you wanted to go over and meet and talk to them!"*[25]

A current professional rider remembers the questioning stares and inquisitive looks about his board and he recalls *"not being able to ride a chairlift without someone asking me, 'What is that thing?'"*[26] Thus, being a snowboarder automatically qualified you as a friend and member of a brotherhood. These fraternal interactions between snowboarders from a multitude of backgrounds and interests contributed to the overall growth and development of snowboarding and its ultimate character.

Ski hill operators initially were very fearful of the reputed disorderly characters. Consequently, this distrust and misunderstanding produced reactionary policies that often banned snowboarders and such discriminatory rules had the potential to ultimately relegate snowboarding to 'fringe' activity status. Dedicated participants were forced to hike up ski slopes or resort backwoods' areas in order to search for alternative venues as riders had to be creative and utilize their resources in order to gain access

to snow hills and restricted areas. Don Jones retold the story of his experience at a private club in Ontario:

> *"I skied all my life and just knew this guy at the club who one day had a snowboard and we used to go out in the mornings before the club opened and then afterwards after it closed. It was a half an hour to walk up the hill and then you'd ride down...that was everywhere. You weren't allowed on the hills anywhere."*[27]

Ironically, this prevailing negative establishment bias toward snowboarding ensured that the newly formed snowboard culture remained unspoiled because participation demanded true commitment. Unfortunately, the low rates of participation forced many small snowboarding businesses to go into debt or to claim bankruptcy.[28] The sport survived during this era due to the extreme passion and resolve of its participants who often took extraordinary measures in order to continue riding.

During late 1980s, skiing witnessed a downturn in the popularity and there was a dramatic increase in snowboarding interest. This upsurge of potential new business proved to be a very lucrative alternative for the faltering ski resorts and subsequently they adjusted their business plans in order to attract the snowboarding community.[29] Small, poor ski areas were the first to allow snowboarders on their hills, but gradually larger resorts permitted riders on their chairlifts. For instance, by 1989 ten ski resorts in Ontario permitted snowboarding and a similar pattern emerged across Canada.[30] In addition, there were a few dominant Canadian riders in major ski areas throughout the country whose broad appeal produced an environment of grudging acceptance by ski hill operators.[31] Skiers retained full reign and access to the ski runs at resorts; however, these trails were frequently restricted to snowboarders. As Scott Taylor recalls, "*You'd be cruisin' down a run and it was like 'Snowboarders Can't Go Beyond This Point!' and you'd be diverted off on this little kinda side run or whatever.*"[32]

Snowboarders were young, brash, and generally ignorant of ski etiquette. They were considered out of control and unruly by the skiers and the restrictions reinforced the already existing divide between the two groups. During the 1980s, skiing was perceived by snowboarders to be a cliquey and exclusive elitist realm and, contrarily, the emerging snowboarding community was believed to possess an inclusive community spirit that consciously rejected the staunch skiing ethos. The two realms were at philosophical odds and the skiers tended to be very protective of their territory. As Matt Houghton explains:

> *You know like skiers went to the ski hill everyday and never had to deal with snowboarders. All of sudden snowboarders show up at their mountain and they don't look like skiers. They're young and they have a different attitude and outlook that is carried over from skateboarding...I came from a ski background...I knew what the hills were like and I knew the etiquette and I knew how it worked, but a lot of people started snowboarding who never had been to a ski hill...Did they care about cutting someone off in a lift line or jumping over a rope or going into a closed run. They didn't care. You're coming from skateboarding where half the stuff you do is essentially illegal if you are street skating anyway.*[33]

The new breed of ski hill enthusiasts routinely displayed inherent disregard for established traditions and etiquette that had been previously established at the resorts. The snowboarding newcomers were deemed offensive and in need of rules and regulations.

With each passing year, the ski hill operators opportunistically embraced snowboarding's growing popularity.[34] In 1993, *Ski Magazine* declared snowboarding's importance as one of the "100 Greatest Things that Ever Happened to the Sport;" it stated that snowboarding "*attracted a whole new generation of young riders to the ski resorts, giving the ski world a much needed shot in the arm.*"[35] Whether snowboarders and skiers actually began to mend their broken relationship of the past is somewhat of a debate. On the one hand, some considered it to be the point in time when skiers and snowboarders came to understand each other and recognized the other groups' differences. Conversely, there are many reports that conflicts continued to occur on the hills, in both overt and covert ways.

The sport evolved at a rapid rate and many factors served as catalysts for the evolution of snowboarding during this time period. By the 1998 Olympic Games, approximately 988,000 Canadians over twelve years of age had snowboarded at least once[36] and it was estimated that eighty percent of the people on the slopes under sixteen years of age were snowboarders.[37] No longer was snowboarding solely the domain of rebellious youth as the sudden increase in participation attracted individuals of all ages. As one interviewee explains this tumultuous time period of the mid-1990s:

> *everything was happening at once...increased popularity means more people want to snowboard, [which] means that more ski hills are going to allow it because they're going to make money from snowboarders, you tell your friends, shops start opening up, resorts are promoting it, you know, demo tents at the ski hills and rental shops. You know, more magazines are coming out because people want to read about snowboarding and want to buy magazines. More videos coming out, and in turn, T V. is becoming interested, it's on ESPN... it's all those things.*[38]

With its numbers skyrocketing and an influx of people trying the new activity, snowboarding's subcultural environment expanded from the ski hills and into the urban areas. The ballooning participation and interest in snowboarding was in stark contrast to the earlier period when this sport was often outlawed and regulated externally. However, the perpetual conflict with skiers

only served to enhance their personal identification and foster a collective ethos distinctive from other sports. The committed riders were disgusted with the commodification of their activity and rebelled against both the ski industry and the mainstreaming of their sport throughout the decade of the 1990s leading into the Nagano Games.

Flexing the Snowboarder Ethos[39]

A 1998 Sims Snow2board advertisement stated: "*Time has come to slash the jugular of mainstream mentality. To dismantle all notions of boundaries. To reclaim the mountains bastardized by conformity. The time has come to be free.*"[40] This quote represents the essence of the snowboarder ethos within that epoch. Ethos is defined as a "*characteristic spirit of a community, people, or system.*"[41] Playing on the dichotomy of value systems, snowboarders prided themselves of their demarcation from conventional ideologies in society, conformism in skiing and sports, and control from external encroachment. Moreover, because snowboarding was new to the snowfields and was often eyed with suspicion, frustration, or anger by skiers who felt an urgent sense of protectionism for their traditional domain, snowboarders proved their legitimacy through their outward displays of their subcultural unity. The esprit de corps within snowboarding leading up to the 1998 Games was captured by the riders' endorsement of individualism, creativity, and freedom and their continued support for the maintenance of a participant-controlled activity.

A deep respect for individualism was an essential element within the snowboard subculture. The sport itself promoted this value through its means of participation since snowboarding did not require riders to join a league or depend on team membership to play; all that was needed to partake was the basic equipment. This aspect of the sport served to be particularly attractive to individuals who tended to be outsiders of established social and sporting milieus, professional rider Kevin Sansalone stated succinctly,

> *"I've never been much into team sports or group activities. I didn't play on any teams in high school, and I never joined the Cubs or the Boys Scouts. I guess I always like to be the centre of attention, and the best way to do that was with spectacular stunts and – as I found out at an early age – crashes."*[42]

Another professional snowboarder disregarded the memory of not being included in the most popular social circles in secondary school as her primary interest was her dedicated zeal for the sport of snowboarding: "*In high school I was kind of a loner, I didn't really fit in, I had a few friends but wasn't into the whole scene. I was more focused on my riding than anything else.*"[43] Even the niche media picked up on this aspect of snowboarding culture and infused it into their advertisements in snowboarding magazines. For example, in highlighting a professional riders' performance of incredibly long rail slide, one snowboard advertisement suggests that membership within the snowboard community does not require membership into other, more traditional sport clubs: "*Tom Derry didn't make his football team. Does he seem concerned?*"[44] Particularly in the early stages of the sport's evolution, snowboarding's non-traditional sport culture possessed a magnetic appeal for youth seeking a new way to participate in athletic play. The fact that the core culture comprised of outcasts from traditional sports was a plus for the attractiveness of snowboarding.

Snowboarders exhibited their individuality through their adoption and adaptation of different riding styles. The most significant underlying aspect of riding style was its reflection of one's ability, environment, and creative expression. While it was agreed that certain tricks and ways of riding were popular in particular locations or time periods, snowboarders were always encouraged to: "*Keep an open mind and break out of whatever rut you might be in. Do something totally different. When you free your mind, your ass will follow.*"[45] When deciding upon riding style, a writer from a 1993 Snowboard Canada article suggests:

> *"Ask yourself, 'What's my thing?' Do you like to jib and bonk everything in sight? Do you like to ride plates on an asym and haul ass? Or maybe you like to ride a nice long freeriding board and just don't care about specializing 'cause you're just having fun'. Whatever you do, make sure it's what YOU want, not what your friends think is cool or what is trendy at the time."*[46]

Often noted in snowboard magazines were the endless pursuit of thrills and the seeking of the adrenaline rush from snowboarding. One rider insisted that, "*I've got to find the steepest hill...that's the beauty of it – after you've taken the worst wipeout and then you stand up you feel so satisfied. You end up feeling afterwards like you've taken some tranquilizer. It makes you feel numb. You feel so fulfilled.*"[47] Thus, there was a continual emphasis on resisting what was popular and exploring the essence of one's uniqueness through their congruence. The internal satisfaction that riders derive from their activity fostered a commitment to the sport and a reverence for the values and culture.

While the ethos of the sport dictated individualism, a pervasive, dynamic and distinct snowboard image evolved. Initially, both skiers and snowboarders possessed visually similar appearances. The common image associated with snowboarding and more rebellious skiers was part of the "neon phase" and "doing the extreme look" of the 1980s.[48] Styles reflected the popular trends observed outside of the sport and often times snowboarding apparel was not commercially available. During this period of development, snowboarding was not about status or 'doing it right'; it did not help one's image to be a snowboarder because snowboarding itself did not possess a definite image.[49] Yet, as snowboarding became more popular, there was a desire among participants to forge their own identities. Within a few years after their

arrival to the ski hills, snowboarders rejected the fashionable, extreme image and aligned themselves with the emerging alternative culture. Slowly the flashy, flamboyant colours that defined skiing contrasted with the out-of-the-closet grunge look assumed by snowboarders. In an attempt to portray themselves through means of shock and differentiation, snowboarders expressed their resistance through their appearance. They complimented their earth-tone, excessively baggy outerwear with afro-like wild hair, sticking up and dyed a variety of colours, earrings, nose rings, and eyebrow rings.[50]

This new snowboard image drew from a range of symbols associated with expressions of their virtues, values, and interests. Fashion, equipment, and lifestyle choices defined what was 'cool' while fostering group cohesion and recognition. Ultimately, for some riders there was a clear connection between appearing 'in style' and one's commitment embracing the purest snowboarding image, as Scott Oliver, former Product Manager for Burton Snowboards stated:

> *"When boarders try on a helmet they want to feel comfortable first then they look in the mirror. No one wants to look like a dork on the slopes... In hockey, the tough-guy aggressiveness often demands Darth Vadar-like amour. Snowboarding, on the other hand, is a much more co-operative sport where image is everything. So getting the equipment to match the hairstyle is a vital part of the snowboarding lifestyle."*[51]

Significant boundaries existed within the snowboard subculture that distinguished it from outside sporting cultures. For instance, in a parody on snowboarding culture and its differentiation from skiing, the following was included on the list of "Top 23 Things Overheard in the Lift Lineup": "*Number 2: Is that a one-piece suit, sir? Uh-uh...Come with us. You'll have to be shot.*"[52] The visual appearance assumed by snowboarders was in sharp strong contrast to that of the skiers who shared the same snow hills. Through a range of modes ranging from humor, nonverbal communication, and outright rebellious action, snowboarders strove to make their lifestyle choices reflect and promote their core values, norms, and attitudes.

Snowboarding has always been a "commodity-oriented subculture"[53] in which the pledging of allegiance to snowboard companies through purchase and wear requires the company to possess a genuine corporate philosophy that aligns with the snowboarder ethos. Especially in the decade of the 1990s when hundreds of start-up companies began to cash-in on the booming participation, snowboarders were extremely brand conscious and aware of entrepreneurial intentions. In the Editor's Note in a 1996 issue of *Snowboard Canada* magazine, Fabbro wrote:

> *Snowboarding does not revolve around washed up wanna-be marketing execs, with their jeans, pot bellies, grey hair, pony tails and Bugs Bunny ties... You know, the one that thinks R&D is an acronym for rob and duplicate, that a hit is something you get on the Internet, and downloading is what you do with your lap top, and that a spin is something you take in a sportscar.*[54]

Consequently companies that did not acknowledge the importance of a pure image were consistently dismissed by central members of the snowboard community. As a professional rider explains, "*Companies like Nike have a hard time succeeding in snowboarding because anybody who has been in snowboarding for a while is like, 'I wouldn't buy a Nike snowboard, are you crazy?'*"[55] Loyalty was reserved solely for companies that were run by-snowboarders-for-snowboarders and marketed their corporate identities as extensions of the subcultural values.

Core members within the subculture could clearly spot those individuals who did not embrace the spirit of their sport. Matt Houghton, editor of *Snowboard Canada* magazine, stated that "*everyone who is really involved in snowboarding has a pretty strong bullshit detector and when someone's coming at it for the wrong reasons [the core] can usually figure it out pretty quick.*"[56] It was obvious through their promotion of visual appearance that snowboarders wanted to shape their sport and their subcultural identity independent of all peripheral influence. This control over their cultural and sporting domain was paramount within their efforts to protect their unification and progress in the latter part of the decade. Although there were many other elements of the subculture that shaped its identity and drew boundary lines between insiders and outsiders, underlying all of these facets was a total commitment to snowboarding. The act of snowboarding itself was cherished by riders; the sport was always about "going out with your friends and having a good time, looking for fresh tracks, and progressing your overall ability."[57] Amongst the inner circles of group membership, snowboarding was the touchstone identification measure and driving purpose of one's existence as a snowboarder. The soul of their sport was grounded in the purity of the activity and the ways in which snowboarders themselves determined the directions of snowboarding. The subcultural tenets of individualism, anti-conformity, and participant-control were fiercely promoted in the 1990s and nurtured while the sport was in a state of endless growth and change. Snowboarders sought to be free from the constraints they observed in other sports and this carried through into the participant-constructed culture of competitions and opinions of global sporting events such as the Olympic Games.

Stomping Success in the Snowboarding Domain[58]

Snowboarding prowess was always an essential ingredient for subcultural group membership. Beyond the capacity to ride proficiently, there were clear levels of achievement that distinguished a snowboarder's level of competence and ability. These hallmarks of success were linked to the freedom, self-organization, partici-

pant-control virtues within the snowboarder ethos. In this sport the pinnacle of success was not represented by an Olympic medal or world podium finish. This fact is crucial to understand because it played out directly and vividly at the 1998 Games.

From the onset, the internal, inclusive membership of snowboarding subculture defined its meanings of accomplishment. A former Canadian national team snowboarder described snowboarding success: "*People are like, 'woo hoo, we love magazines, we love movies.' That's how we know someone has made it because they're being recognized in the culture...It's like, 'you've made it because you're in the mainstream', but it's a different, separate mainstream.*"[59] Thus, to 'make it' in snowboarding, riders needed to perform up to a level whereby their skills were noticed by their niche media and, in turn, through their professional status they gained recognition and respect from their peers.

The subculture of snowboarding was the by-product of a fusion of various sporting practices and histories and these sports did not deem it imperative to distinguish the boundaries of professionalism as part of the subcultural shaping process. Thus, the definitions of what constitutes amateur and professional were incredibly vague within snowboarding. One possible suggestion for this ambiguity and lack of definition by a pro snowboarder is: "*You could be a professional in the Olympics before snowboarding really even emerged on the scene, right? So I mean, snowboarding never had to be [amateur], it doesn't have the history of an amateur sport. There's no amateur history. It's just something that's blurred.*"[60] In a sport where "*twelve year olds have agents and entire laundry lists of sponsors*,"[61] snowboarding did not have to clarify and delineate a concept of professionalism.

Within snowboarding, 'going pro' was viewed differently as compared to traditional sport definitions of professionalism. Even the snowboarders themselves were caught in a conundrum when trying to define what professional status was within their sport. When asked about being a professional in snowboarding, one snowboarder pondered while being interviewed, "*The best thing you can do is teaching. That's how you can actually make money but it's just a job, it's not really going pro...Like, is the guy that teaches golf at the driving range, is he a golf pro? Or do you have to play on the PGA tour to be a golf pro*?"[62] Furthermore, a magazine article attempted to clarify this by providing a humorous example of ambiguity of achieving professional status:

> *If you call the Snowboard Outreach Society in Vail [Colorado], a guy will get on the phone and say, 'I believe that the distinction is – hey, does anyone know the difference between an amateur and a pro? Hello? Is it a pro rider who has sponsorship? And is paid to ride? Maybe? Another way to look at it: A handful of pros are headed for the X Games this afternoon. So are the amateurs, but they're going to watch.*[63]

It was apparent that there were many variations and levels of 'going pro' within snowboarding. Instruction and participation in competitions that provided prize money were ways to earn income from the sport, while attaining sponsorship from snowboard companies to promote their product was another avenue towards gaining professional status.

The attainment of sponsorship was the most rudimentary parameter of success and earning sponsorship income was considered by some as, "*the equivalent of being drafted to the NHL.*"[64] At the highest level, there were only a small number of riders in the world who attained full sponsorship, getting such material things as hill passes, flights to resorts and competitions around the world, and access to spots in niche snowboarding videos.[65] These talented and popular riders were at the pinnacle of the sport because they were able to earn a living solely from riding. At the other end of the spectrum, at a more local level of participation, "*if somebody can get their equipment they're probably called pro... that is, if they can get their equipment and clothes for free.*"[66] Thus, sponsorship itself was provided in varying degrees depending on a rider's skill level, marketability, and various other aspects of his persona that made him appealing to snowboard companies.

Quite simply, competitions were the initial starting point for riders to get noticed for their talents. As one rider stated, "*Everybody that is a movie star had to go through all the ranks and competitions, win the competitions, get picked up by a big sponsor, and get promoted to get into it.*"[67] These contests served as the primary catalyst for a rider's freestyle and filming career. The potential recognition that successful competitors received from structured, organized events assisted their 'going pro'. Ironically, competitions stimulated ultimate independence from the pressures of competition.[68] What is key to understand here is that freedom to snowboard when, where, and how one wished – with the monetary and emotional support from the core riding community – was the epitome of success for snowboarders.

Carving Snowboarder's Perspectives on Competition[69]

Although the snowboarding milieu promoted the new leisure movement's philosophy of anti-competitiveness and cooperation, competitions existed from the sport's inception. Originally, these events were more akin to social gatherings than traditional, rigorous contests; they were cultural hotbeds where a relatively stratified scene came together and percolated.[70] These competitions served as outlets to display prowess but, more importantly, they were the only opportunity for snowboarders to gather and observe new equipment, riding styles, and fashions. As Steve Fairbairn described the National Championships the early 1990s: "*They were really instrumental in helping both the East and the West to grasp [snowboarding] quicker because this was the*

only event where top athletes from each province actually met competitively."[71]

The first competitions were generally of the grassroots variety and were organized and operated by the riders. During the early years, competitions were of major importance as communication channels of information. Whether at the local or national level, these competitions served as major impetus for the transmission of knowledge about the sport. They were individualized events where riders paid to participate and routinely found their own way to the hills to compete.[72] The majority of competitions centered on the halfpipe event but, because the sport was still young and was not specialized, many riders competed in both the alpine and halfpipe competitions.[73]

While the competitions ultimately produced winners and subsequent rankings, there was a limited emphasis on winning because the events were often considered a good excuse to party. During a professional snowboard tour in the 1990-1991 season, Canadian snowboard legend Mark Fawcett described the scene:

> *The 'ten percent to the bar' prize money was in full effect and drinks flowed at vigorous pace as a result...[a few riders] started a small mosh pit. Kelly Jo accidentally elbowed a nearby musclehead bouncer and triggered the gnarliest bar brawl I've ever seen. She was flung into the air, and didn't contact the floor until she hit the opposing wall. Mike got to throw a punch and a half before three others jumped on top of him. After that, everyone broke into the action. If they weren't kicking a bouncer, they were throwing chairs, bottles, or tables.*[74]

At the 1992 Canadian Championships one competitor remembers the event:

> *At the hotel it was apparent by the size of the lavish party put on by the Quebec Team that the days of celebrating a victory with a food fight were over... [but at the event] there was a slight delay in starting after the course officials discovered several gates have been vandalized overnight. Team Ontario did not make it through the elimination rounds, but John Craig entertained the crowded and disqualified himself by hurtling the gates, dressed in plaid, and protected by duct tape and tree branches.*[75]

No matter the level of the venue, snowboarding competitions replicated the values of the snowboard culture. Now a photographer for Snowboard Canada magazine, Colin Adair believes that these competitive events served to demonstrate to outsiders and to the resorts that snowboarding was a force and that snowboarders themselves were a force.[76] From pranks, to costumes, to the booze-drugs-and-rock-'n-roll-ness, snowboarders resisted all structures of formality and the pressures that weresteeped within other traditional realms of sport participation.

Competitive venues maintained their non-competitive, friendly aura even as the riders progressed technically at a rapid rate. Yet, even at the highest level of national competition, the atmosphere was communal; two former competitors recalled their experiences:

> *"What we liked in '93 and '95 was that competitions were cool places to go...we had five or six racers from Nova Scotia and when we were there we didn't have a coach and the next thing you know was that an Alberta coach was coaching us for free just because that's the way it was. 'Hey yeah, jump in, I'll give you some feedback' and so it was a pretty cool deal."*[77]

> *"There's a much looser atmosphere at the top of any snowboard event than there is compared to a skiing event. Athletes still give each other wax and tools to help tune boards and stuff like that rather than keeping to themselves and being overly competitive that way. It's not adversarial, it's still very friendly."*[78]

The environment of snowboarding events, at all levels, exemplified this non-competitive, cooperative spirit of the sport. It can be suggested that in looking at the history of participation and development in snowboarding, the culture of competition and challenge had to align with the values of the core riders or they would lose momentum and eventually dissolve from existence. Similar to the acceptance of snowboard manufacturing companies, riders rejected the overly aggressive, specialized nature of formal competition and only competitions that are 'made for snowboarders' were given the ultimate respect from riders. Burton's U.S. Open, the Mount Baker Slalom, and the Arctic Challenge were prized events of the most committed members of the snowboard community versus the more mainstream, televised events, such as the X Games national championships, and the Olympics.

Competitions were considered to be "*a way of measuring who can perform the best on that day and inform all those people [of their performance] against all those other riders.*"[79] In a discussion of the importance of results, professional rider Kevin Young told Snowboard Canada magazine in 1998: "*Results don't mean much besides every context is different and the judging seems to be very sketchy. [The judges] have tried to standardize it, but snowboarding is such a progressive sport that often the judges don't even know what they're seeing.*"[80] This line of thought was consistent in the articles discussing competition in niche snowboard magazines in the 1990s. Below is a dialogue between a disgruntle reader and the editor of Snowboard Canada on the politics of judging:

> *'Sick and Tired' wrote via e-mail: "So here we have yet another individual sport based on the opinion of a judge. Who did you like the best? Snowboarding, in my opinion, is becoming like figure skating. It doesn't matter how good you are; it only matter who you are. Let's give credit where credit is due."*

Editor's response:

> *"Trust me when I say that many pros share your*

opinion. However, snowboarding is not becoming figure skating anymore than it's becoming ballroom dancing. Figure skating has guys in tights, tasseled shirts and salon haircuts that make Patrick Swayze in Dirty Dancing look like a tough guy. Snowboarding...well, it doesn't. Judged events are never easy to deal with, especially when you lose. If riders don't like it, they shouldn't enter. Otherwise, just go bigger than everyone else, stomp your shit, and stop complaining. Even if you have the best judges in the world, someone will always get the shaft. Shrug it off and make the winner buy you a drink."[81]

Results, judging, rankings, and protocols often irked those within the core snowboarding domain. Each shift in development in the competitive realm brought about judgments and debate around the way snowboarding was to be assessed in the competitive domain and whom was permitted to control the standardization of assessment. Important to note is that it was only in the decade of the 1990s that standardized judging systems developed – both within snowboarding and by external ski organizations. These efforts lodged a debate within snowboarding circles as to the direction snowboarding was being pulled, pushed, and maneuvered.

Ubiquitous within snowboarding ethos was the stance that snowboarding was "*all about having fun and not about serious competition.*"[82] Some riders went so far as to reject competitions as Damian Sanders, now deceased legend in snowboarding , said competitions are "*Boring! I'm bored. Competitions are bored. The future is in some kind of boarder cross – a Chinese downhill!*"[83] Sean Littlejohn recalled his early days of snowboarding and his resistance to competitions:

"When I was young, my friends and I used to jump everything. I had a Burton Safari and I only rode powder. I didn't want to race because my friends were ski racers and they weren't having fun. I liked to party, smoke joints, and drink beer. I used to skip school and freeride."[84]

In attempting to explain the conundrum many snowboarders faced, professional and Olympic American snowboarder Todd Richards explained his stance in 1998: "*There's a fine line between selling out and buying in... When it comes down to it, it's me against myself.*"[85] With regards to participating in competitions, he explained that: "*If...the contest is me, it's cool. I'm having a contest with myself to see if I can put together runs. I just keep things in perspective and not put too much emphasis of being really competitive.*"[86] These statements ultimately circle back to the ideals of individualism and quest for personal freedom within one's participation in snowboarding. His statements demonstrate that even at the elite levels of formal competition, snowboarders did not betray their roots, and instead chose to bring their ethos into the competitive sphere.

The bottom line was that competitions needed to mirror the snowboarding ethos and core values. In a sport steeped within a history of rebellion, the upper echelons of the traditional athletic formality and structure were the "*anathema to the essential attitude of the sport, which is sort of bad-kid-playing-hooky-listening-to-rock-'n-roll-attitude.*"[87] Snowboarders embraced a school of thought that was consciously different from that of more traditional sports, hence when the opportunity to participate in the Olympic Games presented itself, there was endless debate and upset within snowboarding circles. Needless to say, the path to the 1998 Olympics in Nagano was not a smooth ride.

Snowboarding's Bonking into the 1998 Olympic Games[88]

The International Olympic Committee first expressed interest in snowboarding as a cultural enrichment exhibit for the 1994 Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway. Planned to be a demonstration event, there were to be no official contests, medals awarded, or official team recognition. The display was to consist of jumping, carving, and ground tricks choreographed to music without the formalities of racing gates, halfpipes, or boardercross structures. While intended to be a preamble for a future Olympic event, the IOC dismissed the demonstration from the Olympic program prior to the Opening Ceremonies. On 26 August 1995 IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch issued a request to the Nagano Olympic Organizing Committee (NOOC) to consider adding snowboarding to their Games. Makoto Kobayashi, Director General of the NOOC, was shocked by the immediacy of this demand: "*It was a total surprise. We'll have to reconsider the scheduling of the entire games...There's question of whether the snowboarding competitors will fit into the athlete's village.*"[89] The organizing committee made necessary arrangements and snowboarding became the first Olympic sport to bypass the exhibition event stage in 1998.

Suffice it to say that the myriad forces connected to move snowboarding into the Olympic Games came primarily from outside of the snowboarding culture. Snowboarders knew that the Olympics would expand the awareness and recognition of snowboarding on the international scale; however, the crux of their internal debate was whether Olympic affiliation was part of the identity that the snowboarders wanted or deserved. A range of opinions existed within the core snowboard community about participation in the Olympics and this was displayed in the selection of statements by professional snowboarders, snowboard analysts, and future Olympic competitors in the years between the Lillehammer and Nagano Games:

- "*The way the Canadian Snowboard Federation wants [snowboarding] to go, it is going to become some gay f-ing cheesy Olympic sport....[snowboarding's] going to become like any other sport eventually. Ya know, there's going to be*

teams and people are going to have to train."[90]

- "*The Olympics aren't going to change snowboarding. Snowboarding...will change the Olympics!*"[91]
- "*Snowboarding is part of the younger generation. The Olympics aren't going to change that. But it'll definitely add some personality to the Olympics because you got some crazy people up here.*"[92]
- "*I think the era where it was an outlaw thing and you just rode with your friends is gone. I think the Olympics are going to bring a lot more structure to the sport...I also think it will bring a lot more politics into the sport, which is something I don't want to see. I don't think we should have hockey parents in snowboarding!.*"[93]
- "*The Olympics would definitely determine the future of our sport....I don't see how we can lose by being an Olympic event.*"[94]

Snowboarders embodied an "us versus them" mentality when contemplating their involvement in, impact on, and influences from the Olympic Movement. To snowboarders, the Olympics represented a contrary ethos. The emphasis placed on official teams, rules, bureaucracy, structures of organizations, disciplined behaviours, and focus on winning detracted from the perceived values of creativity, freedom, participant-control, and purity within snowboarding milieu.[95] Even though snowboarding was engulfed and transitioned into an Olympic event, a public statement made by Burton Snowboards Director of Marketing David Schriber depicted the community's overall sentiment one month prior to the Nagano Games,: "*No rider I've spoken with in the past few weeks is 100% comfortable with the Olympic situation.*"[96] Thus, even if snowboarders saw their sport's involvement in the Olympics as a potentially positive move for snowboarding, there was still immense hesitation, anxiety, and distrust within the snowboarding community.

As previously discussed, the cornerstone of the snowboarder philosophy was their ability to retain control over their sport and its cultural development. The few formal organizations that did survive were formed from the ground-up and run-by-snowboarders-for-snowboarders. When snowboarding was considered for Olympic involvement, the IOC went directly to the FIS for representation of snowboarding as a new alpine discipline. From the outside, this action may seem like the logical organizational choice; however, to snowboarders there was no more blatant insult or bureaucratic error on the part of the IOC. At the time, the international governing body of snowboarding, the International Snowboarding Federation (ISF), had existed since 1990 and organized seven successful international competition circuits. By 1995, the ISF had 48,000 members from 48 countries and the support of internationally-recognized snowboard stars such as Terje Haakonsen, Daniel Franck, and Danny Kass. Although the organization furthered the progression of rules and officiation of snowboarding, the ISF maintained the trust of riders for promoting snowboarding and was believed to have "*the sport's best interests at heart.*"[97] The FIS created a parallel world snowboarding competition circuit and eventually all national snowboarding organizations were coerced into utilizing the FIS selection process based on the FIS point system. Individual riders were therefore pressured to choose between the snowboard-run ISF and the IOC-supported FIS, creating great confusion at all levels of competition and organization.[98] The ISF felt threatened and fought back. There were protests by top ISF athletes at European FIS events, boycotts, and sanctions imposed on competitors that raced both tours. Less than a decade later, the ISF dissolved and the FIS attained power over snowboarding.

To members and supporters of the ISF, the FIS was an

Logos of International Snowboarding Federation (L) and Federation Internationale du Ski (R)

organization managed by "*65 year old skiers in suits.*"[99] Riders were furious with the IOC's decision and the FIS's subsequent actions. They were extremely vocal in their disapproval because the idea of being a 'discipline' of skiing was antithetical to their fundamental core ethos and historical struggles. An online contributor to *Flakezine* blog wrote an article about his disgust entitled "Getting FISted," and ranted:

> *The bottom line is FIS doesn't give a lump of feces for snowboarding, snowboarders, or snowboarding culture. They simply see snowboarding as another way to sell sponsorships, gain power, and control another winter sport. Anything they say to the contrary is a bald-faced lie. They are a bunch of unethical, evil cretins set on destroying snowboarding as we know it.*[100]

Snowboarders were philosophically opposed to being embraced by the skiing bureaucracy. To be merged with skiing was illogical to them and FIS governance was not acceptable. Greg Johnson, a former International Judges Commission snowboarding judge, stated blatantly, "*The people at FIS making decisions about snowboarding aren't snowboarders. It's crippling,*"[101] while Victoria Jealouse, a Canadian female rider who refused to participate in the 1998 Games, questioned: "*Could you imagine if the ice skating federation governed hockey teams just because they did both their sports on ice? Then the ice skaters rewrote the hockey rules and ran the hockey games?*"[102] Ted Martin, the ISF President from Canada,

made an official statement in response to the IOC decision: "*Snowboarding is a SPORT, not a discipline!...The snowboard community is saying that it wishes to continue to be governed by an organization that is made up of snowboarders.*"[103] Moreover, amidst the fury and disarray, there was a fear that this direction would squash the spirit of snowboarding forever.

> *All international riders were presented with the moral dilemma of Olympic participation. One of the most significant disruption within snowboarding's history was when Terje "The Legend" Haakonsen of Norway decided to remove himself from Olympic involvement. Haakonsen, the 'undisputed grandmaster of freestyle' snowboarding, avowed that his embrace of snowboarding was purely because of its inherent freedom and good-natured environment: "I ride differently every year. I stay in shape but have no special program. I just go and play every day."*[104]

A still photograph of Terje Haakonsen in the snowboard film *First Descent: The History of the Snowboarding Revolution.* This image represents the epitome of success and freedom in snowboarding

When asked about the future of the sport in 1996, Terje replied, "*The contest scene definitely has to improve, from the organizational level. There is so much politics-bull shit. The judging and rules. It's important for everyone to be comfortable and have fun.*"[105] In a press release on 7 January 1998, he cited "IOC corruption" as the root of his condemnation, claiming that the FIS was non-representative of sport and the ISF, even though long established and respected, was ignored by the IOC. Haakonsen was disgusted by the IOC's decision and likened the organization's corrupt behavior to that of the mafia: "*When I say the mafia, I mean what most people say in the word: people who take over control but never let anyone have an inside look at what they are doing.*"[106] The philosophical dynamics of snowboarding culture allowed Haakonsen and fellow dissenters to express their opinions freely while still maintaining the respect of their community. Conversely, the they did not want their participation to dissolve their uniqueness. He challenged the fundamental values of the Olympic Games, denied the relevance of the Olympic Movement, and publicly shunned the practices of IOC members. While Haakonsen escaped retaliation by the IOC-FIS officials, his snowboard brethren would not get off so easily. The pre-Olympic voices of dissent by core members of the snowboarding community engendered IOC bias, and subsequent negative judgment, toward the snowboarders.

Upon receiving the news that snowboarding was accepted as an event at the Olympics, the national snowboard organizations had to devise qualification systems to send their competitive teams. Adam Faithfull, the Canadian Snowboard Federation's (CSF) President at the time, recalls the confusion:

> *"We became serious about teams when we got into the Olympics because before we could shun FIS contests. 'Who cares, right? It's FIS, we don't care, let them do what they want to do. We support the ISF and we do the ISF series so you don't need a team for that, [snowboarding] is just individuals'...I think snowboarding as a team sport is kind of weird anyway. Then we get into the Olympics. 'Well how do you qualify for the Olympics?' Well you have to compete in FIS World Cups. 'Well how do you do that?' Well you need teams, you have quotas, oh all these rules and regulations around. 'What do you mean we can't send 20 people?'...You can only send four and one has to be a woman."*[107]

The challenges and hostilities between the ISF-FIS factions at the international level also trickled down to organizations at the national level. In Canada for instance, the disorder and lack of organization within the CSF was compounded by pressures from the Canadian Ski Association (CSA). The CSA challenged the CSF's commitment to represent the FIS snowboarding programs in Canada and threatened to obtain sanction as the organizing body for the sport. More specifically, by 1997 they wanted to assume the CSF's authority to oversee Canada's national snowboard team and Olympic selection process, forcing the CSF to give up its control and lose potential funding from the national Olympic association. After great misunderstanding, board meetings, cancelled trial events, poor weather conditions, and reassessment of team selection, the CSF assembled its Olympic snowboard team and maintained control over their sport. However, myriad examples such as this did not leave riders with a good feeling about the Olympics as they departed for Nagano.

From the moment snowboarders arrived at the Games, their presence garnered public attention. A newspaper article described how snowboarders represented a trend for the future, nonetheless clashing with others around them: "*Those who speak derisively of the snowboarders call them knuckledraggers. Meanwhile, snowboarders seem to label non-devotees as pinheads. Without getting into name-calling, it's easy to say there is plenty of room for good stuff.*"[108] It was a known compromise amongst snowboarders that even though their sport was officially

part of the Olympic Movement, their values were not to be repudiated by external pressures. Even at the Canadian Olympic Association's (COA) opening dinner, the snowboarders marked their distinction from the others:

> *"The snowboarders were the life of the, uh, party. The athletes were dressed in their funeral director costumes – black on black, with just a hint of gray – as they were solemnly introduced. Then came these cats, pants hiked up, duck-walking, all wearing pink sunglasses and woo-wooing. They were staying in character. Someone please explain how that is an indictable offence."*[109]

Their differences were both subtle and blatant, philosophical and action-oriented; most, if not all, of the snowboarders that traveled to Japan for the experience of the Olympics were part of a generation of riders who had to fight for their place on the ski slopes and the legitimacy of their unique culture. The riders were determined to not sacrifice the rules of their own game even though they participated in the Olympics.

The desire for autonomy was often misunderstood by outsiders and criticized throughout the 1998 Games. The riders' dismissal – or innocent ignorance – of Olympic traditions was perceived to belittle the Movement itself.[110] Canadian snowboarder Trevor Andrew described this after the Games:

> *"There were just so many questions about whether we cared about being at the Olympics. I care about the Olympics but it isn't the highlight of my career, there is just so much more to snowboarding...I think the [Olympics] make you a stronger person. I know you win some, you lose some, and I didn't win yesterday but I did have fun. I tried my best and I fell, but it's no big deal because I hope to go to another Olympics."*[111]

American snowboarder Todd Richards explained how their appreciation of the Olympics was an entirely individual choice: "*It depends on how stoked people are on it, and since Terje left the Olympics and he's not going to do it, it takes away from the best competition that we could possibly have. [Whether riders value the Olympics] really depends on what people perceive the Olympics to be. If they make it cool or they don't.*"[112] In a culture premised on play, youthful rebellion, and cultural resistance, the Olympics were not taken seriously by snowboarders and this translated into condemnation by Olympic authorities at first opportunity.

Canadian snowboarder Ross Rebagliati was the first rider up ski lifts when Whistler-Blackcomb permitted snowboarding in 1989 and he was a staunch advocate for snowboarding's entrance into the Olympic Games ("*Kids can start growing up with Olympic dreams now*"[113]). He was the ideal candidate to bridge the gap between the more conservative, traditional sporting realms and the untamed snowboarders in Nagano.[114] His Giant Slalom victory won him the first-ever gold medal awarded in snowboarding and the media seized the opportunity to celebrate this well-spoken, clean-shaven sporting hero. A newspaper writer elaborated on this stating:

> *"[Rebagliati's] no slacker to be. He didn't talk about doing a stiffy for all the watching pinheads out there. No piercings on him. And he didn't look like he was scoping for a shred Betty when they played the national anthem. He looked like he was moved and that he wanted to be moved...Rebagliati will have done more for his sport than NHLers for theirs...Rebagliati made snowboarding seem as all-Canuck as mom and ice-dancing."*[115]

However, soon after his triumph Rebagliati was charged with testing positive for traces of marijuana in his urine. Rebagliati denied this charge, claiming that the drug test results were due to second-hand smoke inhalation.[116] The IOC Medical Commission determined that this positive test result deserved severe punishment, and subsequently the IOC Executive Committee elected to uphold the Medical Commission's recommendation, forcing the COA to strip Rebagliati of his medal. Although the decision was overturned two days later by a ruling of the IOC Court of Arbitration appeal and Rebagliati's medal

Rebagliati immediately after his win in Nagano (L) and his appearance on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno (R)

returned, this negative scenario reaffirmed the snowboarders' abhorrence of Olympic politics.

Rebagliati was distraught during this tumultuous time, yet he maintained his deep commitment to the snowboarding community and his friends. The Canadian team supported Rebagliati and a few members went to extreme lengths to express their opinions. Rebagliti's fellow snowboarders were appalled by the political undertones of the decisions made by the IOC. After his run on the halfpipe, rider Mike Michalchuk harnessed the current media attention to vent his frustration:

> *"I was so angry that my girlfriend and I made a banner out of a napkin that said, 'Give Ross Back The Medal' and I held it up after my first run. I think everyone was stoked on it and I gave it to Ross after he got his medal back. I was sick of it! I wanted to do something other than answer all the stupid media questions. I wanted to take my own stand."*[117]

The snowboarders in Nagano resented the fact that Rebagliati was targeted by the IOC as one of two snowboarders tested for marijuana consumption. Peter Judge, the coach of the Canadian freestyle team, expressed his

sympathy for Ross: "*It's tough to see that young man now put on the stretch rack like that and hung out to dry.*"[118] An environment of mistrust, anger, and disgust arose out of this incident and it was assumed by some that the IOC used Rebagliati to prove what would happen when athletes disrespected or resisted their authority.

The snowboard community was completely disenchanted with the IOC and believed that the organization was acting like a social police force, rather than the international governing body of sport. Quite simply, they were furious with the FIS and IOC alike. A member of the Canadian snowboard team retorted:

> *"The FIS were floating in the background and could have done something if they knew or wanted to do something. The FIS didn't exercise that option... The IOC didn't think it through...their decision was more like a knee jerk reaction. I think they thought it would give a message to the kids. But in the end it made them look foolish and uninformed...There was no justification to do what the IOC did."*[119]

Another snowboarding figure, CBC snowboard broadcaster Rob Stevens, vented his frustrations with the actions surrounding Rebagliati:

> *"For the FIS, were they insane? It was like a suicide pill! No one was really too on fire for those guys in the first place and then they go and pull something like that. Even though Ross has his medal back there are competitive snowboarders in general with a pretty bad taste in their mouths, especially when it comes down to a FIS' rule and not the IOC's. ... They didn't think. Because if they tested everybody under their umbrella they'd be getting more than just Ross in the net. It's just impossible to think that some skier in the whole history of ski racing never smoked. Come on. They were trying to jerk the snowboard chain and they pulled a little too hard and the snowboard dog turned around and bit them on the ass."*[120]

The confrontation forced many snowboarders to re-evaluate their sport's involvement within the Olympic Games. Upon reflecting on his experience in Nagano, Michael Wood, the Canadian Team Leader, expressed, "*I think everyone was a bit like, 'Is it really worth it?'*"[121]

Interestingly, save for the affair surrounding Rebagliati, the Olympic experience in Nagano was deemed to be relatively positive by participating snowboarders. In various post-Games interviews, snowboarders acknowledged that they were able to hold onto their roots while participating in the grandiose sporting event. Canadian rider Tara Teigan described the whole experience as "*Nutty! None of us ever expected to be in the Olympics. We never really fit into the Olympic ideal.*"[122] Fellow national team member Mark Fawcett also commented on the way that snowboarders did not blend into the norm, yet they were embraced by fans and media throughout the Games. He considered the spectator turnout for snowboarding to be:

> *"Amazing. [Nagano] was the biggest snowboard event ever. It was just incredible. The crowd was freaking out. They loved every minute of it. They were impressed with the snowboarding itself Like wow, these guys are athletes. This is crazy. They still think it's nuts which is cool. We haven't lost our element of extremity and [the crowds] loved it."*[123]

Some riders even noted the astonishment of those at the Games regarding the camaraderie and teamwork amongst the snowboarders, regardless of one's nationality or level of competition. As Canadian halfpipe competitor Maelle Ricker remembered: "*It was great because everybody was so stoked on each other. I think some officials that weren't used to being around snowboarders were really surprised at how friendly everybody was. It's a pretty tight knit family and nobody was snapping at each other, everybody was just having fun.*"[124] Perhaps it was their naiveté, or their steadfastness to the core values within snowboarding culture, but the snowboarders seemed to bring a fresh glimpse of a new way to compete and interact into the Olympic space.

Cab Conclusions[125]

At first glance, the history of snowboarding and its entry into the Olympic Games may appear similar to the natural progression of sport evolution. However, what transpired within a short period of time in the 1990s for snowboarding was unique within the Olympic Movement. Although abandoned in 1994, the initiatives by the Lillehammer Olympic Organizing Committee served to be the necessary catalyst to show snowboarding's potential as a legitimate Olympic event. Four years later, snowboarding catapulted from a discharged cultural enrichment exhibit to a highly mediated and controversial official event at the 1998 Nagano Games. What makes snowboarding's entrance into the Olympic Games special however is that the push for the sport's involvement was provided by individuals outside of snowboarding itself, primarily the FIS and the IOC. The historical evolution of snowboarding clearly demonstrates why there was such a polarity existed between snowboarders and Olympic proponents. Snowboarders embraced a different ethos for their sport, one that was conscientiously tangential from traditional sporting norms and values. Its' sport culture lineage was different from any Olympic sport up until that time. Thus, when the participant-directed snowboarding domain was placed into the Olympic lineup by external players, this advancement was not fully respected, appreciated, or even understood by the snowboarding community. Subsequent to the completion of the Nagano Olympic Games, snowboarding's maturation process continued. Olympic participation became an accepted option of the snowboard milieu.

The vibrant energy inherent within the snowboarding culture jolted the international sporting community in 1998. Acceptance and participation did not merge seamlessly; however, respect and maturity were mutual

beneficiaries of this evolutionary progression. The IOC received an effervescent, new sport with wariness and trepidation, while the snowboarding core entered the structured world stage with youthful zeal. The "what's a cool you are?" verbal symbol of individualism and creative freedom was well-received by media, spectators and athletes in general in Nagano, and heading into the new millennium the 'schooling' of snowboarding was also being 'taught by Olympic involvement. ■

Notes

1 T. Davies, "Boarding comes of age: The Olympics welcome the wild child of the ski slopes," Maclean's, 111.6 (1998), 54. 1

2 A. Murphy, "Snow jobbed," *Sports Illustrated*, 86.17 (2002), A16.

3 R. Mickleburgh, " Swiss, German capture gold in halfpipe debut," *Globe and Mail*, 13 February 1998, O3.

4 *Shred* is a snowboarding term used by early snowboarders that means "to ride". It is synonymous with the action of snowboarding or riding. For instance, the snowboarders shredded Whistler Mountain in 1987.

5 D. Humphreys, "Snowboarders: Bodies out of control and in conflict," *Sporting Traditions* 13 (1996), 3-23.

6 K. Althen, *The Complete Book of Snowboarding* (New York, NY: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1990), 3.

7 *Stick* is a term used to call one's snowboard and is also a term used to describe landing a trick or jump. Throughout the text, the author uses snowboarding terminology to implicitly familiarize readers with the language within the culture.

8 "Back in the Day," *Burton Snowboards*. [online] 28 June 2003. http://www.burton.com/company/default.asp

9 Humphreys, "Snowboarders: Bodies out of control and in conflict," 13.

10 S. Howe, *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 43-44.

11 Humphreys, "Snowboarders: Bodies out of control and in conflict," 6.

12 *Trick* is a snowboarding term used for any maneuver or act performed on a snowboard that exceeds basic turning skills down the hill.

13 M. Fabbro, *Snowboarding: The Ultimate Freeride* (Toronto, ON: McLelland and Stewart Inc., 1996), 86.

14 Howe, *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding,* 52.

15 *Huck* is a snowboarding term used to describe the act of riding off a jump often going faster and bigger than one normally does.

16 D. Booth, "Surfing '60s: A case study in the history of pleasure and discipline," *Australian Historical Studies* 103 (1994), 277.

17 17 Ibid., 278.

18 18 P. Donnelly, "Sport as a site for 'popular' resistance," in *Popular Cultures and Political Practices*, ed. R. Gruneau (Toronto, ON: Garamond Press, 1988), 245-265.

19 D. Humphreys, "Selling out snowboarding: The alternative response to commercial co-optation," in *To the Extreme: Alternative Sports Inside and Out*, eds. R. Rinehart and S. Sydnor (Albany, NY: State University Press, 2003), 407-428.

20 Donnelly, "Sport as a site for 'popular resistance," 74.

21 D. Humphreys, "Shredheads go mainstream? Snowboarding and alternative youth," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32 (1997), 150.

22 This claim was found in many *Snowboard Canada* magazine articles and stated by interviewees Scott Taylor, Matt Houghton, and Steve Fairbairn.

23 S. Taylor, Personal Interview, London, Ontario, 15 January 2004. Taylor was the manager of the Boardshop in London, Ontario.

24 M. Houghton, Personal Interview, Toronto, Ontario, 27 October 2004. Houghton was the editor of *Snowboard Canada* magazine.

25 Ibid.

26 M. Houghton, "Snowboard Canada's 10th anniversary," *Snowboard Canada*, Fall 2001, 160. Statement by professional Canadian rider Kevin Young.

27 D. Jones, Personal Interview, Bolton, Ontario, 26 October 2004. Jones was a Canadian Association of Snowboarding Instructors (CASI) coach.

28 Humphreys, "Shredheads go mainstream? Snowboarding and alternative youth," 155.

29 Howe, *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding*, 41.

30 J. Macdonald, "Snowboarders Taken for a Loop," *Toronto Star*, 21 December 1989, B10.

31 C. Adair, Telephone Interview, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 25, 2004. Adair was the assistant editor of *Snowboard Canada* magazine.

32 Taylor, Personal Interview.

33 Houghton, Personal Interview.

34 M. Fabbro, "Whistler Blackcomb: The world's ultimate snowboarding destination," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1993, 17-19. The article states that snowboarding was conservatively estimated at ten percent of all visitors and was growing at the time. M. Fabbro, "Mont Tremblant: The biggest just became the best!" *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1993, 20-21. Mont Tremblant quickly became the premier snowboarding centre in Eastern Canada and in 1991-92, an estimated ten percent of all skier traffic were snowboarders. This was found to be about forty thousand snowboarders, up from thirty-five thousand the year before.

35 S. McCoy, "The 100 greatest things that ever happened to skiing," *Ski Magazine*, January 1993, 84; cited in Humphreys, "Shredheads go mainstream? Snowboarding and alternative youth," 152.

36 M. Clarkson, "Board game: No longer a fad, snowboarders rule Canada's ski hills," *Toronto Star*, 21 January 1998, E8. Statistics in article are from the Canadian Ski Council.

37 M. Fabbro, "Getting your kids started," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1997, 150.

38 Houghton, Personal Interview.

39 *Flex* is a snowboarding term used to describe the stiffness and pattern of how a snowboard bends, or the bending of one's knees while snowboarding.

40 Sims Snowboard Advertisement, *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1998, 252.

41 M. Waite, ed. *The Oxford Colour Dictionary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216.

42 K. Sansalone, "Guest editor," *Snowboard Canada,* Winter 2003, 182.

43 S. Littlejohn, "Jorli Ricker," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 46-47.

44 S. Burke, "The ten most influential people in Canadian snowboarding," *Snowboard Canada,* Fall 2004, 179-196.

45 A. Warburton and G. Daniells, "Freeriders," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1993, 28-29.

46 G. Stroebel,"2 cant or not 2 cant?" *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1993, 41.

47 R. Starkman, "Snowboarder seeks danger at every turn," *Toronto Star,* 10 December 1997, C7

48 M. Binsted, Personal Interview, Bolton, Ontario, 26 October 2004. Binsted was a former national-team snowboarder and sponsored rider.

49 Howe, *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding*, 37.

50 R. Heino, "What is so punk about snowboarding? Snowboarding and alternative youth," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 24 (2000), 179.

51 L. Jacobson, "Style drives sports gear designer," *Globe and Mail,* 7 July 1998, M1. This is a quote by Scott Oliver, Product Manager for Burton Snowboards.

52 M. Luder, "Top 23 things overheard in the lift lineup," *Snowboard Canada,* Winter 2001, 40. In addition to this, there was a play on the dominance of Caucasians in snowboarding demographics: "#4 Yep, I really am the only black man here."

53 J. Stratton, "On the impossibility of subcultural Oorigins," in *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. S. Thornton and K. Gelder (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 181-190.

54 M. Fabbro, "First run: Editor's note," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1996, 30.

55 Jones, Personal Interview.

56 Houghton, Personal Interview.

57 C. Nichols, "So, you wanna get sponsored? Lesson 1: The first step," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 2003, 70.

58 *Stomp* is a snowboarding term used to describe the dominant completion of a trick.

59 Binsted, Personal Interview.

60 Ibid.

61 JS, "Q&A: When did you first go from am to pro and how is it different?" *Transworld Snowboarding,* Winter 2003, 16.

62 Jones, Personal Interview.

63 R. Chotzinoff, "The rides of their lives: These women are going downhill fast," *Westword*, 4 March 2004.

64 C. Nichols, "So, you wanna get sponsored? Lesson 1: The first step," *Snowboard Canada,* Buyer's Guide 2003, 70.

65 M. Stastook, Telephone Interview, Calgary, Alberta, 9 November 2004. Stastook was a professional snowboarder.

66 Binsted, Personal Interview.

67 Jones, Personal Interview.

68 Adair, Telephone Interview.

69 *Carving* is a snowboarding term that refer to the act of snowboarding down a hill.

70 Howe, *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding*, 55.

71 S. Fairbairn, Telephone Interview, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 28 October 2004. Fairburn was the Canadian Snowboard Federation Chairman and CASI instructor.

72 Ibid.

73 Adair, Personal Interview; A. Faithfull, Personal Interview, Toronto, Ontario, 27 October 2004. Faithfull was the former CSF Chairman, the FIS, CSSA, and COC Representative, IJC international-level snowboard judge.

74 M. Fawcett, "Rookie days," *Snowboard Canada,* Spring 1999, 46.

75 M. Fabbro, "92 Canadian Amateur Championships," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 1993, 38-41.

76 Adair, Personal Interview.

77 Fairbairn, Telephone Interview.

78 S. Fairbairn, Telephone Interview.

79 M. Stastook, Telephone Interview.

80 T. De Koker, "Kevin Young," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1994, 24-26.SBC No. 4 Winter 1994.

81 "Talkback: Our readers write – The politics of judging," *Snowboard Canada,* Fall 2001, 38.

82 C. Adair, Telephone Interview.

83 "Rider on the storm," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 1993, 8.

84 "Fresh tracks," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 1997, 41.

85 D. Smith, "Snowboarders make own path: Some Olympians don't take kindly to rebels of slope," *Toronto Star*, 7 February 1998, B6.

86 S. Littlejohn, "Todd Richards," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 75-81.

87 M. Miller, "Snow bunny: Hard knocks," *Santa Fe Reporter*, 10 February 2004,12.

88 *Bonk* is the snowboarding term used to describe the act of hitting or tapping an object with the snowboard.

89 While Kobayashi used the term "fit" literally in reference to space issues in the Olympic Village, the author inserted italics to show the irony of "fitting in" the Village since snowboarders were clearly outsiders to other Olympic athletes and their sporting norms and values.

90 E. Reder, "Scott Newsome," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1996, 100-102.

91 S. Jarrett, S, "Stevens interview: CBC-TV's Olympic snowboarding analyst," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1998, 100.

92 D. Smith, "Snowboarders make own path: Some Olympians don't take kindly to rebels of slope." Statement made by American GS specialist Rosey Fletcher

93 S. Littlejohn, "Jorli Ricker," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 46.

94 M. Fabbro, "Ross Rebagliati," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 1995, 31-32.

95 For a more in-depth discussion about the values within and espoused by the snowboarding and FIS-IOC cultures, see M. Popovic and D. Morrow, "Stomping the shadow: The *elevation* of snowboarding to the Olympic pedestal from a Jungian perspective," *Sport History Review* 39, 170-191.

96 "Terje boycotts Olympics!" *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 28.

97 M. Beaudry, "'Olutlaw' sport goes legitimate for Olympics," *Globe and Mail*, 29 December 1995, C12. Statement made by Ross Rebagliati.

98 The ISF witnessed its demise in 2001. The World Snowboarding Federation (WSF) became the new governing body to "present international snowboarding to the authorities of the world and assist the Professional Snowboarders Association (PSA) and professional snowboarders worldwide in building a firm and secure environment to pursue their chosen career and live out their dreams and aspirations." "Quickhits," *Snowboard Canada*, Fall 2002, 70.

99 Beaudry, "'Olutlaw' sport goes legitimate for Olympics."

100 Faithfull, Personal Interview. The CSF relocated offices to Calgary Olympic Park, initially setting up in a trailer and then moving to share office with Alpine Canada. This was the office that the researcher visited. It was obvious that there was tension between the two organizations and members of both the CSF and Alpine Canada exhibited a lack of respect for certain employees of the other organization.

101 Murphy, "Snow jobbed."

102 M. Houghton, "Victoria Jealhouse," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 2001, 156.

103 "CSF Update," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1997, 13.

104 M. Fabbro, "Terje Haakonsen," *Snowboard Canada*, Winter 1996, 66-71.

105 Ibid.

106 R. Starkman, "Snowboarder 'sells soul' for shot at Games," *Toronto Star,* 24 January 1998, E9.

107 Faithfull, Personal Interview. Until 2002, the CSF received no recognition from Sport Canada. This was because Sport Canada required all national organizations to have at least four years of auditing done prior to applying for funding. In 1997, the CSF received sponsorship from Canada Investment and Savings, an agency of the federal government established to provide Canadians access to government securities such as Canada Savings Bonds. Team members were required to wear Canada RRSP Bond Logos

on uniforms. "Canadiana," *Globe and Mail*, 19 December 1997, S5.

108 D. Perkins, "Boarders ride wave of future," *Toronto Star*, 8 February 1998, D16.

109 Ibid.

110 D. Smith, "Snowboarders make own path: Some Olympians don't take kindly to rebels of slope," *Toronto Star*, 7 February 1998, B6.

111 S. Litteljohn, "Trevor Andrew -29th Men's Pipe," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 47.

112 S. Littlejohn, "Todd Richards," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 75-81.

113 D. Perkins, "Riding a wave of success," *Toronto Star*, 9 February 1998, D3.

114 See Popovic and Morrow, "Stomping the Shadow: The *Elevation* of Snowboarding to the Olympic Pedastal from a Jungian Perspective," *Sport History Review* 39, 170-191for a more detailed look at the ways Rebagliati could have become the bridging force at the Olympic Games, but instead was rejected by FIS-IOC and the two fields remained separate.

115 P. Goddard, "Networks air confusing time-lapse coverage," *Toronto Star*, 9 February 1998, D6.

116 Both urine samples provided by Rebagliati tested positive for traces of marijuana metabolites. The IOC considers marijuana a prohibited substance, but the FIS lists the concentration of over 15 nanograms per milliliter illegal. Rebagliati was found to have 17.8 nanograms per milliliter. Rebagliati claimed that he attended a party where marijunana was smoked on January 31, 1998 in his hometown of Whistler, BC and denied using the drug himself on that occasion. According to Bill Corrigal, director of behavioural research at the Addiction Research Foundation in Toronto at the time, "There [were] a lot of loose ends" with the charge. Studies presented at the time showed that tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, marijuana's main active ingredient can build up in the body even if a person is exposed only to the second-hand smoke of cannabis users. L. Papp,"2nd-Hand Smoke Tale Plausible, Experts Say," *Toronto Star*, 12 February 1998, A1.

117 S. Litteljohn, "Mike Michalchuk: The Chucker exposed," *Snowboard Canada*, Buyer's Guide 1998, 74-84.While for the most part people seemed to by sympathetic of Rebagliati, not everyone supported him. American Olympic snowboarder, Shannon Dunn, said that no one she associated with takes drugs, claiming, "I don't take any drugs, I only take vitamins." There were many statements in the media that pertained to Rebagliati's drug charges. Even his grandmother was quoted: "Ridiculous…I don't think he's guilty, but it sounds like they're going to put that trip on him. I know him too well. He's not the party type. He doesn't even drink alcohol –except I guess the champagne when he won." R. Mickleburgh, "No fun at Games: Snowboarding," *Globe and Mail*, 12 February 1998, O1.

118 D. Smith, "Golden snowboarder stripped of his medal," *Toronto Star*, 11 February 1998, P1. Ross returned home to Whistler Village in British Columbia and was received by 10,000 fans at a homecoming reception. He received a "key" to the Village, a lifetime pass to Whistler/Blackcomb and a $10,000 cheque from Kokanee Brewery.

119 M. Wood, "Canadian Olympic snowboard team leader," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 20.

120 S. Jarrett, "Rob Stevens: CBC's TV Olympic snowboard analyst," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 21.

121 "Michael Wood: Canadian Olympic Snowboard team leader," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 46.

122 Mickleburgh, "Swiss, German capture gold in halfpipe debut." Statement made by snowboarder Tara Teigan.

123 S. Jarrett, "Mark Fawcett," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 26.

124 S. Jarrett, "Maelle Ricker – 5th Women's Pipe," *Snowboard Canada*, Spring 1998, 24.

125 Cab is the shortened term for *Caballerial* which is a snowboarding term used to describe the act of approaching a jump switch (opposite) stance and spinning frontside.