

Snowboarding undergoes standardization, organization in 1980s
Snowboard instruction manual, regulating associations and World Cup tour formed

As one of the first ski areas to allow snowboarders, Berthoud Pass was a haven for the snowboarding scene in the 1980s. Snowboarding companies were just figuring out how to mass-market and build boards for newcomers to the sport, but many riders were still constructing their own boards or adding homemade custom features onto pre-existing boards (like the Snurfer). Equipment was sometimes unpredictable, and techniques were self-taught – but that didn't stop anyone from still riding at Berthoud Pass, and anywhere else they could.

Dave Alden, a professional snowboarder on the Burton team during the 1980s, used to live at the Berthoud Pass Lodge in the early 1980s. His title was “snowboard instructor,” but his main role at Berthoud Pass was to “help introduce people to the equipment, and how to decide if they rode regular or goofy ... or checking to see if the equipment was set up even close to properly.”

In 1985, Alden was hired as Breckenridge's first snowboard instructor, working with “unusual clientele.” Less than two years later, Alden and some other early snowboarders sat down and wrote the first manual for snowboard instruction. After presenting it to the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) board, the manual was printed, paving the way for the first snowboard certifications. With professional instructors available, this ensured that snowboarding could continue as a legitimate sport, using a singular and agreed-upon method of instruction, in a cohesive manner.

After Breckenridge hosted the World Snowboarding Championships for the second year in 1987, Dave Alden's father, Paul Alden, a “catalyst for all things [for the snowboard industry], and instrumental off the snow,” along with a group of riders and manufacturers, formed the North American Snowboard Association (N.A.S.A., later changed to N.A.S.B.A.). The aim of this association was to create a cohesive World Cup tour system with the Snowboard European Association (S.E.A.). That same year, the first World Cup tour began, with two events in the United States and two in Europe. Additionally, the United States of America Snowboarding Association (U.S.A.S.A.) was founded to establish standard rules and regulations for U.S. events.

By 1997, the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) was incorporated as an affiliate association into PSIA. Today, PSIA-AASI both act as nonprofit associations, dedicated to encouraging snowsports (ski and snowboard) using instruction standards. With more than 31,000 members who are trained and certified as instructors, PSIA-AASI helps to inspire passion for both skiing and snowboarding.

Consistent equipment, standardized techniques and training and the establishment of several large regulatory organizations for snowboarding were all coinciding with a greater acceptance of the sport at ski areas as well. Armed with standard practices and a growing number of certified instructors, snowboarding entered the 1990s, well-equipped for worldwide acceptance.

Sources included:

Snowboarding: The Ultimate Guide, by Holly Thorpe, 2012.

Transworld Snowboard History Timeline:

<http://snowboarding.transworld.net/1000020998/uncategorized/snowboard-history-timeline-part-21980s/>

“The Only Snowboard Instructor In The World,” by Peter Kray. PSIA-AASI Blog:

<http://www.thesnowpros.org/index.php/PSIA-AASI/blog/5050-Blog-The-Only-Snowboard-Instructor-in-the-World/>

PSIA-AASI About (mission, history): <http://www.thesnowpros.org/index.php/PSIA-AASI/info-center/about/>

Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum archives