

Snowboarding enters Winter Olympics

When snowboarding finally entered the Winter Olympics in 1998, it was after years of efforts and numerous obstacles – but the battles were not over.

After the International Ski Federation (FIS) was awarded jurisdiction over managing Olympic snowboarding in the early 1990s, the International Snowboarding Federation (ISF), which governed snowboarding competitions, and the snowboarding industry were outraged.

Despite this, men's and women's snowboarding debuted at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan, featuring giant slalom and halfpipe events. Both Ross Powers and Steamboat Springs native Shannon Dunn took bronze in the halfpipe events, with Dunn becoming the first American woman to win a medal in snowboarding.

Controversy continued to arise surrounding snowboarding: one of the best snowboarders at the time, Terje Haakonsen of Norway, refused to compete, Shannon Dunn and Cara Beth-Burnside wouldn't wear their U.S. team outfits at breakfast and it was later reported that the U.S. snowboarding coaches didn't actually snowboard.

Additionally, after Canada's Ross Rebagliati won the first gold medal in the giant slalom and tested positive for marijuana, he was stripped of his medal. Since the IOC does not consider marijuana a performance-enhancing drug, this decision was eventually reversed.

Snowboarding returned to the 2002 Olympics at Salt Lake City with much less controversy, but attracted thousands of spectators and media attention and featured the parallel giant slalom in place of the giant slalom competition. Colorado's own Chris Klug, who was born in Vail and currently resides in Aspen, earned bronze in the parallel giant slalom. He is the first and only American to not only compete, but also win a medal, in a Winter Olympiad after receiving an organ transplant, in 2000 for a rare liver disease. Klug was inducted into the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame in 2011.

Ross Powers, Danny Kass and Jarret Thomas swept the men's halfpipe event, and Kelly Clark won the women's halfpipe competition.

Snowboard cross, an event where riders race on a course with obstacles like jumps, bumps and turns, debuted at the 2006 Games in Torino, Italy. The U.S. snowboarding team continued to win, with Seth Wescott, Shaun White and Hannah Teter capturing gold medals in the snowboard cross and halfpipe events.

Gretchen Bleiler, Danny Kass and Lindsey Jacobellis all took silver medals in the halfpipe and snowboard cross while Rosey Fletcher earned bronze in the parallel giant slalom. Bleiler, a resident of Aspen, was the first woman to land a Crippler 540 in competition, and won more halfpipe competitions in 2003, '05, and '06 than any other female snowboarder.

White became the darling of snowboarding, completing a perfect season in 2005-2006, winning gold in the halfpipe at the 2006 and 2010 Games and earning the first perfect score at the 2012 Winter X-Games SuperPipe, among earning other accolades.

In addition to White's medal at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, Seth Wescott won the snowboard cross and Scott Lago, Hannah Teter and Kelly Clark earned medals in the halfpipe.

The incredible success of the U.S. snowboarding team has made the sport even more popular, propelling the sport to huge participation levels. Today the Olympics has snowboarding events for men and women in snowboard cross, halfpipe and parallel giant

slalom, but the IOC has approved the addition of a slopestyle event for the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

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Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum archives

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