

Smaller Colorado snowboard companies

As one of the first places to embrace snowboarding, Colorado has a long history with the sport and its innovators. While many have not expanded to the magnitude of Burton or Sims, smaller Colorado snowboard manufacturers, such as the ones mentioned below to provide examples, still have a significant impact on the development of the sport.

Swift/Never Summer

In the spring of 1983, Colorado State University students Tracey Canaday and Scott Rolfs snowboarding at Berthoud Pass. The two decided they could easily build their own, with the help of Tracey's younger brother Tim, and Swift Snowboards was born.

Swift boards featured a wide, long nose for flotation in Colorado powder, and four fins. Between 1983 and 1986, Swift produced about 200 boards in 2 models: the BH and the AV80.

After selling some boards and running a learn-to-snowboard class through the university, Swift ended in 1986. As snowboarding gained more acceptance, Tracey and Tim moved back to Colorado in 1991 to continue snowboard manufacturing and founded Never Summer. They rented an extra ski press and shop space from Steve Link of Summit Snowboards, and benefited from Steve's knowledge.

Incorporating sintered P-Tex for their sidewall material, instead of brittle ABS, Never Summer quickly gained a reputation for durability and innovation. With two patents on their rocker & camber technology, Never Summer remains the only surviving Colorado-native snowboard manufacturer.

Ultimate Control Boards

Frustrated with breakable wood snowboards, Mike Troppman and Karl "Butch" Bendele, two 16-year-olds from Lakewood, began building Ultimate Control Boards in 1981. They set out to build an indestructible board using a single sheet of Tivar 1000, a pure ultra high molecular weight polyethylene. Not many of their boards were sold, but their innovation, talent and passion have earned them a reputation in the snowboard community and as Colorado legends.

Hiper Snowboards

Myron Knapschafer began experimenting with non-stick surfaces after moving to Denver in 1980 to retire. The result of his experimentation, Hiper-Slick, didn't interest the Colorado Department of Transportation for use on snowplow blades, so Myron used it as a snowboard base instead. Along with his homemade board, Hiper, this was sold in a build-it-yourself snowboard kit; perhaps the only one of its kind.

Skosh

Bill O'Connell, Carrie Campbell and David Ralph Dowell ("Skosh") began making prototypes in 1974, using the same wood core techniques as skateboards they sold through their company, Laguna. The first boards were constructed in their garage in Littleton and tested on Loveland Pass.

There were small Skosh teams in both Colorado and California, and they would mostly ride at Loveland Pass and Snow Summit, respectively. The company finished making boards in 1983, due to a lack of ski area acceptance, the death of Skosh and financial stress.

Solid Snowboards

Neil Rankin and Andy Shotts were looking to bring a skateboard influence to snowboard production, and founded Solid Snowboard in 1993 in Fairplay. The company focused on building hand assembled wet-layup wood core snowboards, as opposed to using RIM injection which reduced costs but made boards stiff and heavy. Solid Snowboards had much more pop and were lighter, gaining attention and becoming part of the new school era that saw snowboarding transform into the sport that it is today.

Summit Snowboards

Steve Link began building custom boards in his garage in Wildernest in 1982 under the name Summit, after purchasing a snowboard press and router for \$1,500. These rockered boards were perfect for Summit County's powder, with a high base level side to side. Moving the shop to Silverthorne in 1986, Steve shifted to a vacuum molding process. He sold upwards of 200 boards per season during the late 1980s and early 1990s, gaining a reputation for Summit and also for his riding abilities, even filming with Tom Sims for the James Bond movie *A View To Kill*.

Aggression

As a high school student, Matt Nipper modified his Snurfer, and when he moved to Boulder in 1983, began building his own boards with a used Head ski press. He then began production with Aggression, helping to drive the fat stance jibbing scene. After moving production to Europe in 1995, the factory and name were sold to Volant Skis and went out of business in 1999. Still involved with the industry, Matt currently builds boards with Ernie DeLost and Chuck Barfoot.

Sources included:

Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum archives, Paul J. MacArthur.

"History 101: Snowboard's Roots," Snowboard Colorado Magazine, October 2011.