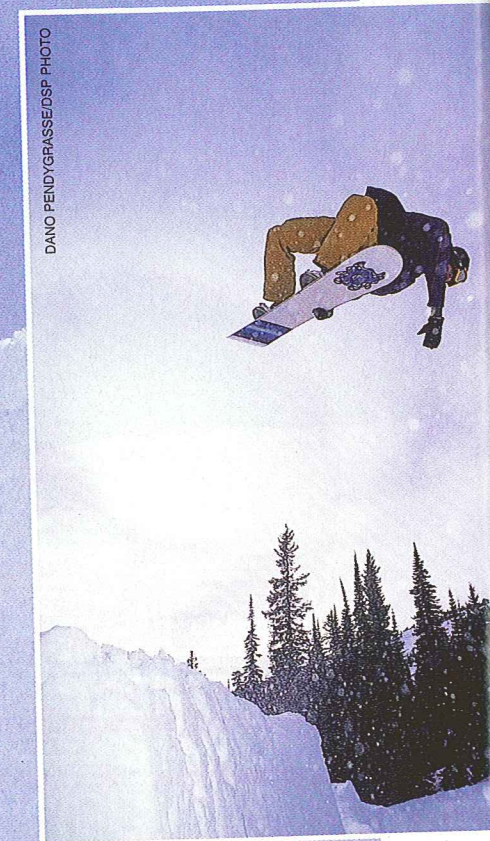


Derek's style may have been influenced by the Scandinavians, but it seems like Yoga added something as well. A few of Mr. Heidt's finer moments from Superpark, pushing the point where tweaking meets contortion.



Derek Heidt

Age: 21
 Hometown: Calgary, Alberta
 Currently resides: Whistler, B.C.
 Stance: regular

MINI-VIEW

It was hard not to notice super-tweaker Derek Heidt's distinctive style at the quarterpipe. "I think I picked it up from watching the Scanners a lot, but there's not really one particular rider I can think of." Although he stepped into the media spotlight only recently, Heidt has been patiently moving up through the ranks for the past six years. After growing up in Calgary, he moved to Whistler for the 1993 season. Now, with a snowmobile in his garage and Whistler's backcountry at his disposal, Heidt values his time at home.

After spending the start of last season in isolated Revelstoke for early snow, Derek was glad to get back. "I'd go looney tunes if I lived there all year long." But living in a place like Whistler can be frustrating, too. "I was traveling too much last season. It would dump here and be so fun and then two days later I'd have to take off on a trip. It always seems to get good just before I have to leave."

While such problems may be welcomed by most people, Derek is by no means the pampered pro. When the Superpark quarterpipe was far from super, he took off his board and spent hours digging with Mike Parillo to make it right. He's also straightforward with his opinion. About the park overall, he said: "I was psyched on the quarterpipe, but after all the crazy natural stuff I rode this season, the whole thing kind of seemed like a big jump." He recommends a big quarterpipe in the middle of the backcountry for next year.

Although exploring the backcountry will be on his mind, Derek's snowmobile adventures will have to take a back seat this fall as he shifts focus to the competitive scene. A recent appointment to the Canadian National Team will mean a busy contest and training schedule, which he hopes will end in an opportunity to represent Canada in the Olympics.





Ryan Williams, b/s 720.



Darren Cingel.

SEAN SULLIVAN/PROGRESSIVE



Tom Gilles.



SEQUENCE: DANO FENDYGRASSE/SP PHOTO

Ryan Williams

Age: 21

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Currently resides: Lake Tahoe, California

Stance: regular

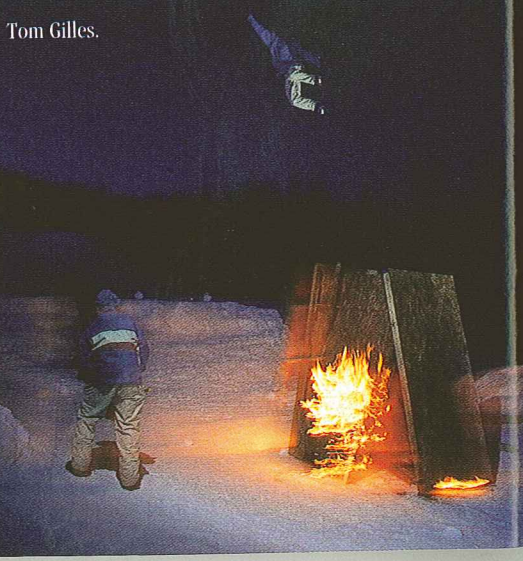
Ryan Williams came to Kelowna hot off a big air contest victory on his home turf in Tahoe. His Sugar Bowl win was his first and brought a nice confidence boost along with some welcome prize money. A seemingly mellow guy whose long hair and overwhelming optimism can be misleading, Williams unmask a streak of Rippey-like aggression when it comes time to throw down. "I'm scared every time I jump; you just have to commit and go for it. That's what gets you around and gets you to the landing." He continues to improve and gather valuable contest experience, most recently earning a fourth-place finish in front of millions at the Summer X Games.

The big tabletop at Superpark was a perfect opportunity for Williams to show his aptitude for big air, spinning smooth 720s and landing in the meat of the transition nearly every time. "I loved being able to hit three such big hits in a row. The line flowed really well. You come out of each hit with so much speed."

Like many dreamy Midwestern riders, Ryan worked toward getting out. Joe Curtes discovered his talents early and got him on the Burton program. From there it was on to the weekend contest series against other farm-league up-and-comers like Nate Cole, Dale Rehberg and Jake Blattner. "I remember after that year, all of those guys took off to go travel. When they came back, you could see how their riding had changed. They were doing new moves and just riding stronger all around."

Ryan was also eager to leave via the pro program when he graduated high school, but opted for a slower progression, taking time off to attend a semester of college each fall. Still a student, he'll be attending his fourth semester of school in as many years at the University of Nevada at Reno. "You need to have something for after snowboarding."

Currently Ryan has plenty, as he lives within view of the tram at Squaw Valley with his girlfriend and Burton teammate Natalia Wojick. The coming winter looks promising. Tahoe is due.



GEORGE F. FOWLER/AM

During one of the last nights at Big White, Tom Gilles and Darren Cingel volunteered for some stunt work. The wooden forms used to shape the quarterpipe were painstakingly dragged uphill and assembled teepee fashion before being doused in gasoline and ignited. The two riders prepared to clear what many were apprehensive about jumping during the day. Now it was dark, icy and on fire.

"I didn't know if it was going to work or not. When we went up I realized how icy it was and how different the snow conditions were. Darren and I were saying our prayers out loud up at the top; we weren't ashamed. I just pointed it and luckily landed. You really couldn't see anything except the flowing red flames of the fire about 8 feet high. You couldn't see the landing until the smoke cleared. Luckily I stayed over my board and had enough speed. Hopefully next year we'll have more wood for a bigger fire. If I don't get burned, I'm not going home happy." — Tom Gilles



SEQUENCE: GEORGE C. COVALLA III/IFOTO



LOCAL HERO

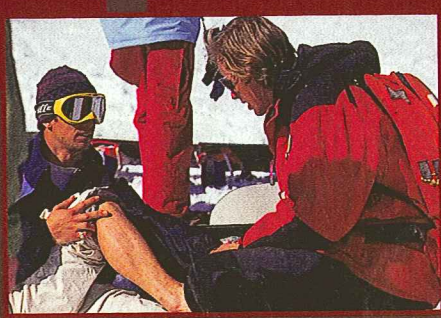
It was understandable that some of Big White's local riders were disgruntled to see such a good park on their mountain and not be able to ride it. After cursing our presence during the day, they would wait for the mountain to close and the photographers to put away their gear. Then a second session would begin, where pocket cameras and peer respect took the place of switch sevens. One rider who commanded the respect of both worlds was Rob Fagan. Talented enough to ride during the day, and dedicated enough to return after hours.



House Of Pain

Unfortunately, not every landing was a happy one.

Devun Walsh became the first rider to accomplish the seemingly impossible feat of clearing the entire transition of the 60-foot tabletop. His huge backside 180 ended in a heel-catch nightmare, sending him into what eyewitness Sean Johnson referred to as a downhill ski racer rag doll. Devun sustained cuts, a bruised heel and a few shots to the head. He opted for the next ride back to Vancouver. Big White was also unkind to some big names from Whistler. Kevin Young sustained trauma to his shoulder and face, while Chris Brown matched Devun in the bruised heel department. Representing the U.S., Randy Gaetano came up a bit short and crumbled on impact, suffering a broken leg. Drae Glover made the long trip only to have his knee tweaked after failing to clear the flats. A poaching local claimed that since he had a season pass he could ride anything on the mountain. Unable to restrain the spirited youth, all watched as he straight-lined toward glory. When he came up 10 feet short and chest first, the would-be hero was carted off by the ski patrol with a punctured lung while muttering "I think I'm bleeding inside." Stevie Alters ran the international border only to pack out his knees a day after and was left to sharpen his billiards skills back in town. After a top-notch performance, Brad Baxter was forced to quit early because of a shoulder injury that also kept him out of the local big air contest the following weekend. Luckily for Brad, Kris Elliott won the contest and was forced to fork over a percentage of his prize money because of some business arrangement the two had. When Jesse Huffman's ankle became too sore and swollen to ride, he acted as personal photographer for his brother Lukas, trying to get some nice shots to send home to mom. And before things were through, Josh Vert's ass free-fell about 15 feet to the bottom of an icy transition and swelled to the point of cementing his cheeks shut.

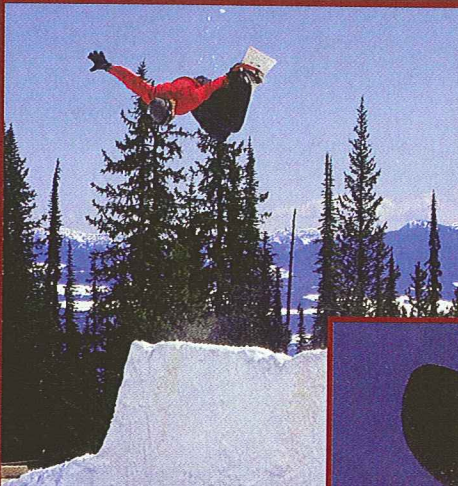


PHOTOS: TREVOR GRAVES

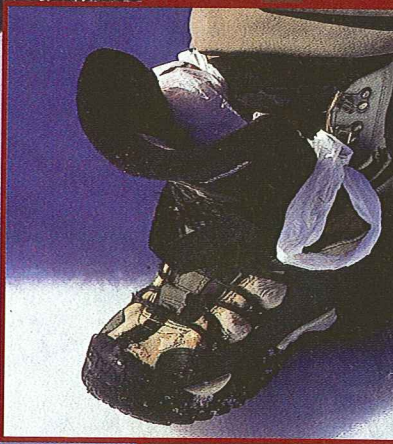


This stalefish had a sad ending.

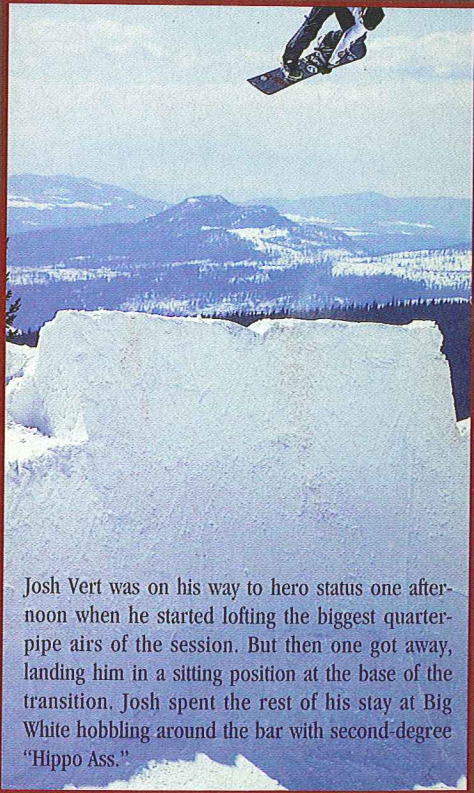
It's broken.



<<< Drae Glover in a brief moment of triumph above the quarterpipe before jacking his knee on the tabletop landing.



>>> Jesse's ankle injury would seem like nothing compared to his fate at Mt. Hood just two months later. The hairier Huffman continues to recover after compacting two vertebrae in his back when he overshot the landing of the now infamous 70-foot hero gap at Hood.



PHOTOS: GEORGE C. COVALLA III

Josh Vert was on his way to hero status one afternoon when he started lofting the biggest quarterpipe airs of the session. But then one got away, landing him in a sitting position at the base of the transition. Josh spent the rest of his stay at Big White hobbling around the bar with second-degree "Hippo Ass."

Bjorn Leines' presence stirred excitement in the park. He would land so smoothly that cheers would erupt from the spectators entrenched in the surrounding woods. Bjorn spent the afternoon hiking and unleashing his impressive repertoire, doing everything once, then doing it again, switch. He looked professional and systematic, yet at the same time just seemed to be having fun.

The middle of three brothers (Erik, 18, and Tor, 22), B.J. was spared the Minnesota destiny of a thick accent and hockey haircut thanks to his parents' influence. He discovered snowboarding on one of the family's frequent ski trips to Utah. After working to save money for his first board, B.J.'s career began on the topographically challenged terrain around his hometown of Big Lake, Minn.

But Utah is officially home now, and the kid who used to wait anxiously for winter is now considering buying his parents' vacation house in the mountains. All that remains of Leines' Minnesota past are some cousins slated for the NHL and a fondness for dirt bikes. (On his rare returns to Minnesota, he rides on a private motocross track he built himself.) He now spends a lot of time on the road—though he's protective about where he's been. "They're pretty much all secret spots that my friends have scoped out."

Discovered by the lens rather than the heat sheet, he says he was influenced a lot by Utah riders like Andy Hetzel, who taught him to refine his skills on the mountain more than in the pipe. This philosophy led to his strong freestyle attack in big-mountain terrain. "I didn't really do a lot of contests," he admits. By producing video parts like the one in *Milk*, B.J. became a well-known rider without ever strapping on a bib.

However, like most riders with pipe skills, Leines feels the draw of Olympic glory, and will spend the early part of next season competing with his brother Erik and a cast of hundreds for a chance to represent the U.S. Then, of course, he can return to filming. B.J.'s future is big, whether it's on kickers, in the pipe, or at some secret spot in the Utah backcountry. The kid can do it all.

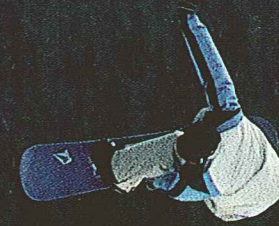
Bjorn Leines

Age: 20
 Hometown: Big Lake, Minnesota
 Currently resides: Salt Lake City, Utah
 Stance: regular

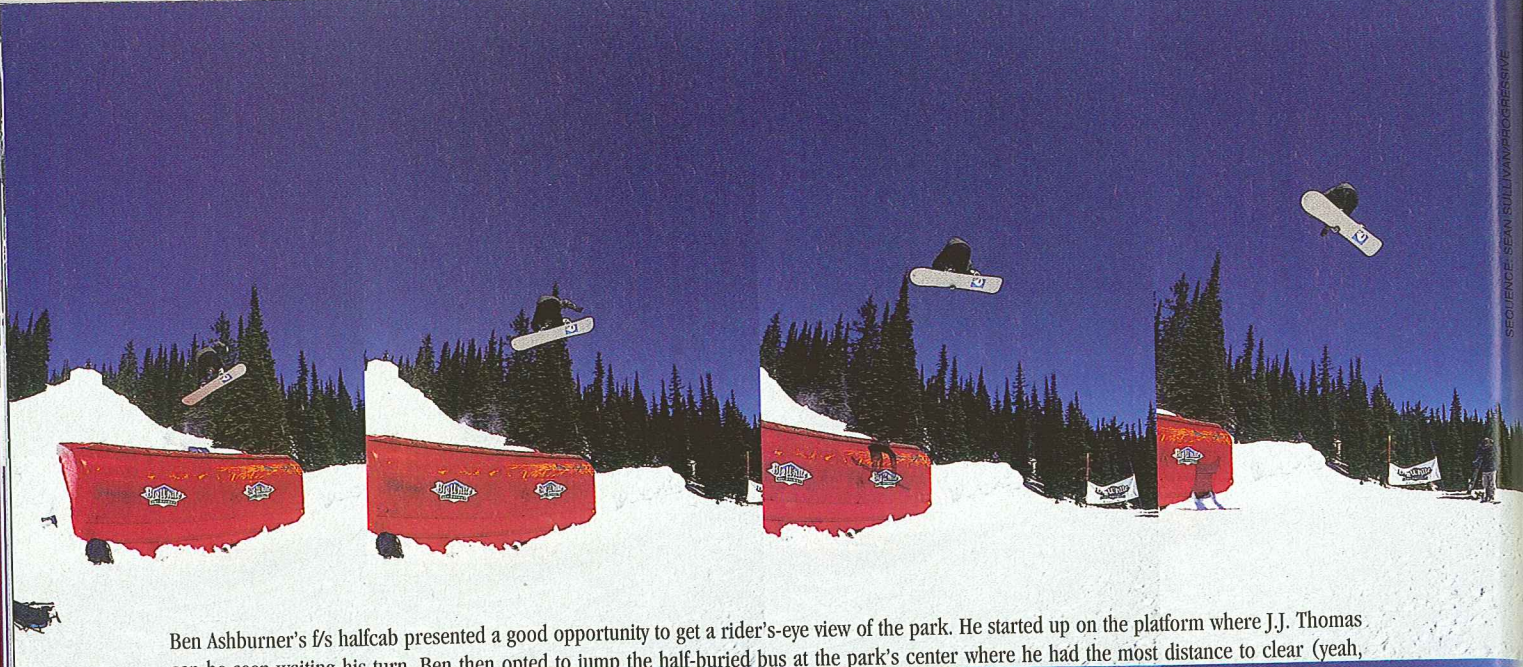


Switch 540 over the Supercollider.

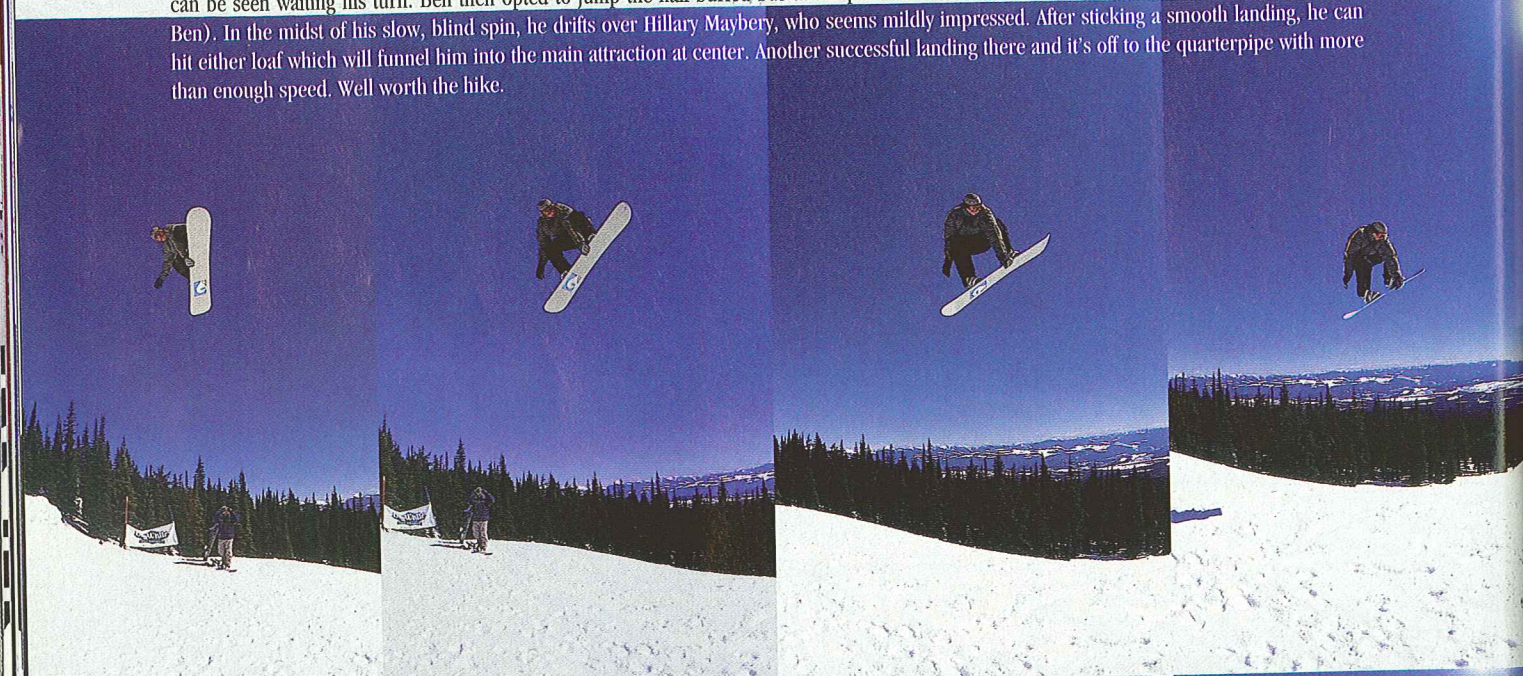
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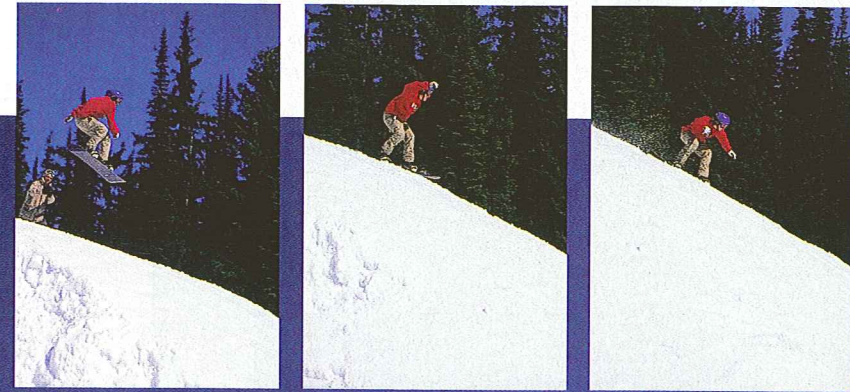
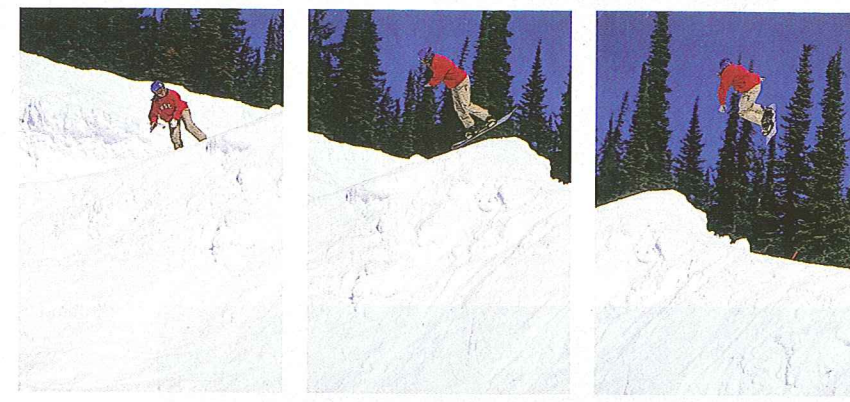
CHRIS BRUNKHART



Ben Ashburner's f/s halfcab presented a good opportunity to get a rider's-eye view of the park. He started up on the platform where J.J. Thomas can be seen waiting his turn. Ben then opted to jump the half-buried bus at the park's center where he had the most distance to clear (yeah, Ben). In the midst of his slow, blind spin, he drifts over Hillary Maybery, who seems mildly impressed. After sticking a smooth landing, he can hit either loaf which will funnel him into the main attraction at center. Another successful landing there and it's off to the quarterpipe with more than enough speed. Well worth the hike.

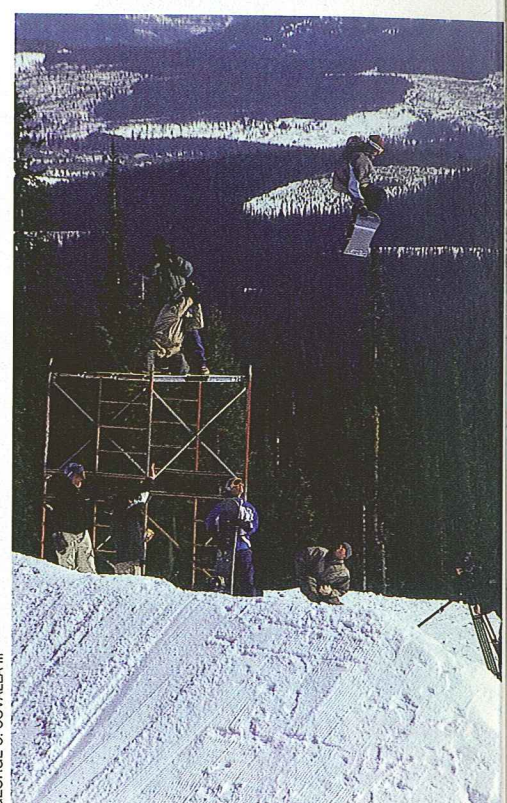


SEQUENCE: SEAN SULLIVAN/PROGRESSIVE



SEQUENCE: DANO PENDYGRASSE/DSP PHOTO

DANO PENDYGRASSE DSP PHOTO

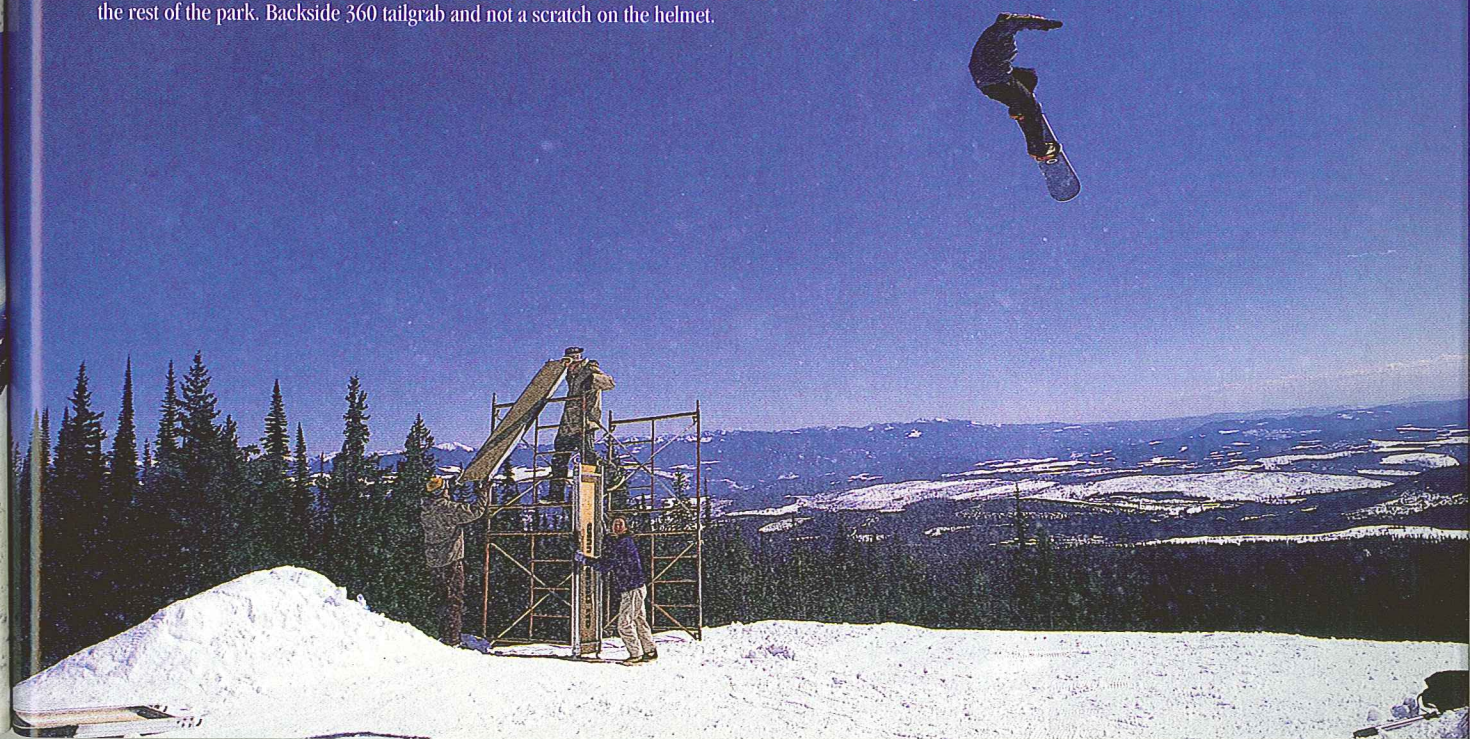


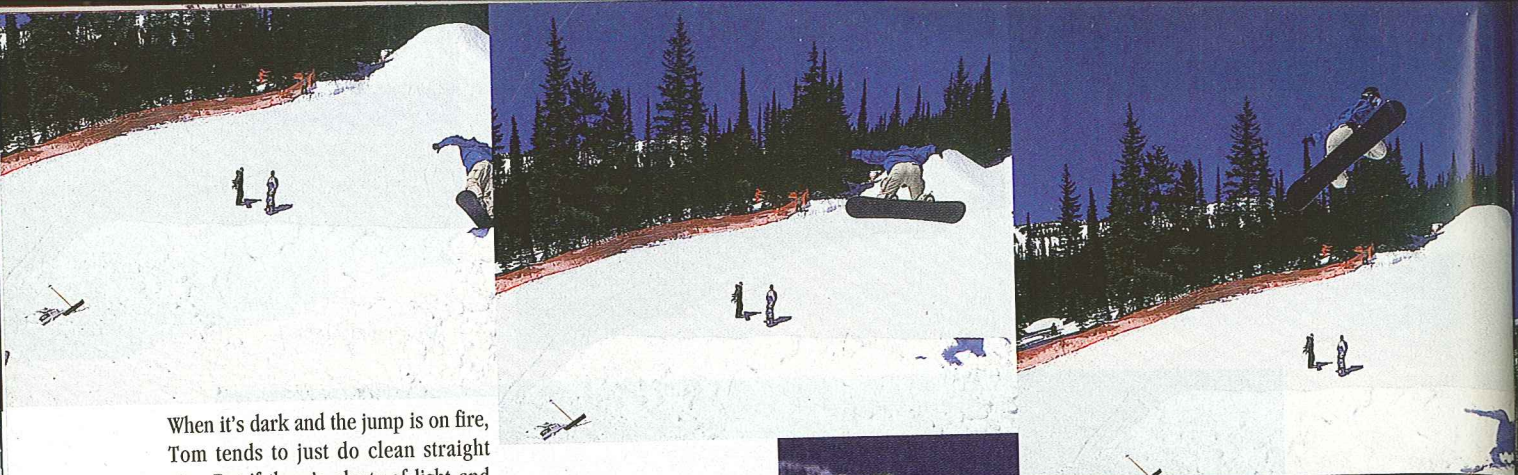
GEORGE C. COVALLA III

Ian Spiro imports some East Coast park presence.

When J.J. Thomas shows people the photos from his sixteenth birthday, they'll all look something like this. The talented youngster came to Kelowna having already spent his winter earning respect in Vail. He later admitted the park was fun but he was a little disappointed Van Halen didn't show up to play at his party like SNOWBOARDER had promised.

Seymour kid Roberta Rodger had an impressive quarterpipe routine and rode just as strong through the rest of the park. Backside 360 tailgrab and not a scratch on the helmet.

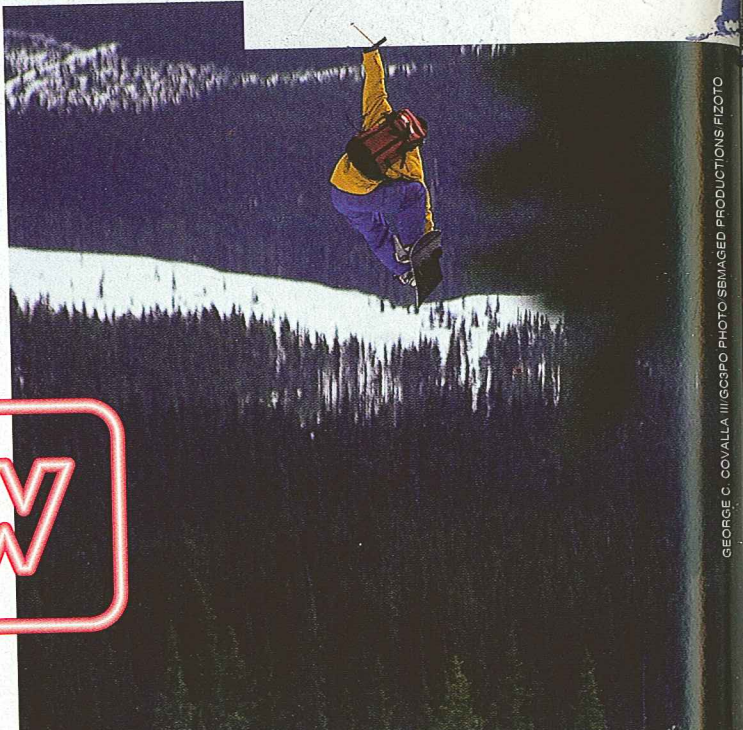




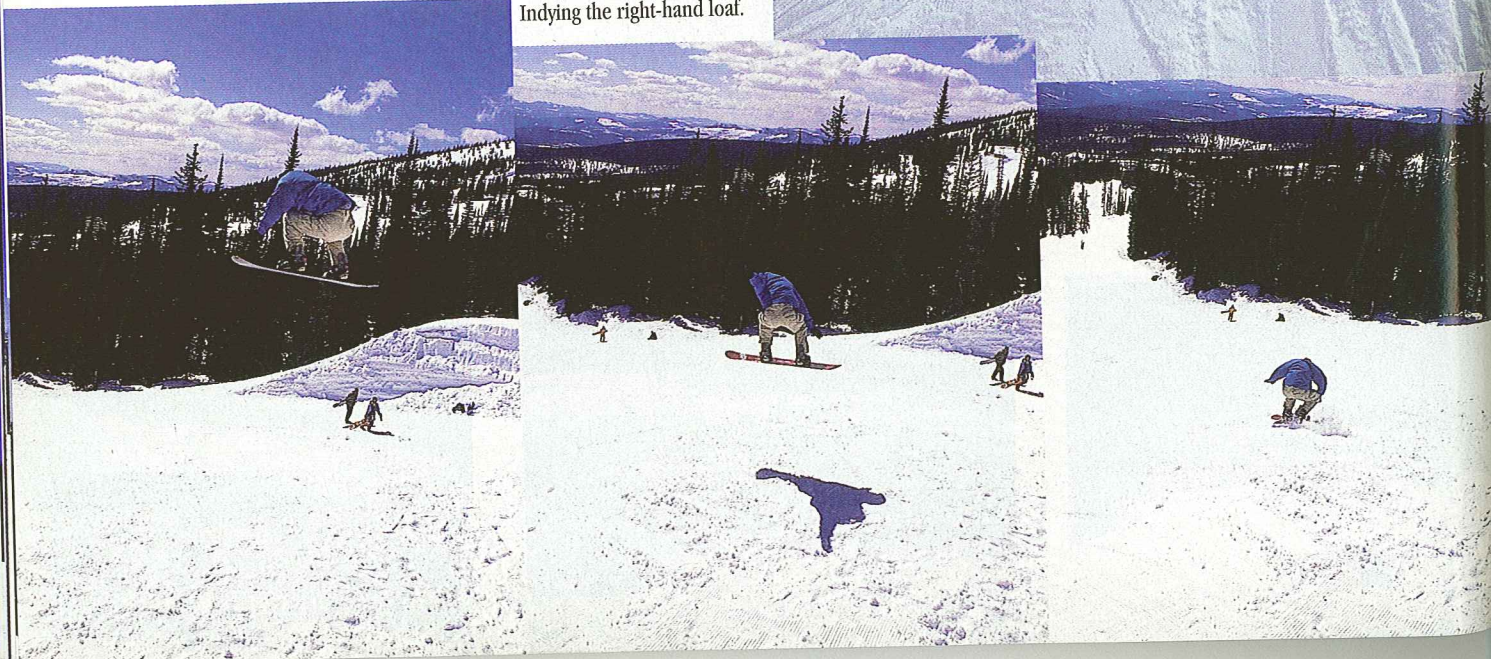
When it's dark and the jump is on fire, Tom tends to just do clean straight airs. But if there's plenty of light and no chance of being burned, he may unmask a beautiful b/s 360 stalefish.



MINI-VIEW



This is Tom again, having smartly changed outfits to freshen his look before Indyng the right-hand loaf.





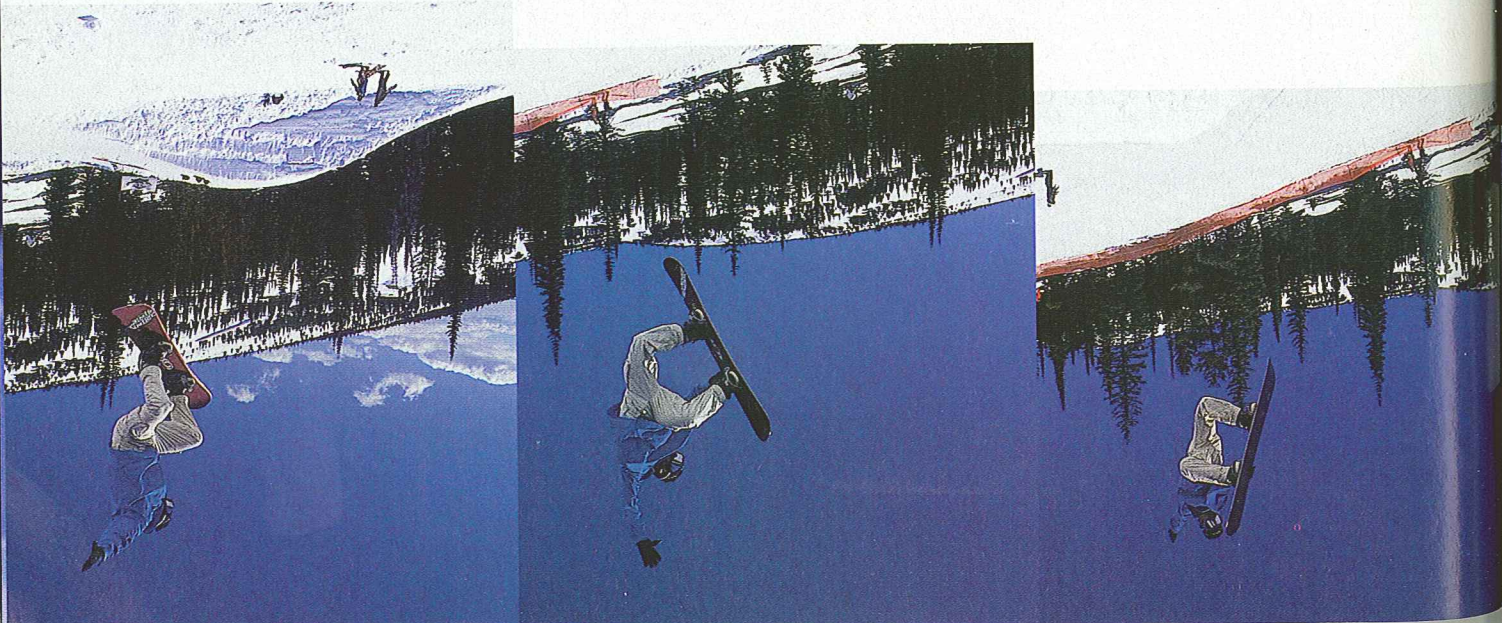
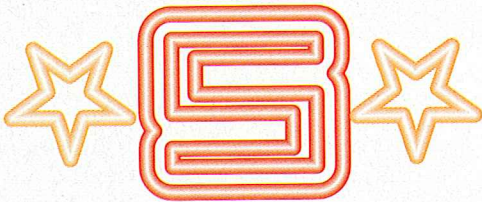
While some of the transitions were still being raked and riders sized up his for the first time, Tom Gilles opened the park for business with a huge backflip over the table-top—followed by what had to be one of the biggest and smoothest b/s 180s of the year. "Those three jumps were the biggest I ever hit in a row. Every air you were pushing it, trying to hold on, hopping you'd make the landing. If you did you were going so fast into the next hit. It was like a motocross." Tom continued to produce all week with the size and consistency that made him one of the most talked-about riders of last season.

The Midwestern transplant keeps headquartering in Lake Tahoe, Calif., now, where he can frequent Squaw Valley or the well-known backcountry. Gilles often thought about leaving Wisconsin for health reasons. "I did a lot of halfpipe contests and rode kickers in the Midwest. Then I got scared about the abuse my body was taking from icy, flat landings. I wanted to go where there was powder." After his friend Ryan Williams moved to Tahoe and told him about all the steep powder, Tom began packing.

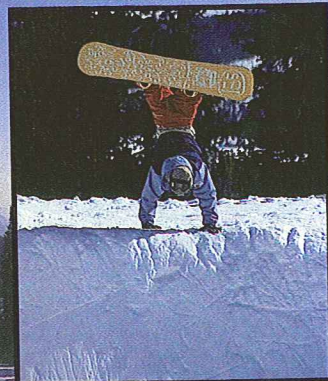
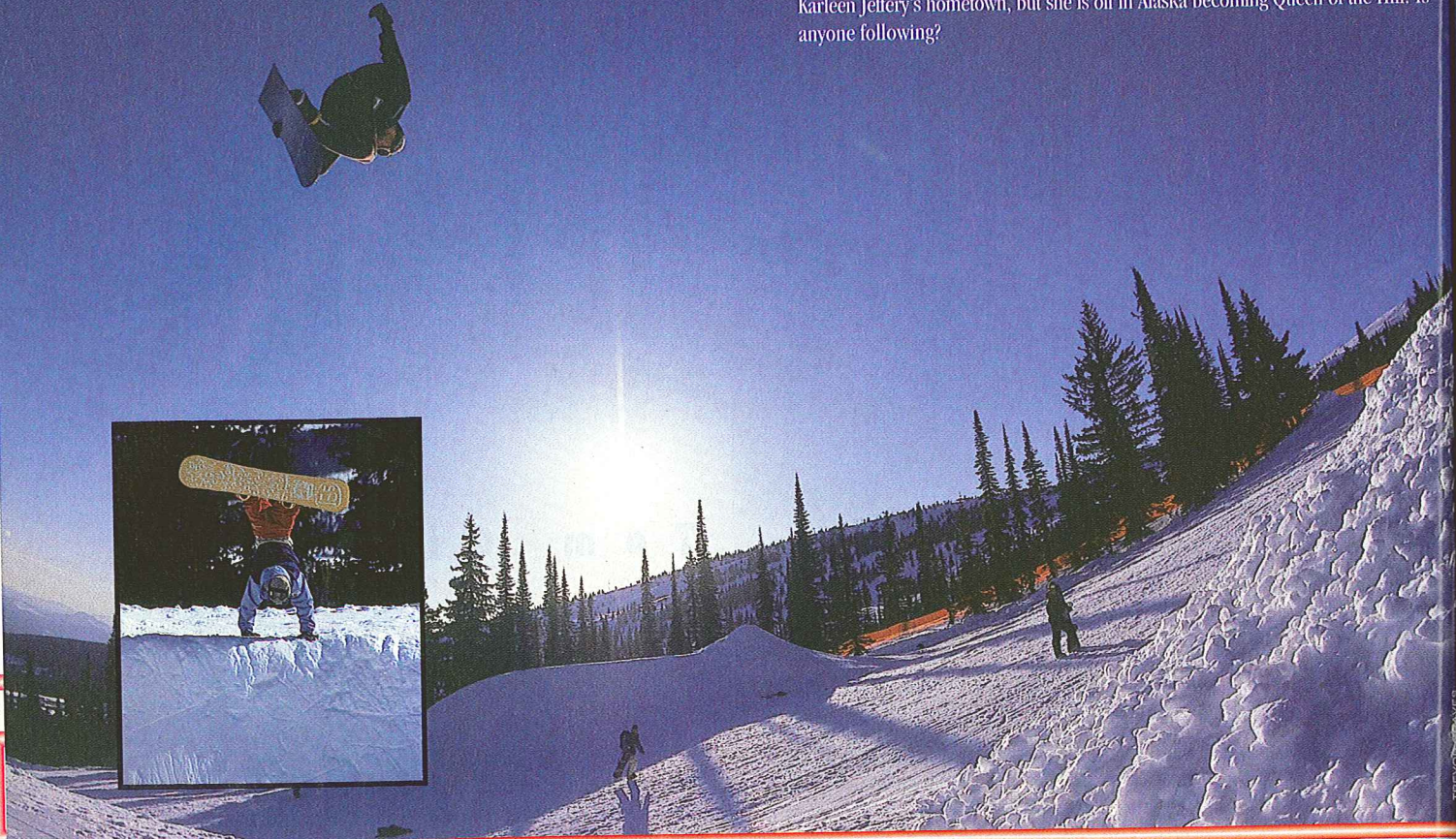
Gilles and Williams came up through the Midwest pipe series together on the heels of greats like Roan Rogers, Nate Cole, Dale Reiberg and Jake Blainner. They had given each other the universal head-bob "What-up" at plenty of contests before actually being introduced. "I used to look up to Ryan; he was the Burton boy and I was just a little groom." Now the Burton boy and groom ride together often and are both looked up to by kids from their home state and in other parts of the country.

Mostly a mellow-mannered guy with a few hip-pie-like tendencies and good sense of humor, Tom's aggressive side shows in his confident riding—not afraid to go first or lead the charge over a flaming 60-foot gap after dark. In spite of his success, there's still a bit of groom inside Gilles. He welcomed the chance to trade hits with so many other talented riders. "J.P. Walker and B.J. Leines really impressed me. And Kris Ehlhoff. He was laying it down like he wanted it." It's not likely Tom will be returning to the Midwest to relieve the old days this winter, however. He shares the optimism of most Tahoe residents that this is the year. "It's going to be so good, that the magazine's going to relocate here. You'll have to change the name from SNOWBOARDER to TAHOE SNOWBOARDER."

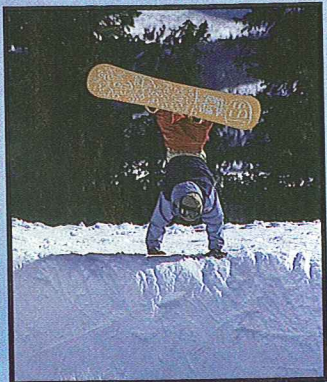
Tom Gilles
 Age: 22
 Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 Currently resides: Lake Tahoe, California
 Stance: regular



Frenchman Thomas Ligonnet is doing a Tai Pan in Kelowna, which is his girlfriend Karleen Jeffery's hometown, but she is off in Alaska becoming Queen of the Hill. Is anyone following?

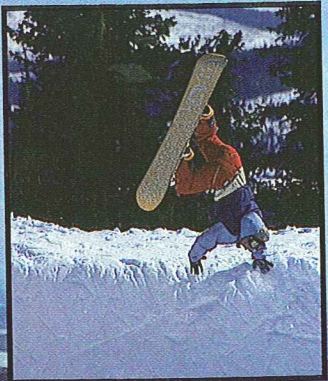


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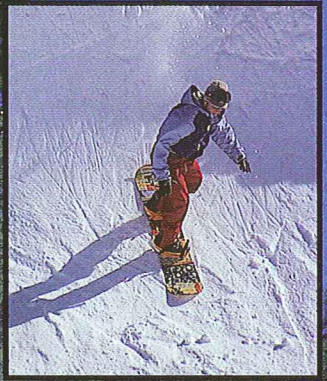
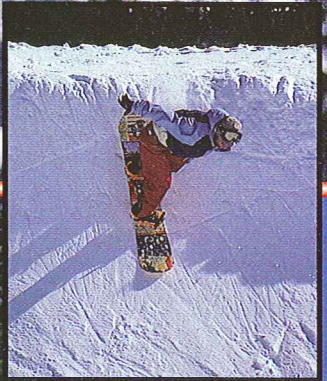
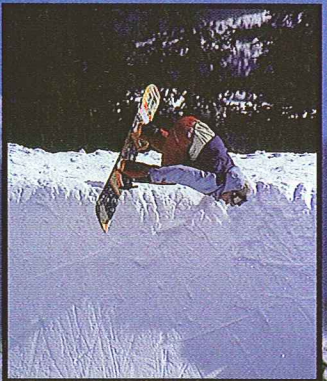


Blair Rusin's approach to the park was definitely the most unique: multiple-pump methods and double grabs. Unfortunately, Blair was another rider who would face some bad luck in months to come. First a four-inch, V-shaped gash from his surfboard fin led to a first-class life flight. Then a botched pipe re-entry at Mt. Hood resulted in a broken leg.

Ali Goulet, ho-ho madness.



CHRIS BRUNDA/STAFF PHOTO; DANO PERDUE/STAFF PHOTO



If something seemed strangely familiar about the park to Hillary Maybery, it may have been all those years of cutting her edges on Mike Parillo's creations at Big Bear. Deja vu stalefish.



Risto Scott keeps the underground barehanded movement alive.

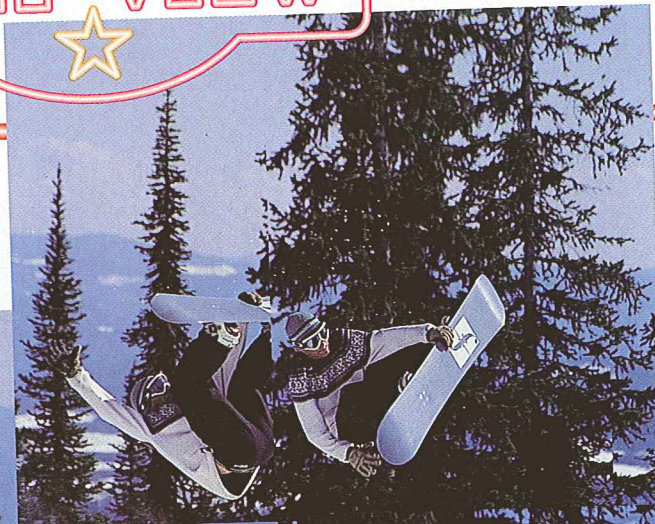
LOCALHERO

A kid with no shortage of personality, Brad Baxter was another local rider who seemed to come from nowhere. He arrived at Superpark just after a big second place finish at the Westbeach big air contest. Brad left Kelowna for Whistler after graduating from high school in 1995, but returned to his old stomping grounds to confirm the rumor that he is one of the strongest young park riders in Canada today. Switch 720. 10 feet high x 25 feet wide x 61 1/2 feet long.

SEQUENCE: TREVOR GRAVES



MINI-VIEW



J.P. Walker

Age: 20

Hometown: Farmington, Utah

Currently resides: Salt Lake City, Utah

Stance: regular



SEQUENCE: GEORGE C. COVALLA III

McTwist.

J.P. Walker proves that just because a guy lives in Utah, doesn't drink, and blows minds in the backcountry, doesn't mean he's a Mormon. But his seemingly clean lifestyle has a secret, dark lust that the good citizens of Salt Lake City are constantly on guard against—skateboarding. "It's illegal to skate in the city and there aren't any parks, so we just skate around, getting chased from one place to the next." When not on the run, J.P. is usually in the surrounding mountains, riding one of the most talked about backcountries in snowboarding. He grew up on the lifts of Brighton and Powder Mountain, learning to wrestle steep terrain and some of the world's driest powder while still developing a solid freestyle ethic.

A product of his environment, J.P. openly displayed his talents in Kelowna. He was comfortable

anywhere in the park, laying down the first inverted airs on the quarterpipe and trading heavy hits at the tabletop with teammate B.J. Leines. J.P.'s riding is well appreciated among his fellow professionals and anyone else who enjoys watching someone make pushing it so hard look so easy. He attacks the terrain with precision, methodically demonstrating his capabilities, which include multiple-rotation rodeos and switch tricks a la carte.

J.P. was discovered among the Utah secret stash of riders like Jeremy Jones, Mitch Nelson and Tim Ostler. He has maintained a backcountry bias, but has still made an impact on what few contests he's entered. "I haven't done many contests, but I won the big air in Japan." Walker's focus has been mostly freeriding and filming. His full act can be seen in the new release *Simple Pleasures*, which includes, along with some insanely solid footage, J.P. getting stuck a long way up while sliding out along an abandoned chairlift cable. "We kind of thought I wouldn't make it because the cable was bowed in the middle, so I had a rope attached so they could pull me the rest of the way across. If I had fallen from there I would have gotten hurt." Expect plenty of J.P.'s highlights in movies and magazines this year; his winter was filled with them.