

SHAUN PALMER

As the “heart and soul” of snowboarding in its infancy, the multi-talented Shaun Palmer was a halfpipe and boardercross world champion and a legendary rebel.



Bo Jackson was one dimensional compared to Shaun Palmer.

Touted as the “World’s Greatest Athlete” by USA Today in 1998 and named the ESPY’s Athlete of the Year in 2001, Palmer first and foremost revolutionized snowboarding in its early years.

Amid all of Palmer’s action-sports achievements—on boards, skis, mountain bikes, motorcycles, and even ski bikes and race cars—it’s important not to overlook the bonfire he lit under snowboarding and the inspiration he provided for tens of thousands of kids to follow. Tom Hsieh, the editor of the world’s first snowboarding magazine, *Absolutely Radical*, summed it up like this in a 2008 interview with *Whitelines Snowboarding*: “Shaun Palmer, alone, embodied the heart and soul of snowboarding.”

Growing up in Lake Tahoe with his single-parent mom and grandmother, Palmer built his own board at age 12 and taught himself the sport. By age 15, he had dropped out of school to pursue a professional career, and in 1986 he casually showed up in a Santa Claus outfit to win the famed Mt. Baker Banked Slalom, which he also won the next year. In 1988, to protest what he judged to be inferior conditions, he rode down the center of the World Championship halfpipe with his middle finger extended to the sky. Two years later, he beat the legendary pipe

SKI CALIFORNIA CONGRATULATES THE ENTIRE CLASS OF 2017 ON THE TREMENDOUS HONOR OF BECOMING U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD HALL OF FAMERS.



We are especially proud of four of the eight honorees, Herman Goller, Shaun Palmer, Thom Weisel, and the late Steve McKinney, who hail from our represented states of California and Nevada. We look forward to honoring each of you on April 14, 2018!



...rider of the day, Craig Kelly, to win the Swatch World Halfpipe Championship.

Heavily tattooed and outrageously entertaining in his behavior, Palmer made it clear that snowboarding was a lifestyle first, and no one could match his unique combination of natural athletic ability, game-day performance and showmanship. Arriving at events in one of his tricked-out, big-finned vintage Cadillac sedans, sporting plaid snowboard pants and a clown hairdo, Palmer would don a shiny, sequined outfit (usually sewn by his mom) to accept the winner's trophy on the podium. He was the lead singer of a punk band called Fungus in the 1990s, and with PlayStation launched an extremely successful video game, Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder. As the third snowboarder to earn his own pro model board, he would sign numerous lucrative sponsorship deals in snowboarding, mountain biking and motocross during his career.

In 1995, Palmer founded Palmer Snowboards and became its CEO (the company would later manufacture skis), and his dominance of the new snowboard cross discipline would help establish the brand's reputation. He would go on to win three boardercross Winter X Games gold medals from 1997 to 1999. In another head-turning display of his versatility, Palmer switched over to skiercross the next season to win X Games gold, then in 2001 pocketed gold in ultracross, which combined skiing and boarding. He was the poster boy and go-to guy for ESPN in the network's promotion of the Winter X Games, and a heavy influence on the nascent freeskiing movement that was playing catch up at the time.

Palmer's hard-partying lifestyle caught up with him in 2005, when he was hospitalized for a near-fatal drug and alcohol overdose. He quickly mounted a comeback and became a valued member and elder statesman with the U.S. Snowboard Team. After qualifying for the 2006 Olympic Boardercross event, where he had

a legitimate shot at a gold medal, he was sidelined by a torn achilles tendon. And at age 41, Palmer was narrowly bumped by another rider from the U.S. squad for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

Palmer's accomplishments beyond snowboarding are difficult to fathom; he seemed able to pick up any sport and immediately compete at a world-class level, though there was usually diligent work behind the scenes. He was a silver medalist in downhill in the 1996 World Mountain Biking Championships, and the Winter X Games gold medalist in Snow Mountain Bike Racing in 1997. In 2000, he won the sedan division of the Pikes Peak Hill climb auto race, and two years later he began his professional motocross career, qualifying for the tour in his first 125cc Supercross main event, an almost unheard of achievement.

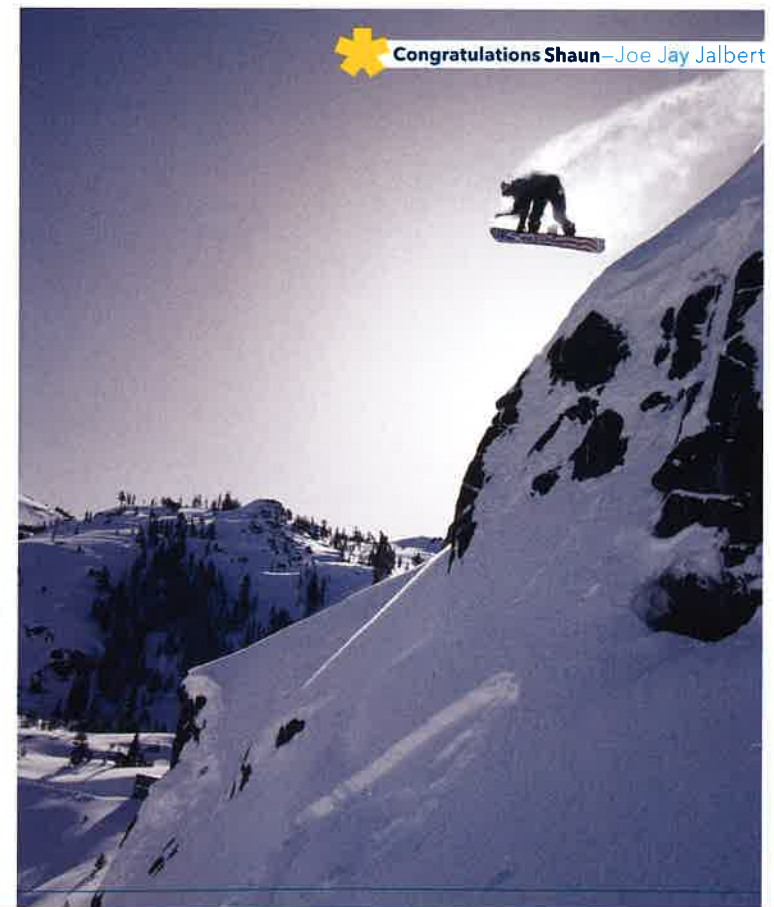
In 2012, freeskiing pioneer Brad Holmes produced a documentary on his longtime friend Palmer, calling it *The Miserable Champion*. One tribute from the film, which would win best biography at the 2012 X-Dance Action Sports Film Festival, stands out above the rest:

"Nobody could keep up with him."

Career Accomplishments



- 1986-87:** Winner of Mt. Baker Banked Slalom
- 1990:** Swatch World Halfpipe Champion
- 1995:** Launches Palmer Snowboards
- 1997:** Gold medal in Winter X Games Boardercross
- 1998:** Gold medal in Winter X Games Boardercross
- 1999:** Gold medal in Winter X Games Boardercross
- 2000:** Gold medal in Winter X Games Skiercross
- 2001:** Gold medal in Winter X Games Ultracross
- 2001:** Named ESPY Awards Action Sports Athlete of the World
- 2002:** Gold medal in Gravity Games Skiercross
- 2006:** Silver medal in FIS World Cup Boardercross
- 2006:** Qualifies for U.S. Olympic Snowboarding Team, but is unable to compete due to injury.
- 2008:** Silver medal in FIS World Cup Boardercross
- Birth:** Nov. 14, 1968 (South Lake Tahoe, Calif.)



photos:
budfawcett.com