

Seth Wescott

Sugarloaf snowboarder won two Olympic SBX golds, revitalized historic snowboard company, stuck to his roots, made fellow Mainers proud.

As a pro's pro, both on and off the mountain, Seth Wescott won the first Olympic snowboard cross (SBX) gold medal at Torino in 2006, then did it again in Vancouver four years later. In a career that mirrored the rise of snowboarding and climaxed with his image on a Wheaties box, Wescott always spoke his mind, stayed true to his boyhood roots in Sugarloaf, Me., supported numerous community non-profits, and then rekindled the company that had manufactured one of the sport's first snowboards in a quest that continues today.

Wescott was born in Durham, N.C., on June 28, 1976, but the family soon moved to Farmington, Me. His father coached the track and cross-country programs at Colby College, and his mother was a professor at the University of Maine-Farmington. He skied and raced regularly as a kid at the local ski area, Saddleback, and in the sixth grade he spotted a snowboarder on the slopes. With proceeds from a paper route, Wescott became one of the earliest converters to snowboarding; three years later, he was sponsored by Burton.

This new sport and fledgling business, and the competition infrastructure that would help support it, were evolving along with Wescott's skills. After spending time at Western Colorado University in Gunnison, which provided him a master's in the big mountain-big snow riding of the West, Wescott returned to Sugarloaf and as a post-graduate attended the acclaimed Carrabassett Valley Academy (other alums include fellow 2020 inductee Kristean Porter, plus Bode Miller, Jeff Greenwood and Kristen Clark). Wescott was a world-class halfpipe athlete and competed internationally in that event until 2003, but eventually went all-in on snowboard cross, which uses a dual-elimination, GS-type format with bumps, banks, jumps and rolls. To win requires eliminating the competition head-to-head in a half-dozen-plus 60-to-90 second runs on a grueling course that tests consistency, stamina, strength, and reflexes.

It was the perfect discipline for the technically superb Westcott, who had the additional quality of peaking for big events. He tallied 10 medals in snowboarding's

“majors”—the Winter X-Games, World Championships, and Olympics. Three of those medals were gold, and two of those came in the Olympics, the premier event of all. In contrast, in the season-long World Cup, his best result was a runner-up finish in 2008-09.

When he won Olympic gold in 2006, he stood in the finish line waving the World War II service flag of his grandfather. He was the first Maine resident to win an Olympic gold, particularly resonant because his mom was a seventh-generation Mainer. Even back then, he stuck to his personal values, making his own decisions on whether he would visit the White House along with fellow Olympians in 2006 and 2010. In 2014, he denounced Russia’s anti-gay laws in the leadup to the 2014 Sochi Games.

Wescott would also return to Sugarloaf, where he co-founded and owned a popular bar on the access road to Sugarloaf, called The Rack, the site of numerous coming-home celebrations over his career. “When you grow up in a small town and have an honest sense of community, success doesn’t change you,” Wescott said at his 2010 celebration. “In Maine, people are so true to who they are as individuals, and I can be myself.” Wescott served on numerous community non-profit boards, worked with L.L. Bean on a lifestyle and active-wear line, and became an ambassador for Sugarloaf. Rather than a salary, the company built him a 2,400-square-foot-home, and he pitched in with the construction.

“I know that athletically I made the right decision (in returning home from the West to jumpstart his competitive career at CVA),” Wescott told *The Maine Magazine* in 2017. “However, the Maine businesses I have partnered with and the relationships that I have formed have truly been the most rewarding part of coming home.” On the eve of the Sochi 2014 Games, after having held the Olympic gold for the past eight years, Wescott reflected on his career. “Snowboarding has given me everything I have in my life and I am so truly thankful for my friends and the journeys and all the memories. Thank you all for everything you have given me back...It’s been a great privilege,” he told Boston.com.

When he was in Colorado, Wescott began a relationship with legendary Winterstick snowboards. The board and its unique Swallowtail design were the inventions of Dimitrije Milovich, an engineer who wanted to surf on snow. The Salt Lake City-based Milovich secured the industry’s first snowboard patent in 1974. The boards are now manufactured at Sugarloaf’s base by Bigelow Mountain Partners, co-owned by Wescott with two partners from his CVA days. The brand is billed as the “longest continually operating snowboard

company.” The Seth Wescott Pro Model won *Backcountry Magazine’s* Editor’s Choice Award in 2016.

*The pull off the West finally got to Wescott, and he now lives in Whistler, B.C., with his wife Kitt, a Maine native (?), and his children (add detail). Why did they move? Does he have a farm? Any detail here would help.*

Meanwhile, Wescott hasn’t lost his touch on snow. In 2019 and 2020, he won the pro class of the Mt. Baker Legendary Banked Slalom, the second oldest snowboard event.

Born: Durham, N.C. (June 28, 1976)

1987: Begins snowboarding at age 10.

1990: Earns sponsorship with Burton.

2003: Wins silver in the World Championships snowboard cross.

2004: Takes silver in Winter X-Games.

2005: Wins gold in World Championships.

2006: Earns first Olympic snowboard cross gold in Torino.

2007: Takes silver in World Championships, bronze in Winter X-Games, and is runner-up in Mt. Baker Legendary Banked Slalom Pro Class.

2010: Wins second gold in Vancouver Olympics, then silver in Winter X-Games and World Championships.

2019-20: Wins two consecutive Mt. Baker Legendary Banked Slalom Pro Class titles.