

## **SHANNON DUNN-DOWNING** (Steamboat Springs, Colo.)

A dominant force in snowboard competition, Shannon Dunn-Downing won an International Snowboard Federation World Championship title, back-to-back U.S. Open crowns and gold at the first X-Games. She was the first American to win an Olympic snowboard medal in the 1998 debut in Nagano. A pioneer in her sport, she developed women's pro snowboards with Sims and Burton. Partnering with fellow Hall of Famer Tina Basich, she helped start Boarding for Breast Cancer.

She grew up around sport in the suburbs of Chicago, learning to ski when she was three. She had early Olympic dreams, but more as a talented gymnast and figure skater. But a family move to Steamboat Springs, Colo. when she was nine changed her trajectory. In 1988, the first winter the Steamboat resort allowed snowboarding, her brother Sean taught her the emerging new sport.

The very next day, she bought a snowboard and never skied again.

Inspired by her brother, she entered her first halfpipe contest that first season. It became a new love for her, quickly pushing her progression. In 1990, at the age of just 17, she scored her first podium in a pro event.

She started college at Colorado University in Boulder, taking spring semester off to ride. But as her pro snowboarding progressed, she made a decision to make that her career. It was a good call!

Between 1992-94, Dunn dominated halfpipe snowboarding. And she did it not just to collect her own trophies, but to make a statement about creating a market niche for women. She partnered with her friend and fellow athlete, Tina Basich, who was like-minded. Together, they would go on to make a dramatic impact on the future of the sport and the value of women.

Her first pro model, the S. Dunn Sunflower Board, was released in 1994 by Sims, the same year Basich had a pro model with Sims. Dunn did the initial graphics, but the company designed an alternative. She stood her ground, with the help of marketing director Gaylene Nagel, and her pro board went on to record sales – even outpacing men's pro boards at the time. It was Sims' number one selling board that year.

In 1995, she switched to Burton snowboards where her new Dolphin 144 pro model again reached record heights in sales. The move put her into the design phase of other women's products, including her working with Velvet Eyewear to help create the first goggle for women designed by a woman. Burton is re-releasing her original Dolphin pro model in May 2023.

As an athlete, she was a pacesetter during the formative growth of competitive snowboarding worldwide. She won back-to-back U.S. Open halfpipe titles and was the 1993 ISF world halfpipe champion. In 1997, she became the first X Games female gold medalist in halfpipe.

She was a headline athlete going into snowboarding's 1998 Olympic debut in Nagano. In the halfpipe at Shigakogen, she made history as the first American, male or female, to win an Olympic medal – taking bronze. She came back four years later to take fifth at the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City.

She was a true leader of progression in the halfpipe, from pioneering back to back 540's, a Mctwist, to an inverted frontside 720.

Together with Basich, Dunn designed and helped market the all female outwear brand, Prom. Their work resulted in the fit, function, and women's-specific style to influence an entire generation of women to start snowboarding. She was also a co-founder of Boarding for Breast Cancer.

Looking back today, Dunn-Downing is still amazed that a sport that resembled art and a means of expression could have grown to become so popular. She credits her longtime friendship with Basich as a key part of her ability to navigate her career through such an exciting time for snowboarding.

Following the 1998 Olympics, she was named Colorado Sportsperson of the Year, and earned induction into the Colorado Snowsports Hall of Fame in 2016.

Married in 1999, she had two boys a few years later, passing on her love of snowboarding and the outdoors.