

**KENT KREITLER** (Sun Valley, Ida.)

A pioneer in the progression of his sport, Kent Kreitler was known as one of the most influential athletes through the formative days of freeskiing in the late '90s and early '00s. He was both a successful competitor and a big mountain filmer, with over 100 first descents to his credit. Kreitler's career mirrored freeskiing's trajectory starting with photoshoots and early extreme contests that later landed him roles filming, where he starred in countless TGR, Matchstick Productions and Warren Miller.

The freeski pioneer grew up on the flatlands of Kansas City, Mo. But a family move to Sun Valley when he was 10 helped forge his passion for skiing. Coached in alpine by the legendary Lane Monroe, he discovered his passion for big mountains when to the Colorado University in Boulder. Due in large part to Kreitler, Boulder became the epicenter for the freeski movement, rooming with the legendary Shane McConkey and Freeze Magazine founder Michael Jaquet. The trio spent more time on the progression of freeski than studies, with Kreitler and McConkey hitting the road to find powder and steep pitches.

His timing was perfect as he won the 1993 U.S. Extreme Skiing Championships at Crested Butte, Colo., a seminal event with then rare television coverage that launched freeskiing into prominence. Kreitler became its first big star, moving to Tahoe and launching his career on the action screen.

After a series of films with Nick Nixon Productions, he landed in the 1994 Warren Miller movie, *Vertical Reality*. He then connected with Teton Gravity Research (TGR) for its legendary film *The Continuum* in 1996. He was also a rare athlete who crossed over on film companies, also starring in Matchstick Productions' features *Fetish* (1996) and *Pura Vida* (1997). In TGR's 1997 film *Harvest*, he pioneered the huge sweeping, high-speed turns down radically exposed Alaskan snow faces – many which had never been skied.

In the early days of freeskiing, Kreitler stood out as a pioneer of what were really two separate disciplines with both modern, aggressive big mountain as well as park skiing styles. He was the first skier to appear in a magazine shot grabbing his skis in a terrain park.

Kreitler is recognized as the first skier utilizing stylist grabs, and the first to land off-axis 360s and 720s, now a mainstay in all contemporary freestyle and park skiing, including the Olympics. He also pioneered big mountain skiing zones around Valdez and Cordova in Alaska and was part of a TGR group that pioneered numerous first descents (and named them) – particularly in the famed Haines, Alaska region. Kreitler holds claim to over 100 first descents throughout the world, including the rarely skied infamous tram face at Palisades Tahoe, Calif., now known as The KK Line, which he pioneered in 1998.

During the mid-90s, he was single handedly writing the story for his new sport, crossing genres from park to mountain, adding corks to flips and captivating film audiences in resort towns as skiers waited breathlessly for him to appear on the screen. He was a constant force at big mountain events from Alaska to New Zealand to South America. Kreitler's slow motion line

down shockingly steep Alaskan rock and snow faces gripped every single skier in the audience. Showing his versatility, he even medaled in skicross at the X-Games.

Kreitler's accomplishments brought attention from the ski industry. He had four separate pro-model skis from K2 and Blizzard, a Kreitler clothing line from Spyder and a signature goggle from Zeal Optics after a long career with Smith. He was an early ski design innovator of both twin-tip and wide skis, and had critical influence in creating the K2 Poacher – the first park-riding twin tip in the fat ski revolution. He was featured in over 50 product endorsement advertisements inside and outside skiing.

Amidst all of his accomplishments, what made Kreitler really stand out was that he not only pioneered a completely new genre of skiing, but he did it in a way where skiing appealed to youth. In a time when snowboarding and other interests were grabbing kids, Kreitler's innovative style, progressive skiing and his knowledge of how to market himself and the new sport as a lifestyle was a game changer for the ski industry.

As freeskiing made its debut in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, many traced back its roots to the sport Kreitler pioneered 20 years earlier.

Kreitler was afforded numerous accolades during his career including being named "Freeskiing's Most Influential Figure" by Freeze Magazine in 2002, the journal that helped launch the new sport. In 2006, Powder Magazine recognized him as one of the "48 Skiers Who Shaped Our Sport." He was inducted into the TGR Hall of Fame in 2017.