

Guide to snowboarding competition



By Ron Judd, Seattle Times

Because of its fast-paced action, soaring jumps, and spectacular wipeouts, snowboarding has quickly grown from a stepchild Olympic sport to a true fan favorite.

Snowboarding is contested on slopes with heavy degrees of human shaping. The halfpipe, where freestyle snowboarding takes place, is a carved snow trough, about 110 meters (360 feet) long and 13 to 17 meters (42 to 56 feet) wide, with walls about 3.5 meters (11.5 feet) high. The parallel giant slalom course is much like those used in alpine skiing for a giant slalom: A set of gates set 7 to 15 meters (23 to 50 feet) apart over a vertical drop of 120 to 250 meters (394 to 800 feet) so racers can compete side to side, making turns all the way down the course. Snowboard cross courses are long, undulating trails—just barely wide enough if all four competitors were to run side by side—with a series of whoop-de-do jumps.

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