

# Friendship dominates competition for Tahoe riders

By Jessie Marchesseau

KIRKWOOD – Of the 41 competitors hailing from Lake Tahoe resorts at last weekend's The North Face Masters of Snowboarding competition, 14 claim Kirkwood as their home turf.

"Kirkwood's an incredible mountain, and as you can see, we have some of the world's best riders in Tahoe and Kirkwood, right here," said Rosemarie Daiek, one of the weekend's competitors.

Daiek's brother-in-law, Josh, won the North American Freeskiing Championships at Kirkwood the previous weekend.



Rosemarie Daiek, from left, Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Iris Lazzareschi and Maria DeBari enjoy a moment of celebration on the winner's podium.

Skiers and snowboarders alike, the Kirkwood riders form a fairly tight-knit group. Many of them ride together regularly, they frequently see each other on the slopes, and in a competition like this one, they are all there to cheer each other on.

As Kirkwood rider Adam DeVargas slid past the finish line after his final run on Day 2 of the competition, he was practically mobbed by riders wanting to give him hugs, high-fives and well-deserved pats on the back.

Daiek was one of the first ones waiting to congratulate DeVargas after his run. At more than 6-feet tall, DeVargas is one of the bigger riders at the competition, something he tries to use to his advantage by throwing extra power into his turns. He dwarfed Daiek as she went in for a bear hug.

Daiek, who is 5-feet tall "on a good day," may not look like she could dominate the forbidden, rocky terrain of the Cirque the way DeVargas can, but looks can be deceiving. A three-time winner of the Kirkwood Extremes, she won this competition in 2009 and was the only Kirkwood rider to stand on the podium this year, taking home fourth place.

Daiek and DeVargas started competing in big mountain snowboarding in 1996, making them some of the more experienced riders on the tour. In fact, they have been entering competitions since before fellow competitor and Kirkwood rider Casey Lucas ever picked up a snowboard.

Lucas, 25, has been riding for 12 years and competing off and on for the last six. She said snowboarding with the older, more seasoned riders has taught her to keep her chin up, even if she has a bad day.



Adam Trout  
rides for his  
friend as  
reflected on  
his shirt and  
board.  
Photos/Jessie  
Marchesseau

“They know that every event is a new learning experience for the next contest. So that’s what I learn, is to be humble and appreciate the fact that we’re all out here to have a good time and push each other and progress the sport,” Lucas said. “It’s really great to have people who’ve been doing it for years and years to motivate us youngsters that are coming in and trying to learn from them.”

The experienced riders are equally as pleased with the company of the younger competitors, especially the skill and charisma they bring to the competitions and to the sport in general.

“The talent’s increased immensely,” DeVargas said of today’s up-and-coming riders. “It’s nice to see when you come out here that everyone’s stomping their landings. You have to really be on your game. And to see the talent that’s coming out now inspires me to go bigger and faster and better.”

Daiek agrees that the caliber of riding has increased tremendously over the last 15 years, as has the number of competitors. When she started, she said there would be four or five women entering any given competition. This weekend, there were more than 30.

“Before, you could milk some turns and now you really gotta go for it if you want something,” Daiek said. “You can’t just take Sally-alley anymore. You’re riding with the world’s best, so it’s awesome.”

One of those Kirkwood up-and-comers is Dave Trout. At 32, Trout has been snowboarding for more than 20 years, but he is relatively new to the freeride competition scene. This is his second year on the tour.



Lake Tahoe riders support each other.

Trout, a New Jersey native, moved to Tahoe four years ago with his friend Beau McGrath. The pair talked about entering competitions together, but McGrath was killed in a plane crash in April 2009.

“We always talked about doing it, so I just wanted to show him that I could do it,” Trout said.

He joined the tour the following winter. Trout’s snowboard and T-shirt still bear the name of his fallen friend with the words “Always ridin by your side.”

Trout pulled off the best finish for the Kirkwood men at this year’s event, taking home ninth.

“You can’t stress out, it’s snowboarding,” he said of competing. “There’s nothing to ever be stressed out about. Just go and ride your snowboard and have fun.”

That philosophy seems to run true for all of the Kirkwood riders.

“This is what I live for,” Lucas said of the fun she is having riding on this year’s competition tour.

Lucas finished third at Crystal Mountain in February, her best finish to date, and plans to continue the tour for years to come.

DeVargas, who has been doing it for 15 years said competing has provided him the opportunity to snowboard new terrain and meet new, talented riders who inspire him to do bigger and better things.

“And that’s what life’s all about, right?” Daiek said. “Going bigger and better.”

Though this was the last stop on the 2011 The North Face Masters of Snowboarding tour, Daiek, DeVargas and Lucas are all looking forward to attending the King of the Hill competition in Alaska next month.