

Opinion: Is Squaw Valley cursed?

By Cody Townsend, ESPN Action Sports

In sports and life, mythological curses are sometimes blamed for tragic chains of misfortune. For instance, when an accident in his Porsche Spyder sports car took the life of James Dean in 1955, the car then became entangled in a five-year-long series of tragedies that killed a race car driver, maimed a mechanic and brought mysterious woe to many who encountered it. The vehicle, it was said, had to be cursed.

In the freeskiing world, for the Squaw Valley community that I live in, it feels like we're driving that Porsche right now. For the past couple of years, we seem to be trapped in a vortex of misfortune – we keep losing our own people, one tragic accident at a time.

Randy Davis, a local up-and-coming freestyle skier, was killed at Squaw in an inbounds avalanche on Christmas day in 2008. We lost longtime Squaw legend Shane McConkey to a ski BASE accident in Italy in 2009. Andrew Entin, a much-loved career ski patroller, died while conducting avalanche control at Squaw in 2009. Then CR Johnson perished in an inbounds crash at Squaw Valley in 2010. Squaw's Arne Backstrom passed away in a ski mountaineering fall in Peru in 2010. And then, a couple of weeks ago, locals Kip Garre and Allison Kreutzen were killed by a backcountry avalanche in the southern Sierra Nevada mountains.

Of course, the greater freeskiing community suffered tragedies during the last few years as well – we lost the lives of pro skiers Billy Poole, Jack Hannan, John Nicolleta, Ryan Hawks, and countless other skiers. But the sheer number of deaths from Squaw seemed to be heart-wrenchingly high. We couldn't

help but think it: Is the Squaw community cursed?

At this point, our tenets of faith – karma, justice, providence – have been torn down. We question everything. How can it be that our heroes, friends and family are being ripped away from the Squaw Valley community so methodically?

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