

X Games medalist returns to slopes after near-fatal accident

By Austin Murphy, Sports Illustrated

No one was sure what to expect—least of all Kevin Pearce himself. But two years after suffering a traumatic brain injury on a halfpipe training run in Park City, Utah, the 24-year-old snowboarder decided he was again ready to take a ride down the mountain.

Until that afternoon in December 2009, Pearce was a medal contender for the '10 Vancouver Olympics. In the aftermath of his accident, in which he hit his head on the edge of a halfpipe, it wasn't clear, however, whether he would again be able to walk or speak, let alone snowboard. "I've had to relearn everything from ground zero," he says. But on Dec. 13 at Breckenridge in Colorado, Pearce—accompanied by several hundred well-wishers—went snowboarding for the first time since his accident. "I was hoping it would be like [riding a bike]," he said the next day. "But I didn't really know how it [would] go."

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