

'Miserable Champion' – the Shaun Palmer story

By Sal Ruibal, Bike

In 1998, I wrote a front-page cover story for *USA Today* that posed the question: "Is this man the world's greatest athlete?" That man was mountain bike-snowboard-motocross-punk rocker Shaun Palmer of South Lake Tahoe, and that story shocked the sports world.

The traditional sports establishment wet their seersucker trousers in anger: USA Track and Field cried that only the current world-record holder in the decathlon could wear that crown. Major League sports fans cried in their Lite Beer because Bo Jackson was a pro football-baseball star. The Earth moved.

Fast-forward to 2012 and the idea that an action sports athlete could be the best in the world isn't shocking, it seems normal. Shaun White, who trains at Northstar in Truckee, lights it up at Winter and Summer X Games while snatching a bunch of Olympic gold medals. He's looking beyond little wheels and half-pipes these days.

Travis Pastrana? If it has wheels and he has bones, give him something to break. One of the scariest rides I've ever been on was in a U-Haul truck with Travis at the wheel.

But neither of those guys were true punk rockers in the heyday of that genre. If the only thing The Palm ever did was scream and shout with Fungus, he would still have a spot in the Crazy MoFo Hall of Fame.

Finally, after many years of frustration and cinematic near death, the Shaun Palmer movie is out there for your viewing pleasure. Brad Holmes' film, "Shaun Palmer: The Miserable

Champion", is a horror show and a Saturday morning Superman cartoon blended with a Sex Pistols live show and a donkey demolition derby. The flick won Best Biography at the 2012 X-Dance Action Sports Film Festival.

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