

X Games drops snowmobile, motocross best tricks

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

ESPN on Tuesday announced it was ending best trick contests for motocross and snowmobile disciplines at the Summer and Winter X Games.

“This change reflects our decision to focus on motor sports disciplines which feature athletes who also compete in multiple, world-class competitions (e.g. professional events and tours) reflecting the highest degree of athlete participation, competitive development and the global nature of our X Games franchise,” read a statement from ESPN.

ESPN, which created and hosts the X Games events, has made more than 60 changes to competition disciplines over the X Games’ 18-year history. The network said Tuesday that dropping motorcycle and snowmobile best trick contests would continue the growth of the games and were designed “to capture the evolution of the sport.”



Snowmobiler Caleb Moore practices during the Winter X Games on Jan. 24 in Aspen. Photo/RJ Sangosti/Denver Post)

The decision comes as ESPN is reviewing its Winter X Games freestyle snowmobile contests following the first X Games death of a snowmobile athlete and four-time X Games medalist Caleb Moore. Moore, 25, of Texas, under-rotated a backflip during the Winter X Games snowmobile freestyle competition at Aspen's Buttermilk ski area on Jan. 24, and snagged the skis of his sled on the landing ramp.

The 450-pound machine struck him as he tumbled down the ramp. After he was helicoptered to Grand Junction's St. Mary Hospital, he developed brain complications following heart surgery to address a cardiac contusion. He died a week after the accident.

The day Moore passed, Scott Guglielmino, ESPN's senior vice president of programming and global X events, said in an interview on the network's "Outside the Lines" show that X organizers would conduct a "thorough review" of all snowmobiling events.

Guglielmino said he would enlist athletes and course designers in an effort "to make sure that we take as much risk as we can out of (freestyle snowmobiling)."

He said he was most concerned with stunts where athletes briefly leave the machine, spinning in the air before mounting the sled and landing. Those body-variation backflips are common during X Games, moto X and snowmobile freestyle contests.

"We are certainly interested in when they become separated from the snowmobile and they go downhill after that – such as Caleb's crash," Guglielmino said during the ESPN show. "We do not want to see snowmobiles landing on athletes, so that is something that is going to be very much the focus of our review in this instance."

ESPN spokesman Danny Chi said the removal of "best trick" contests was under consideration before the Winter X Games in

January in Aspen and the network's review of snowmobile freestyle continues.