

White ready to medal in new Olympic sport

By Scott Stump, Today News

When Shaun White straps on his snowboard for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, there will be less hair tucked under his helmet, and a different obstacle in his path.

The two-time Olympic gold medalist is best known for his aerial acrobatics in the half-pipe competition, but he will also compete in the new snowboard slopestyle event that has been added for the Sochi Olympics.

“What’s fun about the Olympics is that there’s a new discipline,” White, 26, said on Today Tuesday. “Every time you see me in the Olympics, it’s been in the half-pipe, but the new event is called slopestyle. It’s basically a series of jumps in one run and some rail features you slide on, and you make your way down and you basically do as many tricks as you can on those jumps.”

White, who trains at Northstar in Truckee, has dominated the half-pipe event, winning gold in the 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympics and becoming the first man to ever score a perfect 100 in the event at the Winter X Games in 2012. But slopestyle presents a new challenge.

“I’m all right at it,” he said. “I do like to compete in both events, though. It’s fun.”

White’s ability to innovate and master tricks that no one else has tried has kept him at the forefront of the sport.

“I recently was dreaming about snowboarding, and I thought of this new rotation to put on an existing trick that I already have, but it’s random,” he said. “You’re setting out to do

something and by accident you create a new trick.”

White not only has a new discipline to tackle at the Olympics, he also has a new look. The long red hair that earned him the nickname “The Flying Tomato” has been shorn. In December 2012, he had his hair cut off for Locks of Love, a charity that gives wigs to underprivileged children who have lost their hair for medical reasons.

“It was a tough call, but it was a good cause,” White said. “It was 12 to 13 inches long, a lot of weight. I can go higher (on the half-pipe) now.”

While White has been involved in various charities and even had his band, Bad Things, signed by Warner Bros. Records last month, his attention is now completely on getting ready for Sochi.

“I’m really excited, it’s just one of those things where everything around my life right now is focused on the Olympics,” he said. “It’s a really good feeling that it’s coming up, and I think I’m prepared.”

He is the heavy favorite to make it three straight gold medals in the half-pipe competition.

“It’s something to strive for to live up to,” he said. “I like the pressure.”