

Is snowboarding dying?

By Joe Lindsey, Men's Journal

When sporting goods giant Nike quietly announced it was dropping snowboarding, it seemed like yet more confirmation of the sport's downward trend that got so much press last year. After all, participation peaked a decade ago, and has declined 31 percent since, according to figures from the National Sporting Goods Association.

So is snowboarding, credited with reviving snowsports in the 20th century, cooked for the 21st?

Industry sources understandably claim the concerns are overblown. Snowboard icon Jake Burton spoke to that feeling last month in an interview with action-sports industry website Shop-Eat-Surf, saying, "A lot of haters jumped on it as an opportunity to take a shot at snowboarding and I think a lot of it was really misguided."

Pro boarder Jeremy Jones of Truckee agrees, but also admits boarders have to face the numbers. "There's no denying that there are fewer boarders out there than there used to be; that's the reality of the sport," says Jones, who is also founder of Jones Snowboards. The question then is what's driving the decline and whether it will continue.

Snowboarding faces several obstacles. It's almost impossible to learn the sport without falling a bunch, which isn't true of skiing. And for various reasons – including equipment availability and basic physical development skills like balance – most resorts' lesson programs start as young as three years old for skiing but only five or older for snowboarding.

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