

# Olympic champ embraces being free spirit



Jamie Anderson hopes to be back competing this month after breaking her clavicle. Photo/Provided

**By Jessie Marchesseau**

Olympic snowboard gold medalist Jamie Anderson started the season with a clavicle broken in five places, her first surgery, one plate and eight screws.

Her collarbone now on the mend, Anderson is anxiously awaiting approval from her doctors to get back on the snow. When she does return to competition, she will be doing so without the U.S. Snowboard Team.

Anderson joined the team in 2014 when she was heading to the Olympics. However, she has otherwise opted to go it on her own when it comes to training and competing on the snowboard circuit.

“For me, snowboarding is just about fun! It’s not so much

about the ‘serious training’ or team stuff,” Anderson said, “it’s just about being on the mountain with your friends and having fun doing whatever you want.”



Jamie Anderson’s record proves doing her own thing is working. Photo/Provided

John Rice, general manager of Sierra-at-Tahoe the resort that sponsors Anderson, doesn’t see her decision to not be part of the team as having negative impacts on her riding or her sponsorship from Sierra.

“Everyone knows she’s the best female snowboarder in the world, so it’s not an issue at all,” he told *Lake Tahoe News*.

For athletes still working their way to the top, Rice said he believes being a member of the U.S. Team can offer big training advantages. But for Anderson, the advantages would be more for her teammates than for her.

“She’s a free spirit,” he said. “When she needs to be part of the team, she signs up and she’s a good member.”



Growing up in Meyers, Jamie Anderson is all about embracing the outdoors at Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Anderson is not the only pro snowboarder who has opted out of being on the team. Shaun White was rarely a member. Sage Kotsenburg who also won a gold medal in Sochi has chosen not

to join this year. Two-time Olympian Elena Hight took a break from the team last year, but is back again this season.

Tricia Byrnes, snowboarding press officer for the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association and a former professional snowboarder, said it's not uncommon for snowboarders to go on and off the team or only join up around the Olympics.

Snowboarding is different than ski racing, she said. Snowboarders don't necessarily want or need the structured training or team mentality that being part of the U.S. Ski Team brings. A lot of snowboard athletes want to do their own thing and work with their own coaches. Plus, many of them are juggling filming, photo shoots and other obligations which don't really allow them to have structured schedules or make all of the competitions required of team members.

But just because Anderson isn't officially on the team doesn't mean she can't take advantage of some of the benefits like coaches or training. Byrnes said anytime Anderson wants advice from a coach or trainer, all she has to do is ask. And if she wanted to join up mid-season, that option is there for her, too.

But for now, being on her own is working out just fine for Anderson. She follows her own off-the hill training regimen which includes a lot of yoga, acupuncture, working out with a personal trainer, and, recently, spending time in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber to speed her healing.



Repairing the broken clavicle was Jamie Anderson's first surgery. Photo/Provided

"She can survive and thrive on her own program; not everyone can do that," Byrnes told *Lake Tahoe News*. "She's a total free spirit, and she knows what's going to motivate her and rally her better than anyone."

If you're counting, that makes two people who called Anderson a free spirit so far, and Anderson herself makes three. She says being a "free spirit" and wanting to do her own thing is part of the reason she chose not to join the team.

"It's a creative expression," she told *Lake Tahoe News* of snowboarding, "and I just like to go with my own flow."

Anderson missed out on the Dew Tour due to her injury, but she's ready to get back on her board and is hoping to get the OK from her doctors before the LAAX Open in Switzerland Jan. 18. U.S. Snowboard Team or not, fans can expect to see plenty more of Jamie Anderson flying through the air with her snowboard this season.