

Anderson plows her own path to Olympic gold

Publisher's note: *This is one of a series of stories about Lake Tahoe area athletes who hope to compete in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea.*

By Kathryn Reed

PARK CITY, Utah – Age is not spoiling the free spirit known as Jamie Anderson. She still marches to her own drummer. She is just as unconventional on the snow as she is off.

While her laid back, crystal loving, essential oil using, holistic lifestyle may be more apropos in someplace like Santa Cruz, she is 100 percent homegrown Lake Tahoe.

At 27 she is a veteran in the world of snowboarding competition, having been the youngest woman to win an X Games gold in 2007.



Jamie Anderson knows the competition will be stiffer at the 2018 Olympics. Photo/Kathryn Reed

She acknowledges there is another generation eager to dethrone her. They are practicing tricks on dry ground, something she scoffs at. Anderson is old school. The sport is supposed to be all about the snow and being one with it.

Cheating is what those air bags used to be considered. Now they are mainstream.

“It takes away from the fear factor,” Anderson said. “It’s changing the sport; it’s progressing faster.”

An air bag has been set up at the Olympic training facility in Park City. The idea is to try tricks with a controlled landing – an inflated contraption that takes the pain out of falling. Anderson tried it a couple times last summer but has not been won over by it. She remembers going to the mountain and building jumps or finding natural ones. That’s how she still likes to ride, even when she’s at her home resort at Sierra-at-Tahoe.

Anderson tries to get back to Tahoe when she can, but it’s hard with her travel-competition schedule. She’ll be in town this month specifically to work out with her trainer Eufay Wood who owns the Stateline gym Club 100.

“He knows that I don’t like a lot of intense work,” Anderson said smiling. Maybe so, but Wood’s reputation is all about being intense and getting his clients in incredible shape. “I’ve been so bad at training this year,” she admitted.

Anderson intends to be in PyeongChang, South Korea, in February to defend her slopestyle gold medal.

“Qualifying will be the hardest process,” Anderson said. She acknowledged once she gets to South Korea, half of her teammates won’t be there. There are a series of qualifying competitions, with one having taken place last season, which she won.

Anderson was in Park City in September for the Team USA media summit along with more than 100 other athletes hoping to compete in February's Winter Olympics.

She admits there are more responsibilities with her elevated stature in the snowboarding world. Sponsors take time, her charity takes times, it's no longer just about snowboarding. But the young competition, well, she knows their No. 1 focus is the sport.

Anderson acknowledged she's not sure if her gold medal run in 2014 would be good enough to get her into the finals in South Korea. Things have changed that much.

But she has a leg up on some of her competition by having already visited South Korea in a test run last season.

"South Korea is like nowhere else I've been to," Anderson said. The food, the culture, the people, the hot springs – she loved it all. The mountains reminded her of the East Coast of the United States.

For the first time in a Winter Olympics there will be a big air competition, which has been in the X Games for years. This means Anderson will be vying for two medals. Big air focuses on one trick, while slopestyle is a series of tricks.

For now, Anderson calls Tahoe (she was raised in Meyers, where she was home schooled) and Whistler home. Her boyfriend, also a professional snowboarder, hails from Canada.



Anderson prefers to master her sport on the snow, not on an air bag like this one in Park City. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Anderson has never forgotten where she came from. She didn't come from a family of privilege. She understands the costs involved to be an elite athlete. That is one of the reasons why in 2013 she started the Jamie Anderson Foundation as a way to help youngsters pursue their dreams.

In South Lake Tahoe, Anderson was instrumental in getting the sculpture that will be part of Champions Plaza to not resemble three men. The artist, while clamoring that it was gender neutral, revised it. It should be unveiled this year. Anderson will be one of the inaugural inductees.

"I'd like to do a skate park in Meyers. I'd love to do more in the community," Anderson told *Lake Tahoe News*. "A Tahoe skate park is my next project." Well, maybe right after the Olympics.