

A skier's struggle with depression

By Megan Michelson, Powder

The crash was classic Jackie Paaso. It was April, in Verbier, Switzerland, for the final stop of the Freeride World Tour. Paaso, a veteran competitor on the FWT and the 2016 winner on this venue, skied the top of the famous Bec des Rosses relatively conservatively, arcing fast, fluid turns and hitting a couple of tiny airs. The on-air announcer wondered aloud if she was going to step up her game.

I've known Paaso for years, but it's still hard to get a read on her. Like her ski style, her personality feels like one of extremes. Some days, she's warm and pleasant, a quiet girl in the corner observing everything. Other days, she turns inward, closing herself off, while her penetrating and steely blue eyes reveal a crippling shyness.

Paaso tells me she has been keeping a secret for a long time—one she's hidden even from close family and friends—but she's ready to open up. For years, Paaso suffered from a devastating depression that nearly broke her and her ski career. Most don't know this side of her. The 35-year-old has always been good at hiding it.

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