

Paralympian with Tahoe ties set to defend gold



Evan Strong learned to snowboard at Northstar after losing part of his leg. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Evan Strong never had dreams of being a snowboarder. He was a beach guy, having grown up in Maui. Skateboarding was his sport of choice. He had sponsors at 13 and was on his way to being a professional skateboarder.

A drunken driver ended his career.

Part of Strong's left leg had to be partially amputated after the motorcycle he was riding was struck head on. This was 10

days before he turned 18.

Today the 31-year-old hopes to defend his snowboard cross gold medal at the Paralympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, next month. The Paralympics are March 9-18 where the able bodied Olympians just wrapped up their two-week stint.

"I'm in love with board sports and I want to play," Strong told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I saw a snowboarding magazine and thought why I haven't I done that."

Living in a Hawaii was a main reason.

It was in 2007 that Strong arrived at Northstar to work and learn how to snowboard.

Strong describes Tahoe as "endless seasons of fun." While living in the Truckee-North Shore area he also got into mountain biking.

He spends a great deal of time training in the Rockies, though he was out in the Tahoe area last season.

"Squaw Valley is as good as the Rockies," Strong said.

He praised Boreal for its terrain park, Sugar Bowl for its terrain and Northstar for its glades.

In many ways he was a natural on the snow because of his affinity for board sports. Snowboard cross is what gives him the "biggest rush." He has earned every title in the sport of para-snowboarding.

The sport was introduced at the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Winter Games.

In this Games he will compete in snowboard cross and banked slalom.