

Mosher wins Adaptive Snowboard World Cup

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Whistler's Tyler Mosher, 35, won the first ever Adaptive Snowboard World Cup on Friday on Blackcomb Mountain. It was an historic moment for both the sport and Mosher who is also a member of the Canadian ParaNordic Team.

"I trained hard for this race and I really wanted to win," Mosher said. "I was able to maintain my focus during my first two time trials, which resulted in the fastest run," said Mosher, an incomplete paraplegic.

Also an incomplete paraplegic Ian Lockey of Rossland B.C. placed second in the World Cup race while below-the-knee amputee Mike Fisher of Forest, Ontario placed third. On the women's side, Bibian Mentel of the Netherlands placed first followed by below the knee amputee Emily Cavallin of Smithers.

The event was the first international race of its kind with inspections, training and three timed runs. The sport is so new that officials are still working out terminology and rules to ensure the format suits the racers. Nine athletes from three different nations showed up for the World Cup, which Mosher calls a milestone.

"I think the idea is to continue along the line of having a snowboardcross using individual runs to determine winners for reasons of safety and to create a level playing field," Mosher said.

Mosher admits that snowboardcross works well because the discipline incorporates all aspects of snowboarding. He hopes that last weekend's event generates interest from volunteers and athletes.

The World Cup was held in conjunction with the Canadian Adaptive Snowboard Program (CASP) International Summit. The summit emphasized the development of adaptive snowboarding athletes, coaches, officials and administrators.

For Danny Buntain, Adaptive Snowboard Manager, the World Cup was a success.

She said it looked like everyone had a really great time and course was safe and challenging.

While the first World Cup went off without a hitch, Canada's disabled snowboarders are focused on getting their sport into the Paralympics. However, due to the limited number of disabled athletes in the sport "adaptive snowboarding is currently not eligible for Paralympic inclusion.

"It looks like we might have some adaptive riders forerunning for the snowboardcross event at the 2010 Olympics," Buntain said. "It's a chance to showcase the sport to the world."

Buntain said the goal of the first ever world Cup is to generate interest and put the sport on the map. Still it will probably take more than two years for the adaptive snowboard community to become established enough for a Paralympic berth.

"We would like to establish relationships with other nations and organizing committees," Mosher said. "Hopefully we will see snowboarding in the Paralympic Games in 2014 but a lot of work will need to be done in the near future."

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