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# mountain life

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# Noboarding

New mountain sport is making tracks and gathering disciples

By Natalie Langmann

Got a snowboard? Good, now remove the bindings, attach a rope and some custom rubber traction pads and you're ready for a new way of riding snow, something more like surfing or skateboarding.

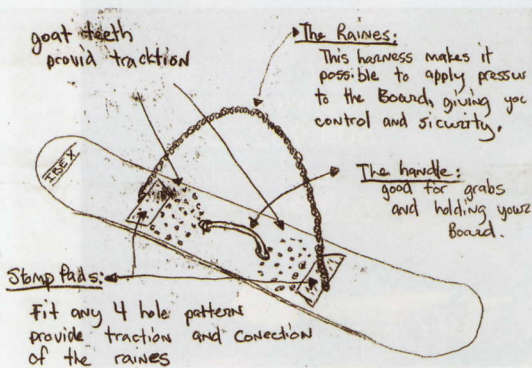
Not sure? I bet there were a few raised eyebrows when Burton founder Jake Burton showed up at a Snurfer event with a binding prototype, but look where snowboarding is today. So, open your mind – this isn't about snowboarding, it's about Noboarding.

"I tried it, reluctantly, and couldn't believe the feeling," says Chairman of the Noboard Cholo Burns. "It's cool how, without even knowing it, what you might be trying for the first time could become your passion. Here we are a few years later and my life is something totally different now."

Noboarding is the brainchild of mastermind Greg Todds, one of Canada's first hardcore, big-mountain professional snowboarders and a great contributor to the early progression of that sport. Shovel in one hand, chainsaw in the other, he carved out the first terrain park at Lake Louise and built the world's first superpipe in the Whistler backcountry.

By the time snowboarding really began blowing up Todds had already dropped enough gnarly cliffs and nailed plenty of hairball lines. Looking to slow things down, he relocated to the quieter mountains just outside Revelstoke, BC. One deep powder day in 2001, while digging around for his binding straps, Todds visualized the freedom of floating over snow without the downward pressure caused by bindings. He raced home to create the first Noboard out of a snowboard, drywall screws, duct tape, and a garbage can handle and soon began flying down mountains in much the same way he would slash waves on a surfboard. A new feeling – less stable but more pressure responsive (you

Original Greg Todds design courtesy of Cholo Burns.



move your feet accordingly) – brought on a whole new bag of stoke.

“When Todds rode, you watched. And when he spoke, you listened,” says Burns who went, that same season, to film his good friend’s Noboarding adventures and, after trying it, ended up as a co-founder, quickly deciding to make moulds of Todds’ designs and take the Noboard into manufacturing. “Thinking back to those days, the amount of work that GT and I did was unreal,” says Burns. “It was an all-out, full-time deal – not typical for snow bums.”

The Noboard, or rather the tried and tested grip pad and rope/handle (you attach it to a regular snowboard), became available for the public in 2004 and a new, more attuned way of riding snow became available to the masses.

Tragically, on January 13, 2005, an avalanche claimed the life of Greg Todds but his vision and legacy live on, not only in the Noboard itself, which Burns has kept true to the original vision, but in the 400-500 people who own and ride Noboards, as well as an annual event where family and friends gather to race Noboards and shred in honour of Greg Todds.

Locally, Noboarding has already arrived. Last winter Burns grabbed a photographer and a small crew and headed into the Coast Mountains, to Bralorne, to hook up with fellow Noboarder Al Clark and rip up some big coastal lines. The pictures don’t lie – Noboards are the real deal and these athletes are doing truly impressive things on them.

“We just want to keep moving forward and turning people on to it,” Burns says, smiling. “It’s too much fun not to.” Noboard already has its own magazine, a glossy, limited-edition affair that focuses on more than just the sport, as well as a hit film *Yes to the No* which was selected for the Banff Mountain Film Festival and World tour. People are catching on. “We’ve already almost sold out of pads this year,” Burns tells me in early December.

Ex-snowboarders are starting to lose the bindings (and the boot pain) and say yes to the No themselves – tricks, spins, backflips and kickflips are routinely getting attempted and stomped. Surfers, skaters, even skiers are climbing aboard. People are discovering what Greg Todds figured out years ago – free your feet and your mind will follow. [noboard.ca](http://noboard.ca)

LEFT - Josh Penner enjoys the freedom of not being attached to the board. JENNA LOW PHOTOS.  
RIGHT - Chairman of the Noboard, Cholo Burns, ripping it near Bralorne.



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