

X Marks the Spot

Last year at this time most were gearing up for the Winter Olympics out of Vancouver, B.C. This year with no Olympics the highlight of Winter Sports at least in the Xtreme venue is the Winter X Games out of Aspen, Colorado, on ESPNHD and ESPN2HD Saturday and Sunday, check local times. What began 15 years ago, as the hybrid of what was then called the Gravity Games, has become a monster media event viewed by millions around the planet. In fact, it was the X Games that pushed the envelop on the Winter Olympics sanctioning snowboarding as an event.

Living in the Mid-West as we do one would think that the influence of Winter Xtreme sports is minimal. Think again. In mentioning the Games to an over 65 year old acquaintance of mine, her response was, “My daughter and I really enjoyed the Olympics last year, especially that half-tube (pipe) and that guy with the red hair sticking out everywhere. He was cute.” You mean Shawn White?

When I relocated from the mountains of Colorado (near Aspen) last summer to Marion and tried to get Ohio vanity plates for my car with the letters SNO BRDR or SNO BORD and SB RIDER none were available meaning all we taken. And, when I finally decided to get my season snowboarding pass at Mad River Mountain, out of Zanesfield, opening day was packed out! And, when Shawn was nailing his victory run at last year’s Olympics with a 1260 double cork, Mad River’s own Louie Vito was there as well—Louie being the only other to land it at the time in the whole wide world. In fact, at last weekend’s snowboarding Dew Tour major event in Killington, Vermont, Louie was back on the podium collecting gold for the super half pipe. The X Games have made it big. What started out as primarily a snowboard, free ski venue has expanded to include snowmobiling and even modified dirt bike big air events as well.

Looking beyond the danger—and there is danger involved—and looking beyond the cost in broken bones and hi-tech equipment, the appeal has to do with two things: pushing the limits and singularity of the moment. America has long been a nation and a people who openly embrace the challenge to push beyond the comfortable into a new frontier of possibilities. Whether viewing or participating in the X Games we can see the limits being pushed and can connect, even if only from the recliner, with something that says, “Yes you can! It’s you and you alone. Go make it happen,”

The X Games provide a singularity of moment, a coming together not only of the athletes and the media but of the spectators and the nation that takes on an energy of its own. From Thursday through Sunday the momentum builds until, when the last metal is given and the lights are turn out in Aspen, those who have been a part will feel a little bit better about themselves and a little bit more encouraged to get up from where they are and do something they thought they couldn’t.

If anyone is up to it Ohio provides places to try out your skills and develop your method with skis, board or tubing. Check it out from MRM to Snow Trails in Mansfield to Boston Mills in Richfield there’s action to be had whether its as spectator grandparents or participating tubers to throwin’ it down riders. Give it a try and build some memories with those you care about.