

carlsbad



WATER.
IT'S WHY WE'RE HERE



CARLSBAD'S

KAILLIE HUMPHRIES



OLYMPIANS

Our local athletes have a wild ride in Beijing.

**WRITTEN BY
WENDY HINMAN AND
FELICE KINNEAR**

SHAUN WHITE

"It's not the critic who counts," Teddy Roosevelt once said, but the person in the arena, the one who is "daring greatly" no matter the outcome. Carlsbadians Shaun White, Kaillie Humphries and Tessa Maud now have Beijing in the books. For White, it's an Olympic epilogue. Humphries is pondering her next chapter and Maud has just completed her preface and introduction. For the first time, or for the last time, all have dared greatly in one of the world's most daunting arenas.

An Olympic athlete's journey starts with a novice's exploration. Those early days looked different for each of our local Olympians: White started on a skateboard, Humphries on skis and Maud on a surfboard at Terramar. White and Maud found their groove on snowboards and Humphries in a bobsled.

As athletes mature, they are chasing skill and thrill. They are also racing age and injury, the body's ultimate betrayal of the athletic mind. What Yogi Berra said about baseball is true for all sports: "It's 90% mental, the other half is physical." The most recent summer and winter Olympic Games have been a crash course on mental health in sports. But if in an athlete's story, they can maintain the sheer joy of their sport and its adventure at the highest level, then Humphries, White and Maud all return home victorious.





SHAUN WHITE TOLD
TOM BILYEU IN AN
IMPACT THEORY INTERVIEW

**“I FEEL LIKE
MY THING THAT I
WOULD LEAVE IS THAT
I REALLY DIDN’T SEE THE
BOUNDARIES OF WHAT
YOU SHOULD AND
SHOULDN’T DO. I DID THE ROAD
LESS TRAVELED. I DID THE THINGS
THAT PEOPLE SAID COULDN’T BE DONE. IF I CAN INSPIRE THAT
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION, THAT’S PRETTY AMAZING.”**



SHAUN WHITE

END OF AN ERA

In February, Shaun White ended his Olympics career with a tearful thank-you to all that snowboarding has given him, calling the sport “the love of his life.” It was a touching moment for an athlete who has given so much to snowboarding in return as one of its true legends.


The lead-up to the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing had more layers, twists and turns than the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The earliest pivot point for White can be traced back to a half-pipe at the YMCA on Saxony Road in Encinitas. This is where a 7-year-old White saw Tony Hawk shred for the first time. A fire was lit, which quickly grew into White’s insatiable passion for extreme sports.

Since then, White has inspired countless athletes, much like Hawk inspired him. In 2010, a young Ayumu Hirano watched White compete in the Olympics in Vancouver. On his final run down the halfpipe, White launched like a torpedo off the snowy lip and threw down the first Double McTwist 1260


in Olympic history. That McTwist pushed snowboarding into another dimension and was the launch pad for many tricks we see at the Olympics today. In Beijing, Hirano won his first gold medal by landing one of those tricks—three flips on an off-axis rotation—causing White to slip into fourth place.

That marked a tremendous passing of the torch; for White, it was also a release from the pressures of 20 years’ competition on the world stage. Tears of gratitude brimmed over White’s cheeks as he made his last exit at the Olympics with applause thundering in his ears.

After his victory, Hirano acknowledged White’s impact. “Shaun White has always shown me his own challenges and I was moved by his performance today,” he told the Kyodo News. “Delivering his best in such a situation, and just riding at this venue itself is much more important than the result. That is a great message for everybody. It pushed me forward and I was empowered.”



a) Shaun White ends a brilliant career with his final Olympics. b) White advanced the sport with his groundbreaking moves (photos by Cole Ferguson). c) White finished fourth at Beijing (photo by Andrew Makedonski).



CARLSBAD'S SNOWBOARDING PRODIGY

Although White did not make the medals podium this time, his massive influence and contribution to the sport endures. That's even more remarkable considering White had open-heart surgery twice before the age of 4 and suffered from asthma in high altitudes. But White, and his family, were dedicated to snowboarding. They traveled across the country for the sport and he won his first competition at just 7 years old.

That same innate skill also translated into skateboarding. Tony Hawk noted a 9-year-old White's talent.

"The stuff that comes easily to Shaun White is the stuff that took me years to develop," Hawk said on the "Legends Live On" series on the Olympics Channel. "He was doing tricks that we had never dreamed of."

White's family moved to Carlsbad when he was 11. He graduated from Carlsbad High School in 2005, where he was well known for his robust agility, magnetic spirit and a fluid snowboarding style honed by combining all his talents. His skateboarding technique gave him an edge in the snow that propelled him light years ahead of his older peers.

White turned professional snowboarder at age 13, spawning an avalanche of success to follow. White continued to grow, and his rapid progression moved snowboarding into another realm.

CLOSING OUT A BRILLIANT CAREER

In 2018 White made headlines by winning Team USA's 100th Winter Olympics gold medal in South Korea. This phenomenal triumph transcended the sports world. For instance, the back-to-back 1440s White landed were called "a physics marvel" by Brianno Collier, an engineering professor at Northern Illinois University.

After White's success in South Korea, he kept a low profile to


prepare for the Beijing Olympics. However, the level of riding since White's last X Games had catapulted. White's absence made room for the other athletes to catch up.

In March 2021, Valentino Guseli broke White's world record for highest jump in a half-pipe. In January 2022, Hirano finished first in the U.S. Grand Prix at Mammoth Mountain, while White withdrew from the finals due to COVID-19 symptoms. This caused many people to question whether White would make it onto the 2022 Olympic team.

But the following week, White galvanized his living legend status by crushing the last Olympic qualifier at Laax in Switzerland. Based on this performance, he was invited to walk through the Olympic tunnel for the last time.

White was excited to finish his career in the same epic style he began. He valiantly took on the qualifying round with the other competitors hot on his tail. White especially felt the heat from Hirano and his countrymen. The Japanese dominated the qualifiers leading up to the Olympics while White was still nursing an ankle injury that caused his leg to give out in Beijing. "They've been on my heels every step of the way," White said to Kyodo News about his peers after the medals were awarded. "To see Hirano finally surpass me is, I think deep down, what I always wanted. You know, to be beaten, to finally walk away."

"Snowboarding is a part of my life but it's definitely not all that I am," White told Tom Bilyeu in an Impact Theory interview. "I feel like my thing that I would leave is that I really didn't see the boundaries of what you should and shouldn't do. I did the road less traveled. I did the things that people said couldn't be done. If I can inspire that for the next generation, that's pretty amazing."



"SNOWBOARDING IS A PART OF MY LIFE BUT IT'S DEFINITELY NOT ALL THAT I AM," WHITE TOLD TOM BILYEU IN AN IMPACT THEORY INTERVIEW.

