

Local pro died living his dream

Josh Malay, 2003 winner of the Heavy Metal on the Hill snowboarding competition, died in a snowboarding accident last week in the Pyrenees

By Laura Loeff
For the Campus Press

Everyone in the Vail Valley knew who he was.

Josh Malay was living his dream as he was just beginning his snowboard tour through Europe with Transworld magazine, of which he was recently on the cover.

On this European trip, he would travel for 10 days and would have the opportunity to snowboard in multiple countries including Spain and Italy.

It was a dream come true for the Minnesota native who left home right after high school to ambitiously pursue a career in the competitive snowboarding world.

However, his dreams tragically came to an end when a snowboarding accident took his life. Malay was declared dead Feb. 29 from head injuries he sustained while riding the Spanish Pyrenees. He was 23 years old.

Malay had had much to look forward to in his future. As an Avon, Colo., local for the last six years, Malay had become an accomplished snowboarder and was sponsored by Oakley, Nixon, Santa Cruz, The Other Side and Vail.

As an employee of The Other Side snowboard shop in Beaver Creek, he was constantly surrounded by friends and co-workers on and off the mountain. They held him in the highest regard.

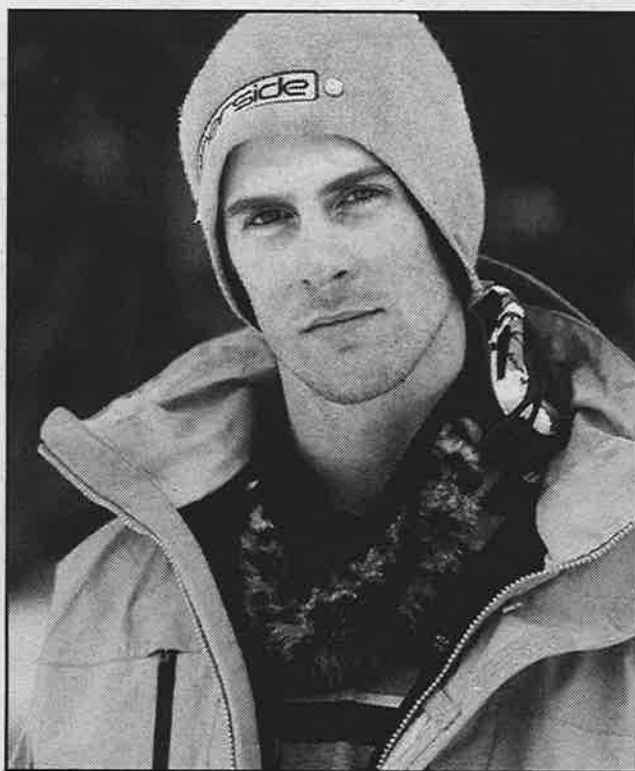


Photo courtesy of vaildaily.com

"He was a great guy and was just getting his foot in the door," said friend and Other Side co-worker Ricky Rodriguez. "He was definitely going to take it to another level. He already was."

Malay hit a small cliff, and fell awkwardly when his

head hit a rock in the snow. After suffering major head injuries, surgery was required but provided no improvement. Malay had lost the use of his brain and was kept alive only with the aid of life support machines. His family made the decision of taking him off the medical

machines.

In order to achieve his dream, Malay put in his time and entered as many snowboarding contests as he possibly could.

In March 2003, Malay entered and won the CU snowboard club team Heavy Metal on the Hill contest that took place on College Avenue and 13th Street. He also participated in the Session snowboarding contest in Vail this past January, in which he was competing against some of the top pros in the world.

Aware of Malay's hard work and dedication to snowboarding, his friends are doing the best they can to cope with the loss, and they want to snowboard even more in order to follow in their late friend's footsteps.

"We would be in the (half) pipe together and he was always encouraging me to step it up," said friend and Avon local Mike Hardaker. "This was his year."

On the morning of Feb. 29, a group of Malay's friends and co-workers, which included both Hardaker and Rodriguez,

were at the main Beaver Creek chairlift at 8 a.m. in order to get the "first chair" and ride for Malay. The lift does not begin running until 9 a.m.

Both Rodriguez and Hardaker say that Malay was always willing to help people out with any questions they had about snowboarding, regardless of how long the person had been riding or whether he was in or out of the shop.

"He gave the biggest discounts and always wanted to do anything he could for people, even if he was getting in trouble for it," Rodriguez said.

Although Malay's life has come to end, Hardaker and Rodriguez are certain that his legacy and memory will live on in the hearts and memories of the people he knew and cared about.

Malay's friends intend to work even harder to pursue their dreams and dedicate their time on the mountain to their late friend.

"He will be a legend in this valley forever," Hardaker said.

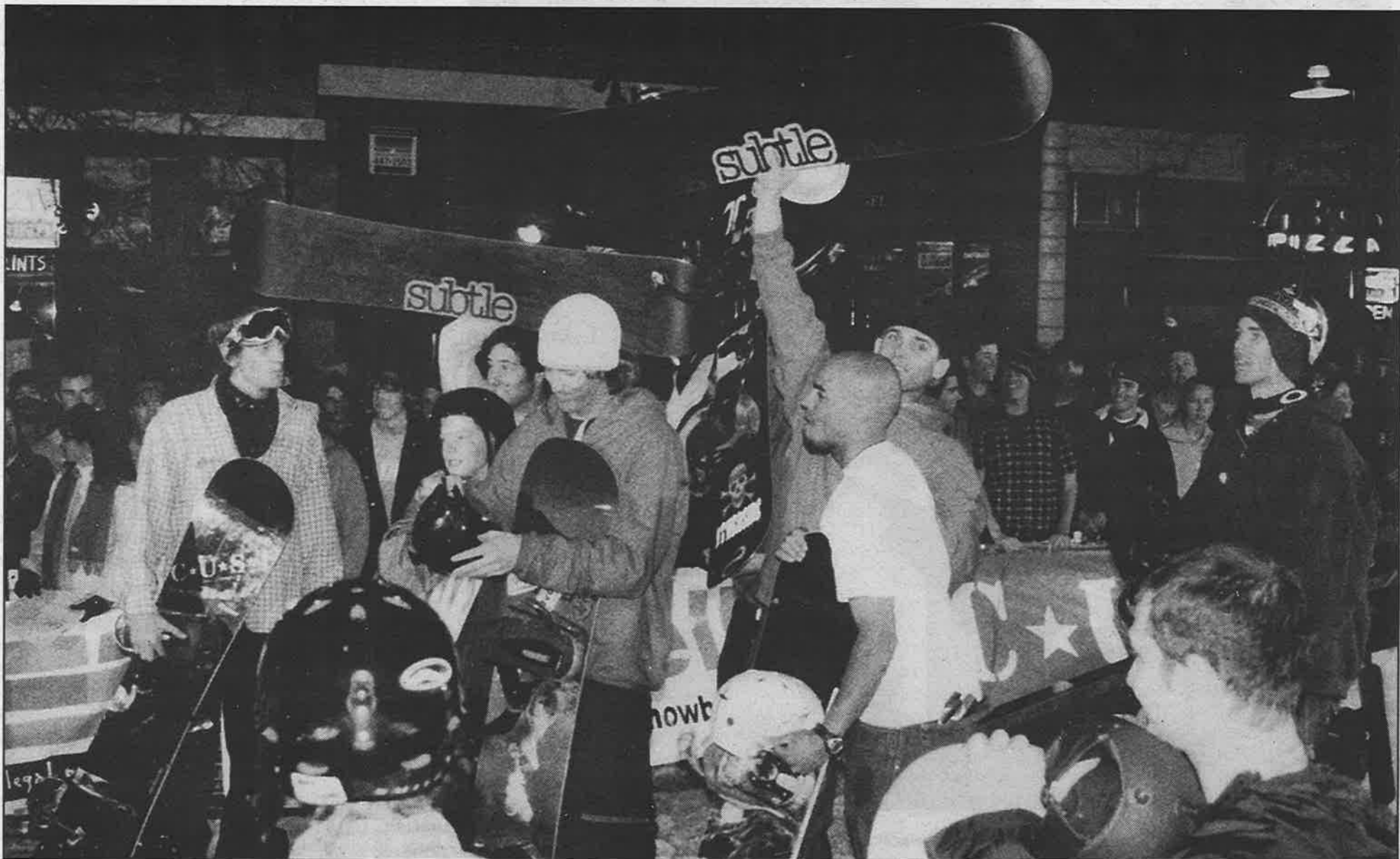


Photo courtesy of Laura Loeff

Josh Malay earned first place in the 2003 CU snowboarding club team Heavy Metal on the Hill snowboard contest. The contest took place between 13th Street and College Avenue last March.