



Shaun White **CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

WITH UNTOUCHABLE SNOWBOARD MOVES, MILLIONS IN ENDORSEMENTS AND NOW TWO OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALS, WHAT WILL SHAUN WHITE DO FOR AN ENCORE?

BY JOHNNY DODD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY TURE LILLEGRAVEN

Shaun White talks pretty much the way you'd expect a 23-year-old California-born snowboarder to talk. He says "rad" and "dude" a lot and can attest to how bizarre it is to become a video-game avatar. But then he'll name-drop Winston Churchill over brunch. "He was involved in all these great battles," says White of the British prime minister. "Afterwards he'd always be like, 'What do I do now?'"

Having conquered the Olympics with a second gold medal and emerging as its biggest star, White can relate: After victory, what next? He has \$10 million in endorsements and plenty of options: first, more snow-

"It's tough to come with one chance to get a gold medal, and he's done it twice," says Olympic champion skier Lindsey Vonn of White (in Vancouver last month). "All the hype surrounding him is deserved."



At 14, White was mentored by skate guru Tony Hawk. Right: Age 7 on a backyard ramp.



Though favored to win in Vancouver (below), when he did, "I was freaking out. I had to stop my hands from shaking."



“I WAS THIS MONSTER CHILD. NOT A BAD KID—JUST A LOT OF ENERGY”

boarding (he'll compete in the Burton U.S. Open March 19); then, returning to his first passion, skateboarding (the summer X Games, at which he has won three prior medals, are in July). Or he could stay put for a minute—in as much as a famous, single guy with a Lamborghini is inclined to stay put—and fix up his new home in L.A. “I feel kind of in limbo,” says White over eggs and orange juice at a Melrose cafe.

He may not be ready to move past his golden moment quite yet. “I still wake up and go, ‘I did it!’” For proof he need only check the sock where he stores his gold medal during travel. (The Torino gold is at his parents’


house.) A post-Games press tour has him in Japan later this week. Yesterday he was in Berlin, and in the days prior, Chicago, New York, London, Salzburg and Milan to satisfy media demands. He also took advantage of some first-time invites: “I went to a fashion show; I was sitting in the front row, like, ‘This is so awkward.’”

In Vancouver, though, he was a model of grace, performing his crowd-pleasing Double McTwist 1260—two flips plus $3\frac{1}{2}$ turns—even though he already had his medal in the bag. White's night on Cypress mountain marked the first time more people tuned in to the Games than to *Ameri-*

can Idol. “Shaun had a lot to do with that,” says teammate Greg Bretz. “He’s made halfpipe what it is.”

White started riding early. He’s been skateboarding since age 6, got his first snowboarding sponsorship at 7, and turned pro at 13. He comes from a line of thrill seekers: His mother’s mother was a roller-derby queen for the Los Angeles T-birds. “My mom had to do her homework at the rink,” he explains. Mom Cathy, 55, a former banquet waitress, and dad Roger, 55, who worked for the water department, loved to surf and ski and took their three kids on sporting trips. Last year for his birthday, Shaun and his mom went sky diving.

There was a time, however, when “it was hard for her to let me out and do things,” White says. As an infant he needed two open-heart surgeries to repair a birth defect. Although he came through fine, the worry lingered. “I was 12 and passed out on a soccer field, and they were like, ‘It’s

A photograph of Shaun White, Kari White, and their bulldog Rambo sitting on a wooden ramp at a skatepark. Shaun is on the left, wearing a black t-shirt and black pants, with his legs stretched out. Kari is on the right, wearing a blue button-down shirt and black pants, sitting cross-legged. Rambo is sitting between them. In the background, there are parked cars and a fence.

White in L.A. with sister Kari, 24, and the family bulldog Rambo, whose photo he put on his line of T-shirts.

“HE HAS HIS CRAZY LIFE, BUT AT HOME HE’S A REALLY SIMPLE GUY”—SHAUN’S SISTER KARI

his heart!” he says. “I always felt that I had something to prove.”

Although he barely remembers it, White’s childhood illness informed his decision to partner with a sponsor, Target, to outfit the rec room at a home for families of kids getting treatment at St. Jude’s hospital in Memphis. He and brother Jesse, 30, designed the space, and Shaun often visits: Seeing the young patients “is a wild full circle. It’s just heavy. Kids are beating cancer there.”

Surprisingly, for a guy who has suffered concussions, broken bones and a cracked skull, White is a bit cautious—or at least realistic—about his sport. “It’s pretty dangerous. I never attempt something I don’t feel confident in. That’s a good way to get hurt.”

In December his friend Kevin

Pearce, one of the few snowboarders to beat White in competition, incurred a traumatic brain injury on the halfpipe. (Pearce watched the Games while recovering at Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colo., where he is slowly regaining his speech and motor control.) “Everybody’s like, is he gonna snowboard again? I’m like, ‘Who cares?’ I want him to be all right,” says White, showing a photo on his phone of himself and Pearce as teens on a mountain in Vermont.

Pearce’s accident left White shaken, but he has no plans to stop pushing his own boundaries. “I can’t stand there and do just this trick,” he says. He won’t rule out another Olympics but also feels there is a lot more to life. He loves playing rock guitar. “I have a little crew I play with; it’s the only

thing I’ve done that has a team vibe. No matter how hard I hit this thing, it’s not gonna be complete without drums, bass, the whole deal.”

Plus, he hasn’t had much time for dating. What’s he looking for? “I like it when girls can snowboard,” he says, adding with a laugh, “But I don’t need some chick trying to shred better than me, take my job.”

For now he’s only sure that he has to prep for the late-night shows, pack for Japan, get in a visit with his family and dog Rambo and try to find a moment of calm. Those often come when he’s on his board, soaring above the edge of the halfpipe. “It’s the best,” says White. “There’s a point where you’re not really going up anymore, but you’re not coming down, and you’re just in this weightless phase. Once I’m up there, I can actually kind of look around; I can kind of enjoy being in the air.”

Additional reporting by **Lorenzo Benet**