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Autor: Wey, Alain
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A 30-year-old bundle of energy. Snowboarder Tanja Frieden, the winner of the gold medal at the Olympic Games in Turin, will soon be pitting her skills against her rivals again in the Boardercross World Cup. Because sport plays such an important role in her life, it's hardly surprising that she doesn't limit her sporting activities to snowboarding. Even in summer she's always on the lookout for new sporting experiences. By Alain Wey.



Tanja Frieden, 2006 Olympic boardercross champion.

Beach volleyball, kite surfing, wakeboarding, longboarding (a form of skateboarding), kayaking, mountaineering: When Tanja Frieden isn't standing on a snowboard, she uses her almost boundless energy to engage in a wide range of leisure sports. Her philosophy is "Use the elements the way they present themselves." Tanja Frieden may have won the gold medal in the boardercross, but she never walks away from a new sporting challenge, be it hiking up to the Konkordia Hut (at an altitude of 2,850 metres between the peaks of the Eiger, Mönch, Jungfrau and Aletschhorn) accompanied by a Swiss camera team or enduring a baptism of fire kayaking down the River Aare.

"Sport dictates my lifestyle," she says. "I like to live intensively, go in different directions, and do what I enjoy doing." Although Tanja Frieden's way of life hasn't changed since her Olympic victory, the gold medalist is now very much in demand. What's more, the snowboarder from Berne is the first Olympic champion in a sport that celebrated its debut as an Olympic discipline in Turin. Just like Gian Simmen, who won gold in Nagano in the half-pipe in 1998, Tanja Frieden is now an example to Swiss youngsters, and living proof of the fruits of perse-

verance and bravery.

Tanja Frieden keeps her feet on the ground and refuses to be blinded by fame. Her motto is "Always be honest and stay true to yourself." Whenever she travels around the world taking part in major fun-sport events, she always radiates the cheerfulness and infectious vivacity for which she was fa-

mous even before the Games. Nevertheless, she too must plan for the future and try to cash in on her new-found fame. When her snowboarding career is over, she'd like to help athletes improve their mental strength. But no matter where life takes her, boardercross will have provided her with three important keys to success: concentration, a cool head and patience.

The 2007 Snowboarding World Championships take place in Arosa (GR) in January, and it goes without saying that Tanja Frieden will be there. The support given by Swiss fans to their very own top sportsmen and -women can help athletes surpass themselves; so why not also the woman who came third in two events in Arosa in 2004? Whatever the outcome, the boardercross competition – which is somewhat reminiscent of a Roman chariot race – should attract lots more fans following Switzerland's success at the Olympics. In Turin, the sport proved its telegraphic appeal to worldwide audiences and showed how little separates victory from defeat: something Frieden's

rival, American boarder Lindsey Jacobellis, who fell just before the finishing line, knows to her cost!

And how does the amiable, expressive Tanja Frieden cope with the glamorous world that success brings with it? "I'm a chameleon. I can just as easily convey a very good impression at a gala evening," she quips. Frieden's wit and sense of humour are reflected in the way she explains her Olympic victory: "They say the Bernese are slow. I just wanted to prove that they can also step on the accelerator when necessary!"

SPOTLIGHT ON TANJA FRIEDEN

- Personal details: Tanja Frieden was born on 6 February 1976 to a Norwegian mother and Swiss father. She lives in Thun, is 1.73 m tall and weighs 65kg. Her mother, Kari, is a former Norwegian speed skater.
- Profession: Professional boardercross snowboarder and teacher.
- Hobbies: Kite surfing, surfing, wakeboarding, cycling, beach volleyball, longboarding, etc.
- Achievements: 2006 Olympic boardercross champion. Fifth at the 2003 World Championships. Runner-up at the 2000 ISF European Championships.
- Agenda: 14.–16.12.2006: World Cup meeting in Bad Gastein (D); 14.–20.1.2007: World Championships in Arosa (CH); 25.–26.1.2007: World Cup meeting in Leysin (CH); 3.–4.3.2007: World Cup meeting in Big White (CA); 10.–11.3.2007: World Cup meeting in Lake Placid (US); 16.–18.3.2007: World Cup meeting in Stoneham (CA).

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