

GOLD, URETHANE AND P-TEX

THE UNCONVENTIONAL KAYA TURSKI

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IF THERE'S ANY WAY TO EMBARRASS a park skier, it's to accuse them of inline skating. Most skiers will deny ever having donned the four-wheeled "fruit boots" as vehemently as they would claims of secretly shredding to Kenny G.

Kaya Turski, however, won't deny the accusations. In fact, the former professional-inliner-turned-six-time Winter X Games-gold-medalist and recent ESPY Award nominee will proudly attribute much of her success to her years of booting fruit. And in less than four years, Turski's move from competitive inlining to skiing has made her one of the ski industry's most unconventional—and successful—athletes.

Turski's passions weren't always urethane and concrete—at three years old, she was ripping on the slopes around Montreal, QC, with her dad. It wasn't until she turned nine that she would switch to full-time blading; while most of her future female counterparts spent their preteen years on snow, Turski spent them on street rails and competition ramps. But in 2006, when the inline skate shop that sponsored her offered her a pair of skis, Turski returned to the slopes for the first time since she was eight years old. Nine months later, she moved west to Whistler.

"I skied every day by myself there," Turski says, "and mid-March decided to check the seedings in the Vermont Open." She went to Vermont to compete in the Open, and returned with her first competition win. Inline was a thing of the past—Turski had found snow again, and was sticking with it.

That initial success came at a price; Turski spent the next two years rehabbing an ACL and internal organ injury after coming up short on a landing during training. By 2009 she was fully recovered and wasted no time coming back: she earned bronze at the X Games that season and swept all three Dew Tours. She's won every X Games slopestyle contest she's entered since.

But it was the 2012 US X Games in Aspen, CO, that earned Turski a place in the history books. Already guaranteed third place, she decided on a whim to try a switch 1080—and stomped it, becoming the first female to land the trick in competition and winning her third consecutive US X Games gold medal. She'd go on to duplicate her gold medal three-peat at the 2012 European X Games

in Tignes, France, making her—in fewer than four seasons—the dominant female slopestyle skier in the world.

That impulsiveness would lead to Turski's ESPYS Female Action Sport Athlete of the Year nomination and a trip to Los Angeles, CA for the award ceremonies. While she didn't get to meet Kobe Bryant as she was hoping—the US Olympic basketball team was training in Las Vegas—and while the award was given to snowboarder and good friend Jamie Anderson, it allowed her a first-time red carpet experience.

"It was a lot of fun getting all glamorous for the night," Turski says. "With snowsports, we're usually going out in the winter and just trying to stay warm. This was a first for me to dress up in a nice gown and get all dolled up and go out."

Now based out of Mammoth Mountain, CA, the 24-year-old self-declared park rat has bigger aspirations than red carpets and X Games and Dew Tour podium time; with slopestyle part of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, her dreams include Olympic gold.

"I'm putting a lot of effort into it," she says. "I'm going to be working closely with Team Canada and Red Bull Performance to learn and get comfortable with as many tricks as I can. Get them dialed and out of the way, so next summer I'm not freaking out."

Along with training and competitions, Turski is working to create a better perception of women's skiing in an industry dominated by men. Following the success of online edits from the likes of Tom Wallisch and Henrik Harlaut, she recently released her own webisode, *State of Mind*, in hopes of drawing more attention to the small, core group of women skiers who are currently pushing the sport.

"I wanted to take advantage of the lack of female presence in the ski industry," Turski says. "People bash women's skiing just because they don't know anything about it. We don't get much coverage at events, and without a lot of coverage in ski films, how can we expect them to really know what we do?"

And if there's anyone promoting—and progressing—women's skiing, it's Turski. With a disregard for convention and social *faux pas*, she's showing girls around the world what's possible, no matter how crazy the sport. And yes, she still boots some fruit from time to time.

"I like to get on my skates whenever I can," she says. "It's a good way to go back to the old days." §