

Adventure Scholarship Grant: Personal Essay

Freeride skiing is a sport true to its name: free, without restriction. It takes place on ungroomed terrain with trees, rocks, and cliffs, objects to be treated either as obstacles to avoid or features to enhance performance. It is judged on several categories, but the most important is line choice. While choosing an easier line lowers a skier's chance of falling, choosing a more challenging line often has a greater reward. I have found that the more difficult path tends to yield success whether or not I crash. If I fall, I am able to learn from my mistakes, and use them to succeed in the future. If I do not, I am provided with the immense satisfaction that comes from facing and overcoming obstacles. Regardless of the end result, challenging myself by choosing a difficult line causes me to grow and learn, and makes me a better skier. I have endured three season-ending injuries to date, one of them as a direct result of choosing a line that challenged me. However, rather than let these injuries defeat me, I chose to see each as a challenge in the form of an opportunity, and have returned the seasons that follow stronger and more determined to succeed. This coming winter, I once again find myself recovering from a season-ending injury. Last season, in my final year competing as a junior, I tore a ligament in my ankle and had to undergo surgery to repair it. After surgery, I underwent extensive physiotherapy to rehab my ankle, and once again began to prepare for the ski season ahead. This was also my final year of high school, and rather than continue directly to university as many of my peers were doing, I elected to defer my offer of admission to university and take a gap year to focus solely on pursuing my passion for skiing. I felt I owed it to myself and my passion for the sport to focus on competing for a year to see what I was capable of. My best friend and teammate shares a similar dream and together we plan to travel across North America to compete in Freeride World Qualifier events with the hope of qualifying for the Freeride World Tour. While this hope of qualifying for the World Tour is one goal I find myself wanting to achieve this upcoming season, an even greater and overarching one is my desire to dedicate myself completely to a sport that, for as long as I have been participating in it, I have had to juggle alongside academics, volunteering, and numerous other extracurriculars. Being a recipient of a Flyin Ryan Adventure Scholarship grant would allow me to spend more of my time training for my upcoming adventure and less of my time working full-time (as I have been doing) to support this adventure financially. This extra time allotted for training will make an incredible difference in allowing me to prepare myself both mentally and physically for the adventure ahead. Freeride skiing has been perhaps the greatest catalyst in leading me to develop my own core values: the guiding principles that have shaped the way I have responded to my adventure so far, and will continue to do so in the years to come. Above all, living by these principles has caused me to grow and learn in a way that has allowed me to appreciate the value of challenge. At the surface level, freeride skiing has shown me challenges in the form of difficult lines. Beyond that, it has presented me with the greater obstacles of injury and heartbreak that come with the sport. However, facing and overcoming the challenges of freeride skiing has taught me that challenges are not something that will prevent my success. Instead, they are a vital component of my experiences that push me not only to realize what I am capable of, but to make me capable of more. Freeride skiing has instilled in me the belief that success is not just crossing the finish line, but rather, choosing the path that means the finish line is just the beginning.