

Bio:

Hello! My name is Vanessa McFarlane and I have been snowboarding for 8 years. Prior to snowboarding, I was an NCAA diver. I grew up in Tucson, AZ and come from a family of skiers, so I didn't snowboard growing up (but I did skateboard!). When I moved to the northeast for school, I began snowboarding at Mount Wachusett. I quickly fell in love with the sport and upon moving to Colorado, got into big mountain riding. I am a member of the International Freeskiers and Snowboarders Association (IFSA) as an adult qualifier and am entering my second season of competition, in hopes of qualifying for the Freeride World Tour in a few years. When I'm not snowboarding, I'm traveling, wakesurfing, hiking, doing gymnastics, or working out. I love the freeride community and hope to encourage more women to participate in snowboarding!

Essay:

Sports have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I learned how to roll into a somersault before I could walk. I've also always had a profound sense of adventure and passion for the outdoors that stemmed from my father and grandmother. Growing up in the southwest, I played outside a lot, whether I was climbing trees, riding bikes in the dirt, or riding my skateboard around my neighborhood. Throughout my life, I have been inspired by sports and the outdoors, as both of those things have significantly influenced most of my life decisions.

A couple of years ago, a random stranger reignited my love of competition and told me to consider competing in the freeride qualifiers the following season. At my age, then and now, I never thought I would be able to compete at an elite level again, unless I had already been an Olympian or had professional experience. I had aspirations after college to become a pro athlete, when I decided that I wanted to train for the national team for USA Diving. I had fought through two stress fractures in college, foregoing my chance to make nationals my junior year and ending my senior season abruptly, so I wanted to keep going and give any chance to keep competing at a high level. Unfortunately, after a year and a half of training, I hung up my swimsuit and my aspirations of becoming a professional diver ended. I did coach for a while, thinking I wanted to pursue a career as a Division I coach and completed my masters in Sport Management. Fast forward a couple of years later and I was in Colorado, ready to embark on new adventures and new athletic pursuits.

Dealing with the challenges of Covid, during and post, snowboarding was an escape from my life. I went through many challenges the first few years in Colorado and snowboarding

helped me cope with all of those challenges. As every season went by, I accomplished more goals and had bigger adventures. My greatest adventure was a snowboard trip to Japan at the beginning of 2023. I had the best time of my life solo snowboarding for the first time in a new place. Additionally, I met some incredible people that made my time even more worthwhile and helped me accomplish some new goals (like attempting my first backflip off a cliff).

Competing in freeride my first season made me realize how much I had missed competing. I missed the challenge of forcing myself to accomplish a set of goals and the camaraderie that comes with being a part of an athletic community. Furthermore, I've been able to travel to some new places and connect with people in the ski and board community that are just as passionate about the sport as I am. With the cost barriers associated with snowboarding, I want to use this scholarship to continue to compete, qualifying for higher level qualifier competitions, challengers, and eventually, a world tour (FWT is my 3-5 year goal). It's been inspiring to see older athletes in the freeride circuit competing at the highest level, like the Freeride World Tour. I've realized that I still haven't reached my peak athleticism, would love to just keep going, and try to achieve the highest level of competition that I am able to. Any scholarship money offered would go to the costs of traveling to and from venues, accommodations, food, and competition entries.

Not only do I want to continue to compete at an optimal level, but I also hope to inspire others that you're never too old to do something. Even just three years ago, I never thought I would have the chance to compete seriously again. I love meeting other riders, older than me, competing and still enjoying the sport and performing at an elite level. Additionally, I would love

to inspire more women to snowboard and participate in freeride competition, as we're still underrepresented in the sport. I hope to use this scholarship to pursue my goals, inspire others, and keep the passion of snowboarding alive for a long time.

Social Media Links

Instagram: @vmac_93

Facebook: Vanessa McFarlane

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/vanessamcfarlane/>

TikTok: @vmac_93

