

# Bay Area man seeks pro sponsorship

Story and photo by Daniel Savickas

After 10 years of working in San Jose as a successful investment-banker, 35 year-old Benji Douglas is moving to Truckee with the hopes of becoming a professional snowboarder.

"It just seems like the right move at this point in my career," Douglas said. "As a banker I've already peaked; but as a snowboarder I'm just so fresh. I just took my first lesson two days ago and today I almost made it all the way down a green-run without falling. Once I move up here I'll just get better each day, and within no time I should pick up a sponsor and get my own pro model. Then I'll have groupies."

Douglas isn't sure which area of snowboarding he plans on focussing his attention, but he's sure of a few things.

"I know I'd be good at all of them, (slope-style, half-pipe, slalom or boarder X)," Douglas said. "I've always had great balance, so rails should be no problem. When it comes to speed, I should have no problem blowing away all the other riders. I mean, come on, have you seen the size of boards people ride. I ride a small board cause it weighs less, less

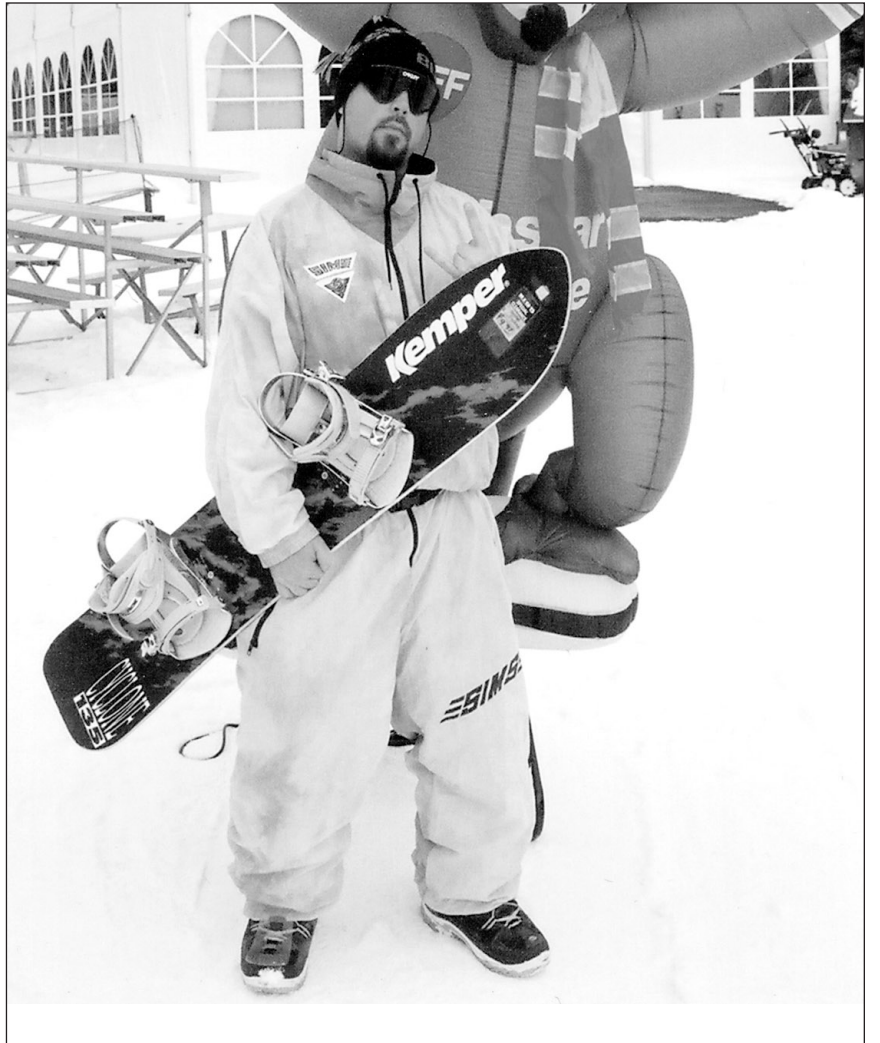
weight more speed. But I think were I'll really excel is in the half-pipe. Yesterday I rode down the middle of the super-pipe and I heard all of these guys yelling, "What the hell is that guy doing?" I was just trying to ride up the walls, but I guess whatever it was that I was doing was really cool."

Douglas may be short on skill, but he makes up for it in confidence.

"A lot of my friends are trying to discourage me from quitting my job to pursue my dream of becoming a pro snowboarder," Douglas said. "I know you have to crawl before you can walk, but when it comes to snowboarding, I feel like I've been running since birth."

Douglas plans to try out for this year's X Games.

"I figure I'll bust out and be the next Shawn White. No one will see it coming. While all the other riders have been training for years on the slopes, I've been getting mentally prepared watching videos and playing snowboarding video games. I'm tellin' you, Douglas is the name to be on the lookout for. Within a year I should have my pro model, sittin' at the trade show in Vegas with groupies all over my flavor."



Above: Benji Douglas shows off his steeze after riding down his first green run at Northstar-at-Tahoe.



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