

LIVING

Snowboarding culture has been embraced by Canadian youth

Extreme boarding

BY PAM CHIOTTI
CORRESPONDENT

Thirty years ago, the hills were alive with the sound of music.

Today, however, the slopes are resonating with whoops and wails of people crash landing onto their knees and heavily padded butts.

Unequivocally, snowboarding is now the "in" thing, with the popularity of this downhill sport rapidly going uphill.

Considered way cooler than skiing, snowboarding offers more than thrills and spills. It affords young people the chance to express themselves in a wild and crazy way.

"It's what you call an extreme sport," explains Drew Flann, assistant ski and snowboard school director at Ski Dagmar.

"It's featured on TSN as a crazy kind of thing to do right along with skateboarding and surfing.

Snowboarding is loved for the excitement it generates. There is little, if almost no social aspect to it, unlike the unwinding that is inherent with the ski lodge and beach scenes.

"When kids come out, they come out to ride," Flann explains.

"They don't sit in the bar with their friends."

Snowboarding is especially popular with young people aged 12 to 22. If given the choice between skiing and snowboarding, that age group would likely decide on the latter,

thanks to its newness and high level of excitement.

"Skiers, on the other hand, are older and more relaxed," Flann says.

"They'll go out, do some skiing, then come in and have a coffee."

Most snowboarders, he says, go straight home after their session.

The high energy sport is gaining attention from the over-30 crowd, slowly but surely.

The controversy over the pot-smoking issue at the last winter Olympics probably made the sport better known," speculates Flann, who doesn't think the Ross Rebagliati drug scandal dampened the sport.

In fact, Flann says, last year's controversy may have brought snowboarding "into the mainstream of light".

It is becoming more common for parents of teenaged snowboarders to give it a whirl — a direct result of their children's enthusiasm.

Dale Frieberg, 18, learned to snowboard last year, after being an avid skier since the age of four.

Her father, "is an experienced skier who just bought a snowboard. He can't wait to try it," Frieberg says. "My uncle snowboards. He used to ski, but for years, all he's done is snowboard. And he works for a Canadian snowboard distributor."

Of which there are many.

Snowboarding is a phenomenally big business, sporting the same scientific technology that has gone into skiing.

Snowboards come in all shapes, sizes and colours with neat graphics. Some have wood core boards while others are made with foam. There are freeriding boards, half-pipe boards and alpine boards with various levels of quality and prices.

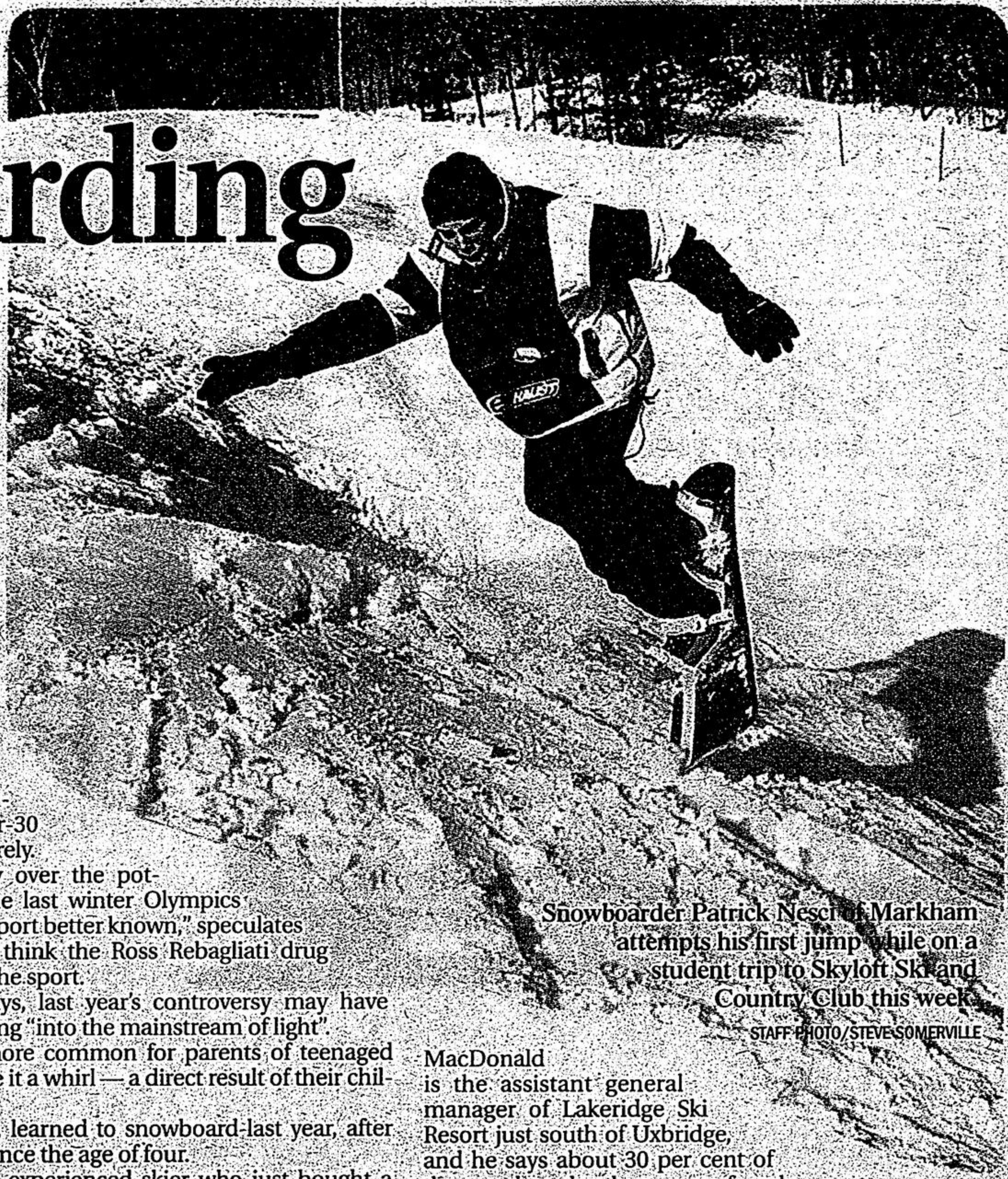
A snowboard can run you anywhere between \$250 to about \$800 while boots can range from \$100 to about \$300.

Flann, who has been teaching snowboarding for six years, says many ski resorts demand boards with steel edges, as well as a safety leash attached to the front binding that also goes around the rider's leg.

"If the binding malfunctions, you won't have a board that runs away on you."

The sport has been male dominated since hitting Ontario slopes in a big way seven or eight years ago.

Interest has soared over the past two seasons, in particular, with more and more females taking part. Craig



Snowboarder Patrick Nesci of Markham attempts his first jump while on a student trip to Skyloft Ski and Country Club this week.

STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

IN STYLE FOR THE SLOPES

The latest in snowboard gear for girls from the shelves of Firehall Skis & Sports in Unionville

hat by NSA

goggles by Spy

jacket by Ride

gloves by Kombi

pants by NSA

'Timeless' board by Ride

boots by Vans



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watching is not harmful to the eyes.

To give your eyes a break when watching TV, you should be sitting at least six feet away from the screen. One guide is to sit at a distance that is five times the width

of the picture. And don't sit in the dark. It's not good for your eyes. There should be light in the room, but not bright enough to wash out the TV picture. Move the light or the TV so that it doesn't cause a reflection or glare in the TV screen.

The set should be in perfect focus. If you've done all you can to get a clear picture but still have trouble seeing it well, maybe it's time for an eye examination.

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