

CHASING HER DREAM

Gretchen Bleiler fell in love with snowboarding as a kid, and she's worked hard to rule the halfpipe ever since.



Q: Once you started competing as a teenager, you had to stay healthy in order to perform well. How did you deal with negative peer pressure?

A: I think you have to figure out what your passions are as a kid. When you have something you love to do, you naturally set goals to achieve those dreams. That makes you healthy and focused and motivated, and you only have time for positive activities, not drinking. You've got a reason not to do something that might be bad for you, and you become more confident, too.

Q: Do you get nervous before a competition?

A: I've always gotten nervous, usually because I'm making things bigger than they really are. Instead of just focusing on the moment and the tricks I want to do, I'm thinking more about the end result. When I take a step back and think of it as giving everyone a good show, rather than seeing the event as something I might lose, it gets me really fired up instead.

Q: When you're out there competing, you're on your own. Yet, as an Olympian, you're part of a team. Do you see yourself as a team player?

A: Definitely. One of the reasons snowboarding is so appealing is that it's a very supportive environment. Some of my best friends are my biggest competitors. When we're training...

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