

Rocket Reaves

MAMMOTH CORNICE, TELLURIDE, COLORADO. PHOTO: COLIN MEAGHER



PERMANENT

HOLDING

PATTERN?

Only two photos of Rocket Reaves have ever appeared in this magazine, both in the first issue of *TransWorld SNOWboarding* six years ago. Not that anyone would know. He was misidentified both times, once as Craig Kelly, the second time as Kevin Delaney.

Eighteen-year old Reaves has stayed well hidden, rooted in the trees, powder, and bumps of the San Juan Mountains of Southwestern Colorado for the last seven years. "Telluride is so far away from everything, no one ever goes down there to check it out," says Reaves.

The lanky, six-foot four-inch Reaves is known, or wants to be known, for serious bigness in freeriding exploits, but his uncanny natural talent in the gates separates him from his contemporaries. The '91 Junior Men's USASA National Amateur Champ crushes the field in most races. Last winter, Rocket faced off against the country's top pro racers in a Rocky Mountain Series GS held during halfpipe day of the Op Pro at Copper. He finished third—behind Mike Jacoby and Shannon Melhuse. This was accomplished with no coach, about four days of training, and a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward racing. "For me, racing is boring," says Rocket. "You've got to train a whole lot, and that's not really what I want to do."

Fresh out of Telluride High, Rocket faces the challenge of making a living as a pro snowboarder without competing. "That's why I want to race a little, because I know I can win some money. I'd like to get in on the snowboard movie scene, too, for sure," says Reaves.

Aggression Snowboards, Rocket's primary sponsor, plans to promote him as one of their top team riders. "Dave Dowd, Tarquin Robbins, and Rocket are the big three on the team this year," says Aggression owner Matt Nipper. "We're letting Rocket concentrate on freeriding—doin' whatever the hell he wants—but we'll have him show up at a World Cup race or two, wearing baggy pants, to dust a few of those guys."

Rocket had his brush with TV stardom in a fifteen-minute segment of ESPN's *Scholastic Sports America*. Kind of ironic for a guy who's the first to admit that he's no model citizen. It's difficult to be one when you grow up in a town where Rastafarians serve on the town council.

But Rocket's priorities remain in place. Number one: being the first person up Telluride's chair nine on a powder day. Some may say he's wasting raw talent, not training religiously, and jetting around the world seeking accolades. Rocket might be Overall World Champion now, but the urge to freeride has prevented such a title, and probably always will. Why should Rocket be motivated to leave when everything he's ever wanted is in his own backyard?

—JAMIE MEISELMAN