

Snowboarding's journey to being welcomed at the Olympics

By History.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.22.18

Word Count **597**

Level **840L**



Image 1. Chloe Kim, of the United States, jumps during the women's halfpipe qualifying round at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea. The halfpipe is a track with ramps on both sides. It can be used for skateboarding or snowboarding. Photo: Kin Cheung/AP

Chloe Kim's performance at the Winter Olympics has made her one of the world's most famous snowboarders. But snowboarding was not a part of the Olympics until 20 years ago. Snowboarding is fairly new when compared with sports like skiing, which has been an official sport for more than 100 years. Our ancestors even used wooden boards to slide on snow thousands of years ago.

Snowboarding only came after surfing and skateboarding had become popular. Like skiing, surfing is also very old. The idea of riding waves on a wooden board spread to teenagers in California about 100 years ago. But native people of Hawaii and other Polynesian islands had been surfing for hundreds of years. Polynesia is an area in the Pacific Ocean.

Surfing Meets Snow

About 70 years ago, young people started attaching wheels to boards. This way, they could "surf" sidewalks. These were the first skateboards. But if teens could ride waves and sidewalks, why not

snow? That's what American inventor Sherman Poppen thought in the mid-1960s. He decided to bind together a set of children's skis for his daughters. By doing this, he made one of the first kinds of snowboards.

It's not clear who first tried to bring the idea of surfing to winter sports. It is not hard to imagine that some kids had already tried it on their sleds. But Poppen was the first person to sell snowboards. He called them Snurfers.

For a while, the sport itself was called snurfing.

Snowboarding Bursts Onto The Scene

Between the 1960s and 1980s, people competed in snurfing contests. Soon, other companies began to sell their own Snurfers. Poppen trademarked the name. That means he registered the name "Snurfer" with the government. Afterward, he officially owned the word "Snurfing."

If Poppen had not done that, companies might have kept using the same word for the boards that were invented later. We might be watching "snurfing," not "snowboarding," at the Olympics today. Instead, the new boards were called snowboards.

Snowboarders began riding down the slopes at ski mountain resorts in the 1970s. At first, these resorts and their guests did not welcome snowboarders. Many resorts would not let snowboarders use their ski lifts, which carry people the tops of mountains.

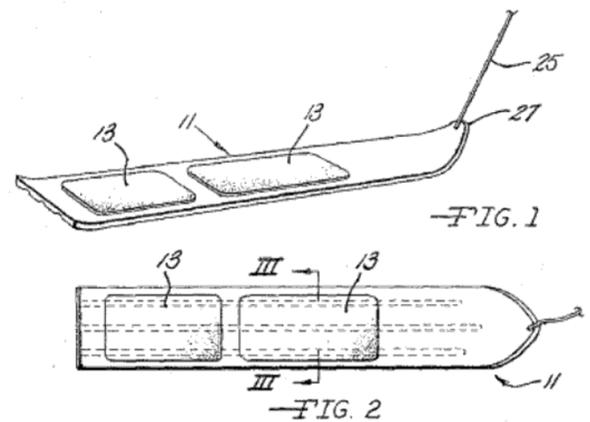
But by the 1990s, most resorts had changed the rules, says the International Olympic Committee or IOC. This is the group that makes decisions about the Olympic games.

Welcome To The Olympics

Soon after, snowboarding finally got its moment in the spotlight. The X-Games were started in 1995 by the sports TV channel ESPN. They were a way to show off "extreme sports" like surfing, skateboarding and skiing. In response, the Olympics began adding more extreme sports. The IOC hoped to draw in the same younger viewers who were watching the X-Games.

Snowboarding finally appeared at the 1998 Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Twenty years later, it is now an important part of the Winter Games.

During the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, its importance was shown by how much the different TV networks talked about snowboarding. For example, NBC reported a lot on the success of gold-medalist Shaun White.



Quiz

- 1 What effect did the X-Games have on snowboarding?
- (A) They demonstrated that the rules of snowboarding would have to be changed to make it more popular.
 - (B) They illustrated the popularity of snowboarding and convinced the IOC to make it part of the Olympics.
 - (C) They convinced most ski resorts to allow snowboarders to use their slopes and lifts alongside skiers.
 - (D) They emphasized that snowboarding was an extremely dangerous sport and made people afraid to do it.
- 2 According to the section "Snowboarding Bursts Onto The Scene," HOW did the name of the sport get changed from "snurfing" to "snowboarding"?
- (A) Many companies used the name snurfers and snurfing, but then one man invented and trademarked the name snowboarding.
 - (B) Early in the sport people competed in snurfing contests, but the name was changed by the IOC's rules about how people could compete.
 - (C) The government owned the name snurfing, so all private companies and ski resorts had to use a different name to attract customers.
 - (D) One man registered and owned the name snurfing, so other companies had to come up with a new name for boards they invented later.

- 3 Read the paragraph from the section "Surfing Meets Snow."

It's not clear who first tried to bring the idea of surfing to winter sports. It is not hard to imagine that some kids had already tried it on their sleds. But Poppen was the first person to sell snowboards. He called them Snurfers.

Which option is the MOST accurate explanation of the paragraph?

- (A) People had likely snowboarded on sleds, but nobody had ever sold a snowboard before Sherman Poppen.
 - (B) Sherman Poppen did not actually invent snowboards because people had been selling them for years.
 - (C) People were getting injured from snowboarding on sleds, so Sherman Poppen invented a Snurfer.
 - (D) Sherman Poppen got the idea of making a snowboard after watching his children surfing on their sleds.
- 4 Which sentence from the article MOST CLEARLY shows that some people did NOT like snowboarding when it first started?
- (A) But snowboarding was not a part of the Olympics until 20 years ago.
 - (B) Snowboarding only came after surfing and skateboarding had become popular.
 - (C) Many resorts would not let snowboarders use their ski lifts, which carry people the tops of mountains.
 - (D) But by the 1990s, most resorts had changed the rules, says the International Olympic Committee or IOC.