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Thayne Mahler is one of a growing number of riders who can do this trick.
PHOTO: **Andy Wright**

Get On Board

ADAPTIVE ACTION SPORTS CONNECTS RIDERS WITH DISABILITIES.

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."—**Charles Darwin**

Countless clichés echo Darwin's ideas about adaptability for good reason: one's ability to roll with the inevitable adversities of life and, well, make lemonade remains the truest testament to character. Meet Amy Purdy. Purdy is the cofounder and executive director of Adaptive Action Sports, a California-based nonprofit organization that helps people with permanent physical disabilities get involved in action sports, specifically snowboarding.

Purdy is a snowboarder and a double below-the-knee amputee. When she was nineteen, she contracted bacterial meningitis and almost lost her life. Miraculously she survived, and although she had to have both legs amputated, she was back on snow and strapped in seven months after she left the hospital.

"All I cared about at the time was snowboarding, and I didn't know who I'd be if I didn't have that," Purdy said. "So I remember thinking, 'Well, if I have to be the first double-amputee snowboarder, then I'll just have to be the first.'" So Purdy set out to see what she could learn about snowboarding with prosthetics but had a hard time finding any information specific to

Thayne had no problem adapting to the pow in the Austrian Alps.
PHOTO: **Andy Wright**



"I HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS PROGRAM—NOT JUST FOR WHAT THEY HAVE PHYSICALLY OVERCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR SPORTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE LOVE AND PASSION THEY HAVE FOR THEIR SPORTS."—**Thayne Mahler**

shredding. She did about a year of "compulsive research" and still didn't discover much. Then she saw a show that featured Burton team rider Thayne Mahler, a single-leg amputee. She made a few calls and ended up asking Mahler himself for advice.

"I just want to know everything you know," Purdy remembers saying to Mahler. She learned to shred all over again, entered competitions, and in time realized the need for an organization geared specifically toward those who've lost limbs but who don't see that as a reason to stop snowboarding. "We just saw a niche that needed to be filled," Purdy said. The "we" refers to fellow Cofounder and Executive Director Daniel Gale.

"The idea is just to create a community," Gale said, "so more people can get out and realize action sports are not out of reach." Last year, Purdy, Gale, and more than a dozen other adaptive shredders traveled to the USASA Nationals to compete. The event proved a huge success; the group turned a lot of heads and created a lot more awareness for the adaptive snowboarders.

Gale and Purdy said they hope to have at least 30 athletes at Nationals this winter, and until then they've got a lot more in store for the snowy months. Already in the works is a week at one of Windell's winter snowboard camps. They're also hoping to create a World Cup event for adaptive athletes, which would be the first step toward getting into the Paralympics. Visit adaptiveactionsports.org for more information.—**Liam Gallagher**