



photos Guy Napert-Frenette/Canadian Snowboard Federation

Michael Lambert

by Andrea Lowe

If while growing up, you were blessed with any level of athletic ability you likely harboured dreams of one day making your mark in the world of professional sports, perhaps even being good enough to represent your country on an Olympic stage.

But would you hold on to those aspirations if you knew what it really took to make it? Though raw talent will get you so far, simply wanting it isn't enough.

You've got to live, eat and breathe those dreams, constantly push your limits, and when you think you've had enough, you've got to find it in yourself to push even harder. Only then might those gold medal dreams take you places.

Michael Lambert had what it took. With a 2006 Austrian National Championship and 2006 Junior World Championship silver medal under his belt, the alpine snowboarding phenom will be one of the elite athletes representing Canada at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.



THE BIO

HOME TOWN:
Toronto, ON

HOME MOUNTAIN:
Caledon Ski Club

YEARS ON NATIONAL TEAM:
2

BEST MOMENT IN CAREER & WHY:
Qualifying 1st at the 2007 Russian World Cup. It was when I finally proved I was as good as I thought I was.

WHEN I WAS A KID I WANTED TO BE:
a Lawyer

FAVOURITE MUSIC:
Electronic

MOST RESPECTED SNOWBOARDERS:
Siegfried Grabner

OTHER MOST RESPECTED ATHLETES:
Roger Federer

ADVICE TO BEGINNERS:
Be confident

OTHER SPORTS:
sailing, wakeboarding, squash, longboarding, golf, tennis.

BEFORE I FINISH MY SNOWBOARDING CAREER I WANT TO:
Win

MENTORS:
Cameron Tudhope, Anne Lambert, Jasey-Jay Anderson



Like many professional athletes, his passion for sports began at a young age. At just two years old, an age when many of us still struggle with walking upright, Lambert was strapping on the skis and hitting the slopes. Ten years later, his need for speed landed him in the bindings of his first snowboard, and that's when things really took off. "When you're younger you might pick up a sport because you think it looks cool, and racing was always really fun for me. Being able to race on a snowboard was that much better," says Lambert who became serious about boarding shortly after. But as is true in any profession, it's not all about having fun. Maintaining a competitive edge requires hours of practice time which can be especially tough when you're training for a seasonal sport. Averaging about 220 days of on-snow training each year has required Lambert to adopt the lifestyle of a backward snowbird; He's constantly on the road in search of fresh powder, spending the majority of his time scattered across Europe and Chile or hitting the slopes closer to home at Whistler or Mammoth. "For a typical day of on-snow training, I wake up at about 6 a.m. and get in a couple warm up runs," says Lambert. "That means I'm just running gates with a timing system on them, or sometimes we set up sort of a duel and race each other like in an

elimination round. Other days it might just be free riding where I'm focusing on a lot of technical work for hours." Even in the summer months, when snow is scarcely found and most of us are shifting into low gear, Lambert takes it up a notch. "In the beginning of the summer, I hit the gym almost every day and do massive amounts of sprinting, like two hours of sprinting to try and build a cardio base. Toward the middle of the summer I switch to a lot of weight work to try and build strength. It's just tons and tons of weights and tons and tons of reps to try and build explosion and power," he says. Giving up your summers and opting to live out of a suitcase for the majority of a year would definitely test even the most disciplined of athletes, never mind one not too far out of high school, but you won't hear Lambert complaining. "If anything snowboarding straightened me out after high school. I was definitely a loose cannon and it really provided me with a focus. It gave me somewhere to put my time and energy." Despite the long hours and hard work required to maintain his edge, Lambert says there has never been a time when he's felt like quitting. On the days when he has trouble getting out of bed, he reminds himself that as a professional athlete, he's got it good, and anything he has to





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complain about really isn't worth listening to. When things get really tough, he looks to his teammates to stay focused.

"My teammates are a huge inspiration. One of the guys, Jasey-Jay Anderson, he's like a four-time world snowboarding champion, and he's the most successful snowboarder in history. He won a championship again this year at 32 years old, and he is definitely one of the guys that inspires me. He's had huge ups and downs in his career, but he's never given up and always manages to ride to the top again," says Lambert.

And with the Olympics returning to home turf in less than a year and an entire country caught up in Olympic fever, the enormity of the situation has definitely sunk in, but Lambert is working hard to maintain his focus.

"A lot of people have been trying to apply more pressure, but the people who are applying the pressure are the people who don't really care about you – they just want a medal out of you. Those are the people I don't really care about. Winning a medal is very, very important to me, but it's important to do it for me. I've worked really hard to make a distinction between wanting to achieve my goals and trying to do it for the people who call you up wanting to give you funding because they just want their name attached to a medal."

While he definitely appreciates the support from fans and fellow Canadians, Lambert finds the fickle support for Canadian athletes to be a frustrating element of Canadian sports in general.

"You've got all these people running ads and putting way more money into

programs than they normally would, just because they want the glory that'll come with winning a medal. They want it for the wrong reasons. I'm out there doing it for the people who really care about me. The ones who support me no matter what and don't base my worth on whether or not I win a medal."

If all goes as planned, come February Lambert will be standing atop Olympic podium in Vancouver, with the whole country proudly looking on. And if you'll be in the area, stop by, because Lambert says alpine snowboarding is a sport that is much better appreciated in person.

"Cameras don't do it any justice. People never really understand how fast we're actually going. We're travelling downhill anywhere from 70-85 km/h, but it doesn't look that way when you're watching it on TV."

