

BACK TO BASICS

Snowboarding icon Jeremy Jones stays true to roots. By Eric Smith

Long before Jeremy Jones (right) was shredding the world's gnarliest descents on his namesake snowboard, he was just another kid sliding down the mellow hills of a Cape Cod golf course on an old Burton Backhill.

Growing up in Massachusetts in the early 1980s, Jones and his brothers Steve and Todd – the founders of Teton Gravity Research – made their first turns on that golf course, an experience that sparked in each of them a lifelong passion for snowboarding.

"It's where a lot of people learned to slide down snow," Jones says.

Now the star of numerous action sports films, creator of a successful snowboard line and founder of the non-profit organization Protect Our Winters, Jones has ascended to snowboarding icon. Yet he remains true to his roots when it comes to his role as an ambassador for the sport.

Jones taught his kids to ride on a small hill at his North Lake Tahoe house by putting them on a binding-less board and letting them glide down – "stand-up sledding," as he calls it. Without the need for expensive equipment or lift tickets, the hill proved the ideal training ground for his kids and their friends, much like Jones's own origins.

"In a lot of ways, that is where it should all start," he says. "Less is more, especially with kids."

Jones didn't take his children to a lift-operated ski area until they were a few years older because he believes the purest experience of skiing and snowboarding doesn't require a destination trip to a megaresort, which can be expensive and intimidating for many families.

He instead preaches the simple pleasures of snow sports – the giddy joy of sliding down a slope on an inner tube or a sled or a binding-less board with friends and family, followed by a roaring bonfire and a cup of hot chocolate.

This is the secret to growing snow sports participation, he says – more people learning how to ski and snowboard on backyard hills or golf courses before they graduate to their local ski area. And once they do, simplifying the "house-to-chairlift" process will bring even more people to the sport and foster lifelong engagement. This grassroots approach might even create the next Jeremy Jones.

"All the pieces are there," Jones says. The question now is, "How do we connect the dots?"

