

Interview with Ursula Bruhin

When did you start snowboarding?

I started snowboarding in 1991 and to compete in 1994.

When did you realize that you were good?

My parents realized it first. When I was only three or four years old we went up on a mountain to ski down. My parents were worried how they would get me down but I enjoyed it and had lots of fun that day. My father was very sporty – kayak, diving, roller-blading. Perhaps that's where I got it from!

When I started to compete it was because of my friends encouraging me to. Immediately I came in the top 10 so I realized, I was excellent.

How did you feel the first time you represented Switzerland?

I had mixed feelings. My friends were really proud and excited about my success. The Swiss Ski federation made dubious selections before the Olympic Winter Games and we always had fights to keep our own Sponsors. It was disappointing. We had to fight to get the finance and support we needed. That spoiled it for me.

How did you become a Christian?

It was in 1998. I had grown up going to church but only out of a sense of duty. When I left home to live in Zermatt, I stopped. Then in 1998 I was in something of a crisis. I got injured, had surgery on my knee and then my boy-friend left me. I put on weight because I could not exercise and my self esteem dropped. I felt angry with my boy-friend.

My sister went to a Bible Study School and seemed so happy. She said, "I believe God wants the best for you but first you need to forgive your ex boy friend". I said that I couldn't and she suggested that I prayed that God would give me the strength. He answered my prayer. I was able to forgive him and suddenly I was free from hate and anger. I started a new life as a Christian. It showed me that if you ask God, he will help you, bless and heal you.

Gradually my faith grew and I came to see God as the source of power. I realized that whether I won or lost was in God's hands, that he was in control.

God and sport?

Before I became a Christian, I was afraid God would want to make me a nun. But I believe God wanted me to stay in snowboarding. That motivated me when I was tired and ready to give up. I prayed and asked God: "Do you want me to stay in the sport?". One day I was jogging and listening to music and I felt God say "Yes". The memory of that time kept me going when the training was hard.

How did the team react to your faith?

At first people would laugh at me and the other Christians in the team. Gradually they started to ask questions and to be interested in what we believed. When they talked with me 1-2-1 they clearly wanted to know more. The Christians in the team started to pray together for the others.

Hard to be a Christian?

Not at all. It is great to know that God is with me all the time.

Sometimes I feel challenged about my motivation. Do I just want to win for me? I needed to learn to win for God.

Once I was sick and I asked God why this happened in the middle of an important competition and told him he needed to give me strength. He did and I won.

It reminded me of Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts".

In the next race I was completely healthy and sure I would win but I crashed. That experience taught me that winning was God's gift, not something that came from my own strength.

Biggest disappointment

In 2002 I was number one in the world. I was sure to make the Swiss Olympic team. I crashed in the first race in the Olympic trial and came second in the second race. The selectors told me if I did well in the next World Cup race they would talk to me. I won the race and never heard from them. I was number one in the world and I was not selected for the Olympics...

I was really disappointed. I could not understand why, if God wanted the best for me, I was not going to the Olympics. Then I came to realize: God wanted the best for me then not going to the Olympics must be God's best for me.

The support friends gave me was my gold medal. Perhaps that was what God wanted me to learn.

Difference Jesus makes in your life?

Having Jesus in my life makes a big difference. Even if you fail, God can make the best of it. He stands behind you and carries you through the difficult times. I don't know how I would survive without God.

Knowing that whatever I do in competition is good enough and doesn't affect what God thinks of me.

Why do you need God when you are successful?

To get to the top in world of sport there is so much pressure. People may think you have everything in life but I have learned that knowing Jesus and being loved by him is the only thing that can really satisfy me.

Bible verse?

Neh 8:10 The joy of the Lord is your strength.

I have had so many great experiences with my God and I realize how much he has generously given me. – Believe in him!

Career highlights

2006 Olympics 7th Parallel Giant Slalom

4 x Worldcampion

6 x Swischampion

World Cup Number 1 in 2000 / 2002 / 2003

World Cup Number 2 in 2004 / 2005

World Cup Number 3 in 2006

2000-2006 Winner of 20 World Cup races