

Josh Dueck

Speaker Profile



Learning to ski at 13 led to a dream for Josh Dueck, and he started to live it right after high school — making the B.C. freestyle team, working to qualify for Canada’s national development team.

The financial demands of competition led Josh to coaching and sharing his passion for sport as head coach of the Silver Star Freestyle Ski Club in Vernon. It was then that the dream crash-landed.

Preparing students for the 2004 Canadian junior nationals, Josh was too fast on a demonstration jump. “Intuition said stop, but my ego made me go,” he remembers.

Overshooting the landing hill, he dropped 100 feet and completely smashed his body —breaking his back and flipping his world upside-down. Bent in an impossible direction, the spine was severed. At 23, Josh was paralyzed from the waist down.

“You’re going to rock the world in a wheelchair and be back on the mountain riding a sit ski before you know it,” said the emergency room doctor. Josh had coached his kids, and the statement from someone in the skiing community helped ease the sense of loss.

“It was an amazing moment, a profound experience,” says Josh. “It gave me a sense of direction to focus on my abilities and not my disability.”

Josh has been making that point ever since — working through the inpatient part of rehab in one third the expected time, getting back on a ski hill nine months after his fall and winning three Canadian championships by 2007.

Since then, Josh has been an international winner for the Canadian Para Alpine Ski Team, winning the world championships in 2009. Now meeting all the criteria for the next Paralympics, he’s determined to win for Canada there.

The dream is alive and well, and Josh credits three lessons learned from his injury:

- ▶ Trust your gut instinct when it says something is wrong.
- ▶ Know that how you see the world shapes what you can do.
- ▶ Find your passion, and dream big.

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