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Diabetic snowboarder Sean Busby rides 7 continents

By **EDDIE PELLIS (AP National Writer)**
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AP - Sports



While a few of his former teammates were competing for gold, silver and bronze, Sean Busby was rounding out a set hardly any Olympian can dream of.

It started 10,500 feet high at a base camp and ended hours later on his snowboard in Morocco's Toubkal National Park.

By riding the highest mountain range in North Africa, Busby became the first person with Type 1 diabetes to snowboard the backcountry on all seven continents.

"When I finally got back, I got texts about Vic getting double gold medals and that sort of stuff," Busby said of his friend, Vic Wild, the American-born rider who won two snowboarding golds for his adopted country of Russia. "But while I was up there, I had no connection to the outside world."

At one point, Busby dreamed it might be him climbing to the top of the Olympic podium as a snowboard racer.

But his out-of-control and misdiagnosed illness that hit more than 10 years ago, at age 19, held him back.

Vomiting. Dangerous weight loss - 30 pounds in the span of 12 days. Pneumonia that set in as a result of doctors' inability to control the other symptoms. Busby lived with an incorrect diagnosis for three months - doctors first told him he had Type 2 diabetes. Turned out, he had Type 1.

Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease and sufferers are dependent on insulin; Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for more than 90 percent of all diabetes, is often associated with older age, obesity and physical inactivity. Sufferers can often feel better by controlling their diets and don't always need insulin.

While Busby was in search for a correct diagnosis, his sponsors left him in droves.

"One of them told me they didn't want to support an athlete who was chronically sick," he said.

After he got the right diagnosis, and the insulin to combat it, Busby started looking for his second act.

In search of something different than racing, he took his cue from some of the great adventurers in his sport - among them, Jeremy Jones and the late Craig Kelly. To the backcountry he went.

"It's the reason I got involved in the sport when I was 12 in the first place," said Busby, who lives in Whitefish, Mont. "It's the sense of adventure. The sense of getting away from it all. It's the true spirit of snowboarding."





Busby founded a charitable organization, Riding on Insulin, that raises money to give kids with Type 1 diabetes the same chance at adventure Busby has enjoyed. Busby also touts the OmniPod, a tubeless insulin pump that allows him to regulate his insulin without the constant injections that many who have the disease need.



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Among other places, Busby has ridden the backcountry in Tasmania, Norway's Lyngen Alps, Kyrgyzstan, Patagonia and throughout the Canadian Yukon, Newfoundland and the United States.

Though the ascent in Morocco allowed him to cross the last continent off his list, he's not done with his adventure.

He plans on leading a backcountry trip through Norway for people who have Type 1 diabetes. There's a trip to Greenland in the works. He's surrounding himself with people who have the same disease he has - spreading the word that anything is possible.

"You're moving at your own pace and it's your own two feet guiding you through it," he said. "I've been able to meet amazing people, see amazing cultures and learn amazing things."

On the Internet: <http://ridingoninsulin.org> ; <https://www.myomnipod.com/> ; <http://www.twosticksandaboard.com/>

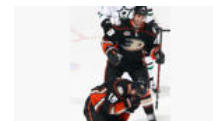
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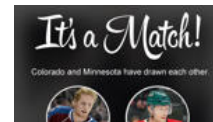
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