

Fil-Am snowboarding pioneer

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to snowboard for the Philippine team and we began to compete in different World Cup events."

Making the switch

The question remains, how does a person quit a very lucrative job to pursue a career into a fairly new sport?

"There was just something about snowboarding that I fell in love with," said Serina to the *Asian Journal*. "It's so unconventional...it was very out of the ordinary for me to make this leap but I don't know, it was a calling, it was something I couldn't deny."

Serina was born in the US but lived in the Philippines for a few years while growing up.

When she was five years old her dream was to work in Wall Street, she said.

But after graduating from NYU, and accepting her dream position for a premiere investment-banking firm, she felt like there was something missing.

In 1997, while vacationing with her family, she was introduced to snowboarding. She had skied a few times before but it wasn't anything like the feeling you got from snowboarding, she said.

"For me, it's like a feeling of flying," she said. "It's like being free. Skiing, you have the poles and the skis [but] with

snowboarding you have a minimal amount of equipment that it almost feels like you're a bird, whizzing by, and you're really interacting with the environment and it makes you really appreciate nature."

"You're in nature," she added. "And it's not just because you're outside. You're in this amazing, grand mountain and it really makes you feel like this tiny speck in the earth. It gives you an appreciation of how great the world is."

Over the years, her passion for snowboarding grew. She quit her corporate job and dedicated her life to snowboarding.

She said the hardest moment for her was telling her parents about the venture.

"At first I told my mom," said Serina. "She was skeptical. She had never seen me snowboarding. But my mom talked to me and she was kind of used to me having these crazy hair brain ideas."

"My dad was very supportive," added Serina. "He loves sports. He was very supportive of the idea. I think it's because he wanted a professional athlete in the family."

And the risk is paying off.

For the past nine years, Serina has been the team captain for the Philippine National Snow-



Photos courtesy of firstfilipina.com

board Team. She's competed in over 120 races, 24 World Cups, and 8 World Championships. In 2005, she had her best finish winning the Bronze Medal in a National Championship race in Finland.

Now, the 34-year-old has set her sights to something bigger.

With the 2010 Winter Olympics right around the corner, she's hoping to qualify and become the first female athlete in snowboarding to represent the Philippines at a Winter Olympic Game.

"It's sort of like the Jamaican bobsled team," said Serina. "You hear about these small countries that don't have the climate condition for the winter Olympics yet they were able to enter the people who qualify. There's just something about representing

your culture and country."

However, her task to qualify for the Olympics is difficult. She receives no funding from the Philippine government and faces opponents who have been snowboarding since the time they could stand. Serina began snowboarding at the age of 20.

Serina said that doesn't bother her. She's mentally and emotionally prepared herself to handle the obstacles.

"It would mean a lot to me and my family if I were to represent the Philippines," she said. "I know my hard work will certainly pay off."

She advises those planning to pursue a career in snowboarding to "talk to someone like me or Jondre Reyes Mina. You have to talk to someone who has done it. Be prepared and really have the passion for it." ■



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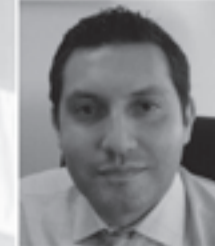
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