



AFTER 20 YEARS OF 'BOARDING AND 11 AS A MEDICAL TRAINER AT THE WINTER X GAMES, ROBB BLACKABY KNOWS WELL THE HAZARDS THAT CONFRONT THOSE IN THE ACTION WORLD. WHICH POSITIONS HIM AND HIS FIRM, MEDICINE IN MOTION, TO HANDLE ANY HURTS THAT ARISE DURING WINTER X 15.

6 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT KEEPING X-GAMERS IN ONE PIECE

BY ROBB BLACKABY,
CO-COORDINATOR OF
MEDICAL SERVICES
FOR WINTER X
AS TOLD TO
LARUE COOK

1. WE KNOW THE TALK ... "MIM has a staff of 25 to 30 certified athletic trainers and physicians. It's not necessary to have a winter sports background, but it does help to understand the biomechanics of tricks. Being able to ask a rider, 'Did you twist your knee on that switch McTwist?' creates a bond and calms them down."

2... AND THE TERRAIN. "We assign teams beforehand to specific events, so they get a chance to know the venue and athletes. And we ride each course to identify fast or dangerous spots and consult with the builders and athletes to learn where best to be, to ensure the quickest response. Of course, we always have people at the top and bottom."

3. MORE RIDERS MEANS MORE PROBLEMS. "Skier X and Snowboarder X are the riskiest events because they involve lots of athletes jockeying for position, which can take them off their lines or even the course. As a result, we may have to respond to two or three hurt riders at a time. That's tricky."

4. IN CASE OF INJURY, EVERYBODY STAYS CALM. "When a rider goes down, we break out our stabilization plan. First, we assess the injury and contact an ambulance if needed. Depending on the severity, we then stabilize the athlete with splints on the extremities and a collar on the neck. Once they've been secured to a spine board, ski patrol helps us transport them. By then, the crowd has been cleared, and a ride will be waiting."

5. SAFETY IS ALWAYS FIRST. "The X Games producers are very supportive. They open gates, shut off music, clear courses—whatever we need. We get lots of time to adequately treat the athletes, and we've never been warned about barging into a broadcast."

6. WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON THE FRONT END, TOO. "I became a trainer because of the lack of care I saw in the field. When I rode, we'd duct-tape our ankles. Now, we advocate real prevention. We want to be asked about stretching, body work and wraps before runs. We'll check you after, too."