

Red Gerard Prepares to Land Runs in Quest for Second Olympic Gold

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At the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games, Team Toyota athlete [Red Gerard](#) became the youngest snowboarder to ever win gold for Team USA. The then 17-year-old was also the youngest male U.S. Olympian to win gold in 90 years — a moment that was both very exciting and a little intimidating for the teenager.

“After winning, I didn’t really know what I was getting myself into,” Gerard says. “There are a lot of media tours and traveling after something like that. It’s very cool, but I also had some maturing to do at that age, and I’m happy with what came out of that experience.”

When Gerard was named to Team USA for PyeongChang, he went into the competition with no expectations—he just wanted to land all his runs. Gerard has been participating in snowboarding competitions since he was a kid and grew up watching the X Games® and Dew Tour®. He says that, in the snowboarding community, those contests are just as big as the Olympics, but the extensive media coverage and attention surrounding the Games was an adjustment.

“The one thing that I’m still not used to is how much media is there,” he says. “There are a lot more people and you’re on a bigger stage. But I think it’s something I feel a little better about. I’m working on not treating the Olympics any differently than any other contest.”

Heading into what could be his second Games, Gerard feels more prepared for the busy schedule and the exciting environment. The young athlete believes he’s grown a lot in the past four years, and at 21, he is hoping to go into Beijing 2022 with the original game plan: simply landing all his runs.

“I’d like to stay healthy, hopefully not get hurt, and just land runs,” he says. “Each season I go in with the same attitude and same goal: Let’s land runs. After that, it’s up to the judges, not me. It’s such a cool experience, so I just want to do my part and then make the most of it.”



The Olympic Learning Curve

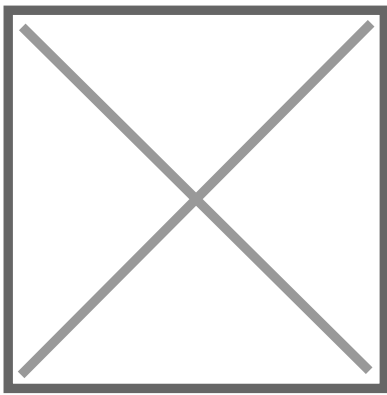
Gerard grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and is one of eight siblings. While he and his brothers started snowboarding at a young age, Gerard got more serious about the sport when his family moved to Colorado almost 10 years ago. Gerard's brother Brendan was also a professional snowboarder at one point, and his brother Malachi is the Olympian's videographer. So, the pair travel together, snowboarding and filming. Gerard primarily competes in snowboard slopestyle, although he participated in a few halfpipe competitions in the early years.

“It’s a mix of rails and jumps, combined into a 45-second or so run,” he says. “Snowboard slopestyle got brought into the Olympics in 2014, so it’s relatively new in that sense, but on the mountain, it’s been around for a while.”

At his home resort, Copper Mountain in Colorado, Gerard will spend anywhere from two to six hours snowboarding a day, training with his friends and brothers. He also works with the coach from Team USA, whom he has known since he was 13 years old. He focuses on recovery during off days, especially when he’s traveling for a training camp.

“After snowboarding, I just try to recover my body so I can set myself up for the next day,” he says. “Stretching, taking a bath or something. Resting and recovery is really important because jet lag definitely plays a factor whenever you’re competing in Europe.”

Taking care of his body is something the young snowboarder has learned over the years through a bit of trial and error. As a young athlete, he didn’t realize how rest can be tied to his overall athletic performance.



“There’s a learning curve,” he says. “You’ve got to figure out how your body works and what’s the best for your mental state. Traveling each weekend to different contests and stuff takes a lot on your body, so it’s experience and getting used to putting yourself in uncomfortable situations.”

Though Gerard has learned a lot from the experience, he also credits the advice he’s received over the years from older athletes. Spending time with other snowboarders has taught him not only new skills, but also the importance of staying positive after tough competitions.

“For me, it’s all about moving on,” he says. “It happened, you didn’t do great, it happens to the best of athletes, and you’ve just got to get past it. I feel so lucky because we really do have some good humans in our sport and a lot of them look out for the younger riders and are always giving us advice.”

Red’s Backyard

One day Gerard hopes he’ll be one of those older athletes giving advice and looking out for up-and-coming snowboarders. He’s noticed the way snowboarders are invested in the sport’s unique culture and wants to be a part of keeping it that way. That’s why he created Red’s Backyard® — a collection of free “hike” parks for snowboarding – inspired by the mini park in the Gerard family’s backyard.

When his family initially moved to Colorado, one of the first things Gerard and his brothers talked about was how the yard had a slope with the perfect pitch for a backyard park. Over the next few winters, the brothers installed a variety of rails and jumps in the yard, complete with a rope tow.

In partnership with ski operator Powdr® and action sports company Woodward®, Gerard worked to establish three Red's Backyard hike parks — which feature rails of varying difficulty — across the country. The free hike parks are located at the bottom of mountains in Copper, Colorado; Killington, Vermont; and Park City, Utah, and allow people to snowboard for free.

“It’s been so cool,” he says. “It’s hard to get kids into snowboarding because it’s such an expensive sport. It’s been my passion project to try and give back to the community a little bit and get people to try out hike parks.”

His family, especially his mother, is very involved with the project and is always looking for new opportunities to grow the concept. Gerard says that Red's Backyard® will always be a work in progress and he’s hoping to expand to more resorts this year.

“We’ve had to learn a lot,” he says. “There are so many different rules and stuff you need to figure out in order to do it. There have been some pieces of the puzzle that are hard to put together, but the parks always come together. I’m excited for the future of it — I think it’s got some cool opportunities coming up and I’m ready to get the winter going.”