

The Flying  
**TOMATO**  
and the  
Olympics

By Sonia W. Black



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## CHAPTER ONE

# LOOK! UP IN THE AIR!

**Soaring** high above skate ramps and ski slopes! Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No! It's the red-haired **athlete** people call "The Flying Tomato"! Who is this athlete? He is superstar skateboarder and snowboarder Shaun White.

Shaun White is beyond awesome at both sports! He won gold medals at the Summer X Games, the Winter X Games, and the Winter Olympics. He amazes everyone with the far-out tricks he **performs** in midair. The Double McTwist 1260 is one of his most famous.



## CHAPTER TWO GENERATION X

Shaun's great fame has drawn lots of attention to his sports. In fact, snowboarding is one of the most **popular** sports in the Winter Olympics. It was not always that way. Sports **critics** called snowboarding an "extreme sport" or a "Generation X Sport." They said young people did it just for fun. Many people were not in favor of including the sport in the Winter Olympics. There was a lot of **debate** about it. Finally, snowboarding became an official Olympic sport. It appeared at the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Shaun White was only 12 years old then.

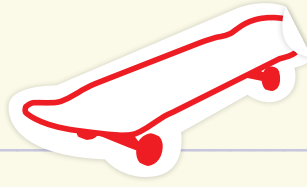


## CHAPTER THREE

# SKATEBOARDING AT THE OLYMPICS?

Today Shaun is a **major** attraction at the Winter Games. Fans would love to see him in action at the Summer Olympics, too. Yet skateboarding is not a sport in the Summer Olympics. While many people want this changed, some do not. As with snowboarding, there is much debate about it. Take a look at these sample letters. They show what some people think about the subject.





November 8, 2010

Ms. Bea Smart, President  
Shaun White Fan Club  
4 Skate Way  
Skatetown, USA



Dear Ms. Smart:

My name is Johnny Qu. I am 10 years old. I love skateboarding and I am a big fan of Shaun White.

I am writing this letter because I have a problem. It's about the Summer Olympic Games. My problem is this: I think a very important sport is missing. I want to ask you to help solve this problem. I think skateboarding should be added as a competition in the Games.

Here's why I think it is a problem that skateboarding is not in the Summer Olympics. First, people who go to the Summer Olympics now don't ever get to see the best skateboarders perform super stunts. Second, the Olympics' businesspeople could be making a lot more money. Third, skate parks in many neighborhoods need help.

I think the Summer Olympics should include skateboarding in their events for these reasons. First, people would get to see star skateboarders like Shaun White perform. Second, a researcher found that more advertisers would participate. That's because more people would be watching the events on TV or at the Olympic Park. More TV ads would mean more money for the sport. Third, one sports writer said Olympic skateboarding would bring more attention to the sport. Then more people would be interested in it. Then they would build or fix up skate parks in their neighborhoods.



Well, Ms. Smart, I hope you will start a petition to send to Olympics officials. I will sign the petition. All of my friends will sign it too. If skateboarding is in the Summer Olympics, it will make the Games better than ever. This would make a lot of people very happy, most of all, me, Shaun White's biggest fan!

Sincerely,  
Johnny Qu







# SHAUN WHITE OFFICIAL FAN CLUB

November 12, 2010

Johnny Qu  
1 Fan Lane  
Anytown, USA

Dear Johnny,

Thank you for your thoughtful letter. The Shaun White Fan Club loves hearing from great fans like you. I understand your wish to see skateboarding as a part of the Summer Olympic Games. Still, I must tell you that many people have a different idea about this topic. They do not agree with you. They may love Shaun's fantastic skateboarding skills as you do. Yet, they are against making skateboarding an Olympic sport.

Here are some of the reasons they give why this is not a good idea. First, adding skateboarding would hurt another sport. Second, skateboarders are independent athletes; they make up their own rules for the sport. Many of them think it's an art, not a sport. Third, skateboarding may not be as popular as some people think.

This is how they say it would affect the Olympic Games and the sport. First, if they added skateboarding, they would have to get rid of another Olympic sport. That's because they can only give out a certain number of medals. The Olympics is at that limit. Second, if skateboarding became an Olympic sport, skateboarders would have to stick to rules that the Olympic Committee set up. The sport would not be the same. Third, there may not be as big an audience at Olympic skateboarding events as some people expect.

Well, that is the other side of the debate. The Shaun White Fan Club agrees with you, though, Johnny. We want to see skateboarding in the Summer Olympics, too. So we will start a petition to send to the Olympic Committee. I trust that many of Shaun's fans, like you, will sign it. Who knows? One day soon we may see Shaun White performing high-flying stunts for crowds at the Summer Olympics!

Sincerely,

*Bea Swant*

President, Shaun White Fan Club



Opening Ceremony,  
2010 Winter Olympics

These sample letters present just a few of the thoughts from both sides. In truth, Olympic Committee members have **discussed** the many points of this issue. It is not a lost cause. One official from the **International Olympic Committee** said in an interview, “We are doing our best to introduce skateboarding for 2012.” Others say it will likely happen in 2016. So, when will we really see skateboarders, such as U.S. superstar Shaun White, compete at the Summer Olympics? Who knows? For now, the answer is still up in the air.

# GLOSSARY

**athlete:** a person who participates in sports.

**debate:** a discussion between two people or groups who disagree or have different views on a subject.

**committee:** a group of persons chosen to give attention to, or decide, on a certain matter.

**critic:** a person whose work is to judge and share opinions about a certain area, topic, or event.

**discuss:** to talk together about.

**international:** between two or more countries.

**major:** great in importance.

**perform:** to do or present for the entertainment of an audience.

**popular:** liked or enjoyed by many people.

**soar:** to fly or glide at a very great height.