

You get what you see in Rebagliati

Cory Wolfe, Saskatchewan News Network; CanWest News Service

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SASKATOON -- As a regular feature, StarPhoenix sports reporter Cory Wolfe gets personal with sports figures. Today, Olympic snowboarding gold medallist Ross Rebagliati gets cornered. Rebagliati was stripped of his medal in 1998 after a drug test revealed traces of marijuana in his system, but that decision was soon overturned.

Wolfe: You're planning a comeback for the 2010 Olympics at Vancouver-Whistler. You'll be 38. How will you respond to young punks who ask, "Who's the old guy?"

Rebagliati: I'll be loud and proud out there. It won't bother me at all. I remember in Nagano, I was like 26, and there were a couple of guys who were my age now, 35 or whatever. There's respect for those guys because they did all of the footwork and got the sport growing.

Wolfe: When was the last time you did an interview when someone didn't ask you about marijuana?

Rebagliati: Ummm, honestly a couple of months ago, I got some questions from a business magazine in Vancouver and they were talking about infrastructure and what we see in the future as far as people versus space. (Not getting asked about marijuana) does happen occasionally. (Laughs)

Wolfe: Name three famous people whose cell numbers you possess.

Rebagliati: I could call Brendan Fehr from CSI: Miami . . . Robyn Regehr . . . Jason Priestley . . . Keanu Reeves . . .

Wolfe: Pick five adjectives to describe yourself.

Rebagliati: Light-hearted. Not-too-serious. Serious. Motivated. Busy.

Wolfe: What song would people be surprised to find in your iPod?

Rebagliati: Hmmm, I don't know. I've got some Stevie Ray Vaughn, AC-DC, Snoop Dogg, Bob Marley ... I think you'd be surprised to find everything except for maybe country. It's not that I don't like country; I just don't have any. I've got some Ben Harper and Finley Quaye and maybe some weird song from the Spin Doctors from when I was in high school and I keep it on hand just for nostalgic reasons.

Wolfe: What's your best party trick?

Rebagliati: Disappearing. (Laughs) I'll show up somewhere for a while and hang out and then I'll just disappear.

Wolfe: How would your life be different if your gold medal had not been reinstated?

Rebagliati: Oh, it would be tragic probably. (Laughs) It was pretty tragic anyways and I got to keep it. It wasn't my lifelong ambition to be recognized for what most people recognize me for now. You get the good with the bad, right?

Wolfe: Forget the international uproar that your positive test created. Did you get in trouble with your mom?

Rebagliati: (Laughs) No, I didn't. I didn't get in trouble with anybody in my family. I never really got in trouble with anybody. A couple of mean letters in the mail ... Maybe a death threat or two came from some real psychos, but that was about it.

Wolfe: Would you give up your gold medal for world peace?

Rebagliati: Yeah, if I could somehow create world peace by giving up my gold medal, then I'd do that. Without hesitation. World peace? That'd be pretty good. (Laughs)

Wolfe: What's the most hurtful thing you've ever read about yourself?

Rebagliati: Probably that I had a lucky day or something like that when I won in Nagano. Anyone who has followed my racing career from the beginning knows that it wasn't the first time I'd won against those guys.

Wolfe: Ever had a mullet?

Rebagliati: A mullet? I have one right now. (Laughs) Just because I haven't had a haircut in a while, but yeah. ... There's a reality show coming to Whistler and they want to cut my hair. Right now it's longer, but not for long.

Wolfe: Explain why you want to compete in the Paris-Dakar rally on a motorcycle.

Rebagliati: Ho-ly! Well, I ride dirtbikes and do some cross-country races. I just love the whole idea of trying to do something that big. I like the adventure of it and being on those big rally bikes. This year, it started in Lisbon, Portugal, and ended up in Dakar, (Senegal). They do change the route every year. That way it eliminates booby-traps.

Wolfe: Booby-traps?

Rebagliati: Yeah, some of the local people set traps.

Wolfe: That's not very sporting.

Rebagliati: No, it's not. (Laughs) They do that in Mexico, too, for the Baja Races. But they try to sweep the course before anything like that does happen. But I've always loved rally and racing, whether it's against people or the clock. Paris-Dakar, for people like me, it's the biggest race you can go in.

Wolfe: If reincarnation exists, in what form do you expect to return to earth?

Rebagliati: Well, I always thought that you'd be reincarnated as a person again.

Wolfe: And what kind of person will you return as?

Rebagliati: A better person. I think you just keep getting better. If you're good, you come back better. If you're bad, you come back more screwed up than before. You get a harder life each time you screw up. If you're good, hopefully you get a better life.

Wolfe: How's your karma?

Rebagliati: I think it's rock-solid. I think I'm coming back with some muscle cars and some bikes and everything. (Laughs)

Wolfe: What's the best part about being Ross Rebagliati?

Rebagliati: I love my job and what I do, which is basically just being me. That's what I do for a living. It's hard to believe, but it's true.

Wolfe: Worst thing?

Rebagliati: The worst thing is also the best thing. You're in the public eye all of the time. People always say, "I want to be rich and famous." That's fine as long as you're rich also, but being famous is a full-time job. When you can't pay your bills and everything is screwed up, you've still got to be nice to everybody.

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