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## INFAMOUS OLYMPIC MEDALLIST WANTS ANOTHER SHOT IN 2010

By Kevin Parnell

Second hand smoke brought BC snowboarder Ross Rebagliati to Kelowna this week.

Well, that and movie star Tom Green.

Rebagliati, now nearly 10 years removed from catapulting to stardom at the 1998 Nagano Olympics, where he won a gold medal, had it taken away after a positive drug test, and then won it back, was in Kelowna doing a round of interviews after filming a snowboard movie with Green.

The 35-year-old Rebagliati had a cameo playing himself in the comedy called Shred, still filming at Big White and Silver Star.

“My scenes are revolving around second hand smoke and the whole play on that,” said Rebagliati.

Back in '98, Rebagliati claimed that second hand marijuana smoke was the reason traces of pot were found in his system, and eventually had his gold medal returned by the Court of Arbitration in Sport.

Today, he says he's not surprised that everyone still remembers him for the controversy that ensued.

“I think in our culture the whole marijuana culture is widely accepted and is not something that is looked down upon,” he said.

“There are some people that are dead against it. I don't condone it. It is what it is and I'm not the one who decides what is.”

Rebagliati is open and forthcoming about his past and his future.

Shred is the first movie he has filmed, not that it is the first offer he has received.

“For one reason or the other I didn't accept the offers. I didn't feel comfortable with what the project was,” Rebagliati said, admitting that it took some time for him to get used to dealing with the fallout from his experience.

“I was comfortable with the situation from the beginning, as comfortable as anyone could be.

“But 10 years has given me time to get accustomed to the notoriety, the popularity and the celebrity that went with it. That wasn't an easy adjustment.”

The years following his Olympic victory in downhill snowboarding haven't always been easy. For three years he couldn't cross the border into the United States and only two weeks ago Rebagliati

was finally taken off the USA's no fly list, allowing him to be able to board plans and fly into the United States.

For the past couple of years Rebagliati has also been attempting a comeback, aiming at the 2010 Olympics which will play out in his hometown of Whistler. But time is running out.

Rebagliati is not a member of the Canadian snowboard team and must earn enough points on the pro snowboard tour to become eligible to race for Canada. Then he must crack the top four.

"This is my third year back riding on my race boards and training and looking for the sponsor that I need," he said. "The main thing was to do as much as I could do to try and make it happen so years from now I wasn't saying I should have tried. "I won't regret trying. If it happens it happens."

If it doesn't happen Rebagliati has other options to fall back on. He runs the Rebagliati Alpine Snowboard Training Academy (RASTA) and hints that something in Kelowna could be on the horizon.

There are lots of other offers coming in as well such as movie scripts like Shred.

And he is comfortable knowing that his past as the Olympic snowboarder who had his medal taken away and then given back, will always be there. "I expected for the rest of my life I will be recognized the same way and I'm honoured to take on that roll," he said.