



Snow secrets unlocked on TV

Weather Channel, Warren Miller bring 'Boat to national audience

By Melinda Mawdsley (Contact)

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — The first image is of gently falling snow. Then, as the music picks up speed and a narrator introduces the audience to Steamboat Springs, a skier drops off a rock into a pile of powder.

It was the sequence The Weather Channel wanted when shooting footage for “Epic Conditions,” a new series to debut on The Weather Channel at 7 p.m. March 4.

The first episode focuses entirely on Steamboat and the weather patterns that produce the trademark champagne powder as well as the dangers that massive amounts of snowfall can create.

“Through vivid storytelling, this series effectively demonstrates what happens when the perfect weather conditions meet the perfect sporting activity,” said Kaye Zusman, the series developer and the vice president of programming and development for The Weather Channel.

Through its partnership with Warren Miller Productions, The Weather Channel hopes to target the avid outdoorsperson, the weather enthusiast and the combination of both with “Epic Conditions.”

On Sunday nights from March 4 through April 1, “Epic Conditions” will take viewers to different locations to show surfing on mountainous waves, mountain biking on the best terrain, rafting in raging whitewater, sailing in top water and, of course, skiing in arguably the world’s best snow.

“They picked Steamboat because of the champagne powder,” said Heidi Thomsen, public relations manager for the Steamboat Ski Area. “It’s truly epic up there.”

Producers met with several local personalities to discuss what makes Steamboat unique. Jonathan Wheby is a close friend with a Warren Miller employee, which was how he got involved in the episode. The Oak Creek resident, who first moved here in 1986, is featured extensively throughout the episode.

“I couldn’t even begin to count the number of powder days I’ve had here,” Wheby said. “I couldn’t even count them last year.”

The footage used in the show was shot in March 2006 when Steamboat was well into its epic 432-inch snow season. Thomsen remembers the day the Warren Miller crew was at the ski area.

"It started out cloudy and then turned into blue skies," Thomsen said. "It was the perfect day."

The show chronicles weather patterns that produce Steamboat's snow and what makes it different from other places in the state and across the world. The show mixes weather lessons with powder shots, but "Epic Conditions" also highlights the dangers that come with 30-inch powder days.

Steamboat Ski Patrol members talk about avalanche safety, and The Weather Channel shows footage of the Ski Patrol triggering an avalanche with explosives.

As a way to kick off the first episode of "Epic Conditions," The Weather Channel and Warren Miller Productions are hosting a pre-screening at 5:35 p.m. March 2 in Gondola Square. The show will air on a big screen after the free

concert by North Mississippi Allstars.

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