

To the Edge and Back: Olympic Medalist Comes Back to Bend to For Book Signing

by K_Guice

Olympic Medalist Chris Klug Speaks at Umpqua Bank

The title of his book says it all; Chris Klug has gone To the Edge and Back. The Olympic medalist and former Bend resident is back in town July 18th from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Umpqua Bank where he will be speaking and signing copies his newly released book.

“It is a story that chronicles my early snowboarding years and my evolution; as well as my experience with transplantation, my medical challenges and how I overcame that,” Klug said.

Bardonecchia, Italy 2004, 3rd Place

He hopes by sharing the trials and tribulations of both his career and health he will encourage people, as well as help educate and promote the importance of being a donor.

“The snowboarding and my success has giving me the platform to promote life-saving donations,” he said. That path of success began in Bend.

Klug, 34, who grew up in Bend, says that the city played a crucial role in becoming who he is today. While he had been skiing since he could literally walk, thanks to his mom, it was his love for skateboarding that led to his interest in snowboarding.

“I got into skateboarding in Central Oregon in elementary (school) and got really passionate about it in junior high,” Klug said. “We brought ramps from the west side and to the old Bend High School tennis courts,” he laughed. That is until the cops shut them down and they found their ramps gone.

The cover of Klug's book, 'To the Edge and Back' Meanwhile, Klug signed up for the Skyliner™s ski class at Mt. Bachelor. That is where he first saw tourists with snowboards. “I looked at it and thought

thatâ€™s skateboarding on snow â€¦ I got to try it and that was the end of the skis,â€• he said.

In the early â€™80s, he said Mt. Bachelor did not have any events and there were no classes. â€œIt was just riding powder and the trying to figure out the best technique for getting to the bottom of the mountain,â€• Klug said. The mountain was both his earliest training ground and play ground.

â€œI began competitive snowboard racing as a junior in the amateur ranks,â€• he said. He did well and moved on to participate in the Northwest Race Series where he won a majority of the events. His first big competition was the North American Championship in Canada. There he placed second in the junior halfpipe. That spring he traveled to Vermont for his first U.S. Open and again finished second, this time in the mogul event.

In 1989, Klug was named the U.S.A.S.A. National Amateur Champion in Slalom and super-G. At 16, he began competing professionally in the PSTA Tour and claimed his first victory at Hunter Mountain in New York walking away with a \$4,000 check. â€œIn 1991 I became a full-time professional and participated in my first World Cup event in Garnish, Germany,â€• Klug said. There he finished eighth.

In October, he will be heading to his 16th World Cup season which starts on October 17. During his career he has hit amazing highs including four World Cup victories, three Grand Prix wins, five National titles, a sixth place in the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan and a Bronze medal in the 2002 Winter Olympics in Park City, Utah.

Nineteen months prior, were some of his lowest. Klug had been moved up to critical status on a liver transplant waiting list. â€œI was diagnosed in the â€™90s with a very rare liver disease called PSC (primary sclerosing cholangitis),â€• he said.

It is the same disease that killed Walter Payton. It can only be cured by a transplant. Payton had been on a transplant waiting list for nine months.

“I was on the list for six or seven years total,” Klug recalls, “But in the spring of 2000 my health deteriorated and I was put on the critical list.”

On July 28, 2000 he received word that they found a match. “Many people never get that call,” Klug said. “There are 17 people every day that die who never got that call.”

He was fortunate and six years later he and his family are still celebrating. “We celebrate that as my new birthday or liver day,” he said. One year, his new fiancée Missy, made him a liver day cake shaped like a liver. “It looked more like a football so we put laces on it,” Klug laughed.

Now, he has created the Kris Klug Foundation (www.ChrisKlugFoundation.org) which promotes lifesaving donations and improves the quality of life for donors, donor families, organ transplant candidates and recipients. “I am here today because of it,” he said. “The need is so great in Central Oregon, and the state of Oregon and across the county.”

There are many ways to donate. “You can give blood, get marrow typed or sign up to be a donor,” he said. One person can make a difference. “In fact, one donor can save the life of up to 25 people,” Klug said.

Transplants work and are now part of main-stream medicine. “And recipients can return to a normal health life,” he said.

Klug is proof of that. Within a matter of months he was back to business on the slopes and is now looking at family life. This April Klug got engaged to his girlfriend of 11 years. “You can’t rush into these things,” he joked.

The couple began dating after Missy got out of college, but they actually had been friends after meeting at a tennis competition in 1989.

Klug had decided to take a swing at the sport between his fall football season and winter snowboarding activities. "I went to Mountain View High School and Missy played at Redmond. I thought she was hot and I went up and talked to her and we became good friends," he recounted.

Now, the two are planning a small, intimate get together for 300 or 400 of their closest family and friends in Sisters on September 16. "Oh, it's going to be huge!" he exclaimed.

In the meantime, Klug is hoping to have another huge turnout for his appearance at Umpqua Bank located at 390 SW Century Dr.

"Chris will be speaking about his experience relating to the organ transplant, how he overcame the odds and competed and won a medal in the Olympics," said Arden Dettwyler, AVP/Store Manager for the Wall Street Umpqua Bank.

"He will have a short video and will also be signing copies of his new book To The Edge And Back" he added. Umpqua Bank also plans to bring in some local outdoor shops and to showcase some of the latest snowboarding equipment on the market.

"This event is part of our first Tuesday lecture series this year," Dettwyler said. "I can say that this July event is one of the top ones that we will be having this year."

Bend Weekly Newslinks: www.chrisklug.com and www.umpquabank.com

To the Edge and Back: Olympic Medalist Comes Back to Bend to For Book Signing by K_Guice