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Unbroken: The Snowboard Life of Mark McMorris

By Michael Grand

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(dramatic music)

(distant cheering)

[Announcer] From Saskatchewan,
ladies and gentlemen,
Mark "McMo" McMorris!

(loud cheering and applauding)

All right, are we ready
to set this place on fire?

Here we go, superhero.

[Commentator] Well,
calling him dominant
might be an understatement.

Our defending gold
medalist, Marc McMorris.

[Nasally Man]

Absolutely perfect.

[Commentator] 92.66, Mark
McMorris in the top spot.

[Broadcaster] Ladies
and Gentlemen, he on one!

[Announcer] Mark McMorris'
slopestyle domination continues.

(announcers groan)

[Announcer] Mark McMorris
hits the rail hard.

He broke his rib
in that competition.

When you break your rib,
and you have to do
those sorts of jumps,
everybody just assumed the
Olympic dream was over.

I think he feels he's got
some unfinished business.
He truly believes that he
should be able to win a gold.

He's got a bronze,
he's so hungry.

There's only one thing that
matters, and that's winning.

[Announcer] This
kid right here
is the most decorated

competitive athlete
in big air and
slopestyle history.
We're the spectacle
culture, we want big.
But at some point, you're like
the human body can't
take that landing.
That's why we have
hospitals, I guess.
(laughter)
(orchestral music)
[Announcer] Front
side triple cork.
(announcers groan)
Mark with one of the
heaviest toe-edge catches
coming down that landing
I have ever seen.
[Announcer] Mark
McMorris broke his femur.
(orchestral music)
I feel so much pain everywhere,
you know my hip, my knee,
everything, the screws, it
all hurts so bad all the time.
If you get hurt, you just want
to get back to it even more.
It's a weird addiction.
(ethereal music)
The 2016/2017 season, he was
coming off the worst injury
of his career, and this is the
year that he has to qualify
for the Canadian Olympic team.
So we traveled
over to South Korea
for the big air test event
for the 2018 Olympics.
Standing at the
top of that run
before I was going to
try my very first one,
I was like oh my god, I'm back.

I thought it I tried a
front side triple cork
I was just gonna
break my femur again.
[Announcer] Best
of Mark McMorris.
It was really
sugary, sketchy snow.
And I just kept telling myself,
you don't need to stress.
[Announcer] Here he goes,
front side triple 14, oh!
Couldn't quite stick it.
I was really happy
that I ate shit
on a front side triple.
You know, like and was fine.
I was like oh, I'm good.
I made it to finals and
then I wasn't scared at all,
I tried the next one, I
just really wanted to land.
He knew he was gonna have to
do another front
side triple cork
if he wanted to win the event.
(announcing in foreign language)
[Announcer] Is he
gonna go for it again?
The front side
triple cork 14, yes!
I slammed into the fence.
I didn't even like
stop, I was so happy.
[Announcer] In first
place, and World Cup winner,
from Canada, Mark McMorris.
Winning a contest again
and doing that trick again
was definitely the
hump in my rehab.
I was off to the races on
getting qualified for the team,
so I was super happy to

get a jump-start on it.
They take your
best three results,
so throughout the
2016/2017 season,
all of the athletes on
the team are jockeying
for the best results
at each of the events.
[Announcer] Your winner,
Marc 'McMo' McMorris.
This kid is insane, man.
When he lands a run, it's
not just for himself.
It's for all the people
that are surrounded by him.
What a great guy.
It's like thank you, Mark,
for landing that run.
(blows a kiss)
It means a lot to
be back at the US Open
after missing a year,
it's a Olympic qualifier.
Definitely wanna show
up to play there.
Mark put down one of the
heaviest slopestyle runs
of the year which put him
on the top of the podium
and solidified his spot for
the Olympic team in 2018.
That's like the best
feeling on earth, ecstatic.
It was sweet.
He's going to the Olympics.
It's the one snowboard
event, slopestyle or big air
that's eluded him a gold medal,
and he's a very
competitive person.
He's got a bronze,
rose gold if you will.
But he wants that real gold.

(audience cheering)

I was so happy to just
end my season like that.

Leaving as one of the
guys to beat all the time.

It's like okay, I'm
for sure back now.

Winning is a good feeling,
being the best feels good,
there's no doubt about that.

And winning X-games and
things like that, it's great,
but it's...

I ask myself this
question all the time,
why do guys like Mark, how
do they craft this career
where everyone looks at them
and sort of wants to
do tricks like them,
or wants to be like
them on and off snow?

One part of it is really
being an all-around rider,
not just focusing
on being the best
slopestyle rider in the world.

I mean Mark is a
good rail rider.

He's a great jumper,
he can ride transition,
he rides backcountry.

He gets himself
immersed in the powder
and building jumps out there,
and he's a true snowboarder.

There's huge contests, and
there's endorsement deals,
and everything that
goes along with that,
and media coverage and stuff,
but that's just one
part of snowboarding.

Snowboarding is kind of

ridiculous in that sense,
where you, as a professional,
you strap into a piece of wood
on snow and slide down the
mountain and do tricks,
and you get paid to do that.

(laughs)

You can't forget that, you
know, it's all about the fun.
You're going out there to have
a kick ass time, you know?
With Mark too, I think his
passion for snowboarding,
he loves it, like
actually really loves it,
and it's really inspiring.
He loves snowboarding, he
loves everything about it,
and right now he's still
in that competitive world
and he's going after it and
he's enjoying it and he should.

But he knows there's so
many mountains out there
just waiting for
him to ride down.

It's really refreshing for me,
spending time in the backcountry
and doing that kind
of snowboarding
after all the years and
all the time I spend
chasing contests and park jumps.

Backcountry riding
is a lot different
than competition riding.

There's not some
prize to be won,
it's just trying to
create magic on your own
and it's literally the
most fun thing ever.

(peaceful music)

(loud carving)

(music builds)
Creativity really opens up
when you get into
the backcountry.
It's really just a different
mindset out there too.
You need to know a lot
about snow conditions
and all that stuff.
It's a whole different game.
Avalanches, trees,
rocks in the landing.
There's so many factors
that are pretty life-threatening
in the backcountry.
It's pretty gnarly.
There's just so
many challenges
and that's like understanding
the slope, the terrain,
snow conditions, but that's
just one aspect of it.
Getting hurt back there,
getting somebody out
from back there.
It's not something you
can just download an app
and go out there and think
you're safe, you know.
You're just a little
ant out there.
[Craig] I don't know, you look at
it on a scale of risk to reward.
Maybe somebody's like
I don't see the reward
for all that risk, but I
definitely see the reward for risk
because it's like no other
place on earth, really.
Having got to do a ton
of the backcountry side,
especially last year,
and the spring when I would
usually be in the backcountry,

I had a broken femur.
I get the itch again,
really excited to get back
in the backcountry
for the whole spring
with some of my
hometown friends,
some friends from
Whistler with my brother
that I hadn't really
snowboarded with once all year.
Mark could just finish
up the competition schedule
and Whistler stands alone
when it comes to
backcountry snowboarding
in terms of sheer magnitude.
It's extremely fun.
Craig calls me
and he was like,
hey backcountry is gonna
be good, really excited,
really good snow.
Found this little
mellow pat-down,
like kind of a famous little
step-down in between two trees.
This one that we went
to, it's called Rainbow.
I was like, that's
perfect for me and Mark.
It's not super big, you're
just landing in snow.
You don't have to
jump over anything.
There's not a
cliff-face or anything.
So we built a take-off.
Ryan, Teeny and Torstein were
building a jump on the shelf.
There was a lot of
bad weather in Whistler.
The snow was coming in and out
and there's cloud-coverage.

On those days we set
up jumps or features
that are close to trees
just cause it helps
with definition when it's
not a full, nice sunny day.
I did a switchback five
and I spun to the right
and I hit the tree branch,
like just on the left.
You really gotta
spin to the right,
like even more than I did.
Then Mark went, he
tried a cab spin,
so he spun to the right,
pretty far to the right.
He landed in the perfect spot.
We each hit it once, both
kinda miss our trick but barely.
And then the clouds
came even thicker in,
so visibility was a huge
issue, so we waited.
And Craig's like you
know what, I'm over it.
I don't even wanna hit it again,
and then I was like okay, well
I'll just wait like an hour
and see if this weather
changes 'cause it clouded over.
Then it kinda did change.
Mark went up again.
(yells)
Okay, ready Mark?
So I'm takeoff,
but instead of
spinning to the right,
he spun to the left.
(dramatic string music)
(crash)
It was a direct hit.
Mark just exploded into
this pack of trees.

[Woman] Did he make it?

[Man] Hear that?

[Woman] No.

[Man] Mark!

And just like silence,
and there's like nothing,
so I'm like oh, oh
shit, here we go.

(suspenseful music)

(Marc cries out)

You don't know if it's
a spinal chord injury
or anything like that,
so you don't wanna
move him really at all,
but you have to keep him warm.

So, get him into

a safe position.

This is not good.

We need to keep calm here and
just assess the situation.

Craig was the one with
the satellite phone.

Luckily he brought that, so he
started calling heli-rescue.

Gotta get him off the snow
cause hypothermia could
set in (snaps) like that.

[Torstein] Mark,

how's your temperature?

Hang in there, buddy.

[Craig] Yeah,

you got this, Mark.

[Torstein] Help's on the
way, help's on the way.

We got the heli.

[Craig] The

heli's coming, Mark.

You know, I could see
his jaw was super broken
cause hanging off,
blood everywhere.

Don't know if the blood
is coming from the inside.

He was lying there,
waiting for the helicopter.
He was so messed
up, so much trauma.
So a half an hour went
by, couldn't hear anything.
An hour went by and
Mark's starting to fade
and vomiting a lot of blood
and like really dark blood.
There's gotta be
trauma to the inside
but you don't know how much
and how long he's gonna last.
You're just waiting
for the helicopter.
It's taking so long,
it takes so long.
Craig kept calling back and
an hour and a half goes by,
and we still can't
hear the blades.
(Mark groans)
[Woman] Okay, don't move.
Don't move.
(Mark groans)
(suspenseful music)
And then Mark is
really starting to fade.
You know, is this
actually happening?
Is he fading that
hard right now?
Okay, you hold on to your arm,
we've got the rest of you.
(Mark moans)
(Mark mumbles)
You got this Mark,
you're a champ.
[Woman] Just focus on
his breaths, in and out.
When it seemed like
it was no hope left,
we started to hear

the helicopter.
(helicopter whirring)
Okay, let's do this,
let's get him out of here.
(dramatic music)
He is fresh off a
World Cup Championship
in snowboarding with
the nation's hopes
for Olympic glory already
riding on his shoulders.
But tonight, Mark McMorris
is in intensive care
in hospital after a horrific
snowboarding accident.
[Reporter] In a release,
Canada snowboard's
team physicians
said the injuries
to McMorris's shattered body
included a fractured jaw,
a fractured left arm,
a ruptured spleen,
a stable pelvic
fracture, rib fractures,
and a collapsed left lung.
(bass drum hit)
The call was from
Craig and when he said,
"You need to come,
it's serious,"
then the panic set in.
When he got to
Vancouver and we started
hearing from the trauma team
in the Vancouver General,
and then knowing that
he's bleeding internally,
that he'd had a ruptured spleen,
and they had to
operate right away.
So now it has
completely gone from,
not what the future

is going to be,
it's whether he is
going to have a future.
(machines beeping)
Yeah, I mean, it
was terrifying because
being in the medical field I
knew what he was up against.
And when we walked into
the room the first time,
of course he's unconscious,
and you have the breathing
machine going beside him,
and all the tubes going
in and coming out of him.
I expected all that
because of where I've worked
and what I've seen, so I
wasn't shocked at that,
but when it's your kid,
it's like, oh my God.
It's like you just
feel sick in your stomach
that he's like, so many tubes,
so many needles,
so much surgery.
And you see what they've
done in intensive care,
and you're like how the
hell did he survive?
I don't remember the
instant second I came to,
but I remember
slowly looking around
and seeing everybody and
just so happy to be alive.
His eyes are wide open.
He knows exactly
what's going on.
He couldn't speak
yet, but write, and...
He's kind of sitting up
in the bed with a clipboard
and writing little notes to us.

He wrote, "I really
thought I was gonna die
"because I saw light and dark."
One was, "So lucky
to have Craig."
He said he really
did keep me alive
because he said I
was blacking out,
and he just talked me through.
We were so thankful
that he was there.
Unfortunate for Craig, I think,
because I think it
was very traumatizing.
But, (clicks cheek), they
do those crazy things.
Those things are gonna happen.
What am I doing?
Why am I even snowboarding?
What is this (bleep)?
If this is what
it's taking me to?
But then, I think,
I think as everything
progressed slowly over time
and they started
to take tubes out,
and I started being
able to use shit,
it got a lot better for sure.
Stopped having those negative
thoughts about the sport
that did everything for me.
(sniffling)
He was feeling down one
evening in the hospital,
and I was just sort
of reassuring him,
you're gonna be okay.
You're gonna get through this.
And he said, "Yeah, I'm
going to the next Olympics."
So, no, even lying in the

hospital bed in agony,
he still has that determination.
Your body goes through
that much trauma,
getting out of
all the surgeries,
metal from the
bottom to the top,
"Can I go to the Olympics?"
(laughs)
I just wanted to know I
had a chance to go there.
And I was pretty impressed
with from day one to nine or 10
how much it had progressed,
and how I could
legitimately talk,
and I didn't have tubes
feeding me anymore.
And as soon as they're not
feeding you through a tube,
they try and get you out
of there pretty quick.
(brooding music)
Can I give you like a...
Burt, baby.
C'mon give me a little chest
(laughs), does that hurt there?
No.
Did you break a few ribs?
Six ribs in my back.
Ohhhh.
I'm so lucky.
People gave you up for...
I know...
He gone.
Yeah, "He gone."
(laughing)
When I went to see Mark
after his latest little run-in
with a tree, we hung
out and it was different
because he really
messed himself up.

And the easiest thing
is to be the victim.

But, he was himself and
he was dealing with it.

So were you trying
to hit the tree?

[Mark] Dude, no, it sucked.

[Jake] Did you cry?

No.

(laughing)

I was passed out for a
second when it happened,
and then when they were
just like yelling at me
pretty much, wanting
to know I was stable,
and just like,

"The heli's coming,
"keep breathing,
keep breathing."

Having Jake coming
to visit was so cool.

I was definitely moving slow,
but I definitely could walk
and pretty cool to have
people that support you
in your journey,
but also support you
when the journey's
not going well.

It wasn't athlete Mark,
"I'm the finely-tuned machine,
"ready to go out and destroy
a slopestyle course."

It was just a person,
who was overcoming
an incredible injury and
dealing with a lot of pain
and disability
throughout his body.

Pretty crazy what
he even asked me.

He was like, "Do you even
wanna do this anymore?"

Don't feel any sort of pressure from us or anything. We're here to support whatever decision you make." Pretty cool to know. It's not just a business relationship. It's way more than that. I knew how competitive the Canadian slopestyle team, just getting on that team for the Olympics, was. And I knew how focused he was on that. You could feel in his soul that he was just focused on getting better and getting back to what he wanted to do. Okay, here we go, get into the recovery mode. Every morning I wake up, it's the worst thing ever. It's just like the whole side all the way down. It's hard to breathe a lot of the time. When I talk, I just have to stop and regain myself. Yep. There's a concern, there's a fundamental concern. I've known Mark for a lot of years, and when I looked at the list of injuries, he was discharged extremely early from the hospital. It's tough for you because sitting hurts, standing hurts, walking hurts, lying hurts. Yeah, I just hurt, so much stuff that there's no safe place. Yeah.

Wasn't his first
significant injury.
We've been through
the fractured femur.
We've been through a broken rib.
So, it's like, okay,
let's understand
the extent of what
the injuries are.
Yeah, you don't
have great blood flow.
I think it was his dad that
told me the first thing
that he came out was
kind of, "I'm okay."
And the second thing
that came from him,
"Does Damo think I
can do the Olympics?"
Which is pretty
powerful in terms of
where his mindset
was at immediately.
Oof.
This hurts so bad.
(groaning painfully)
I don't think I'm convincing
myself that everything's fine,
but I qualified for the
Olympic team already,
and know I had a
chance to go there.
[Damien] You ready, bud?
[Mark] Yep.
Okay.
[Damien] Just easy.
Little squat, but
the key thing is
I don't want you
holding your breath.
So just little movement
through the hips.
Breathe out as you move down.
Don't hold your breath,

even if it's cold.

The process of getting back
is, you're gonna get sore.
You're gonna have to go
through the same thing,
and get sore again, spend
a lot of time in the pool,
a lot of time working on my arm,
a lot of time just trying
to stabilize my core area
and my torso, which
took such a beating.

[Damien] Okay, let's come
out, go in the hot tub.

Oh my God.

[Damien] Hold on,
hold on, hold on.

I know.

[Damien] It's coming.

Damien is really good at
getting you back to snowboarding
but the rehab I needed to
be doing one month post
to the tree incident
wasn't in the gym stuff.
You want to heal and
allow bones to heal,
allow yourself to get over
the aspects of recovery
from surgeries.

Once he was clear to fly,
he really wanted to
be back in the sun.

We're going back to Cali,
and I'm super happy the
collapsed lung is good to go.

He knew it was
a long road ahead,
so cleared the expectations
and allowed that initial
couple months to be just
about rebuilding the capacity
to potentially snowboard again.
As long as I can go back to

where I've been at one point,
I'll be really happy.
The demands of international
elite competition.
We didn't know if he was
gonna get there or not.
It's an unknown.
I'm gonna hold here, and
then you pull towards you.
To where you feel
a good stretch.
When I saw him the first time,
I mean he just, he is frail,
moving very slow, I mean
he was like an ancient man.
Shuffling around the house.
Oh my god is this so stiff.
I have such a hard
time sitting down.
The first couple weeks
were definitely brutal.
It was challenging
just to see him
in the place he had to
go to really open to heal
and understand that he might
not be able to snowboard.
We don't have a crystal ball.
We can only think the best
and try to be positive
but there's really
no clear path.
I was just super
bummed on everything
and like was so
over feeling pain
and I had so much
nerve pain in my back
and I was just
angry at the world.
I was just mad.
It was so challenging
coming back from like zero.
Yeah.

It was really a lot about
focusing on what he could do
instead of what he couldn't do.
She was so good at being
positive and I loved her energy
and the way she would work
on me and slowly try and like
get me to like use my hips and
try and like sit on my ankles
and stretch out my back.
I worked with Amanda
for a month straight.
Every single day,
two hours a day.
Like, I feel like a new person.
Like I'm happy again
because I'm not in
so much pain right now.
In the beginning it was hard
to even position him comfortably
because there was
something somewhere
going on in his body all over.
For the last month
I've been sitting
and last night I just was like,
it felt good to
be standing again.
It wasn't hurting my ribs
it wasn't hurting my back,
my shoulder wasn't
aching, my jaw wasn't,
felt like it was,
yeah it's good.
Amanda and I had
talked through it
and I think his
spirit was rising.
I think coming back was
at that point, motivating.
Whoa.
He was weak, but he was
moving relatively well.
With this whole injury,

I'm just happy to
like, be making gains.
Good, touch deeper,
and push, good.
Damien is a pretty smart dude
when it comes to working
on the body, you know.
And he would push me a
little bit more each day.
He didn't want me to be
dead the next day you know,
so we would start like
finding range in my torso
and twisting and like taking
impact and even pushing off.
Like in the first two months
we made a huge huge leap.
Good, a little more patience.
Don't reach too
far with the foot,
just let yourself
fall and catch, good.
Mark's capacity to heal
and build and move through
is really astonishing to
watch and be involved in.
And once he came back
up from Encinitas
and starting in after
that first month
it was like, this is
actually going really well.
Go on, two, three.
I feel like what's
going through his head is
he wants to be at the
Olympics, he wants to win gold.
That's where his motivation
is, and he's using that
to his advantage to progress.
You don't usually spend
that much time in the hospital
and that much time not being
able to really move that much

and then on month three
be in the gym squatting
and going on skateboard
cruises and by month five, six,
I was back to skating
pretty heavily.

If he has his pop
back skateboarding
he'll feel like he has
his pop back on snow.

You can't reproduce the demands
of snowboarding in
a gym environment.

It's not the same.

Does that have a little
niggle of risk and concern
in the back of my mind, sure.

I feel like he's come so
far in trusting his body.

I watched him transform
from being curled up
into a ball almost lifeless
to now we go surfing.

If he's able to
surf and cut back hard
and turn his body
through it then he knows
he has that mobility
and I think that
those things are
extremely valuable assets
to what he's doing and to
what's getting him back
to being back on snow.

He's getting stronger everyday
and he worked so hard
and put so much effort
into his training and wellbeing
because he wants to be back.

He wants to be back on the
mountain doing what he loves.

This is kind of creepy
that the last time
I strapped in or even

wore any of that stuff
I was pretty much dead.
That's pretty wild.
I'm coming back from a
laundry list of injuries.
It's the biggest year
in four years for me.
That's what I get nervous about.
You definitely think
about, like you're like,
how am I gonna do all
those tricks I did again?
We're headed down to the land
of kangaroos and vegemite.
Australia.
You ready? You ready?
Ready ready.
Thank you.
Let's do it.
Do it.
I love going down
to Australia to ride,
it's a really good place to
like, get your groove back
and not having to compete,
but knowing it's Olympic year
you definitely want to
like, get confident again.
Flew for 14 and a half
hours and then got in a car
and now we are an hour
in the wrong direction.
Make the correction, and
we'll be one direction.
If Adam drives on the road.
Dude is this car just so hard
to keep between the lines?
And we're back on the line.
Full gang mentality here.
We just all hang out together,
all snowboard together,
eat together, sleep together,
not together, but okay.
We shred together,

we love hanging out,
and we all push each other
so much and I don't think
I like being around anybody
more than these guys.

[Man] Ready to
get out, ready guys?

Woo.

[Man] That was a sick...
Sick exit, dude.

Dude everybody knows
you have the sickest exit.

[Man] Mark how hyped
are you right now?

Dude, the hype levels are
through the roof right now.
This is one of my favorite
places, the snowboard park,
in the world, so looking
forward to day one
and just hoping
everything feels good.

Hopefully I don't push it
too much and just have fun.

Having Mark back
snowboarding is
kind of a surreal feeling
to be honest with you
because you see him in
situations and you're like,
oh this guys probably never
gonna snowboard again.

Or like, this guy is
probably not gonna live
for very much longer
and then you see him
in the hospital and then
you see him at Fortius
working with Damien
getting stronger.

Worked his butt off, and then
all of a sudden he's just
in Australia with all the boys.
And now we're going snowboarding

and the world is
as it should be.
Other than all the political
and crazy (beep)
that's happened.
(inspirational music)
I had never been
hurt on that level
so I didn't really know what
I was gonna feel mentally.
That's when you're
like, am I gonna be able
to snowboard at a
competitive level ever again?
Or even do like half
the stuff I was doing,
or take those
impacts or whatnot.
(yelling)
I slammed my shoulder.
I felt out of
breath a little bit.
Because like, you can
work out all you want,
but then when
you're snowboarding,
you're like expending
energy but you're also
like trying to do everything
right and not get hurt.
You forget to breathe almost.
A lot of people don't
realize like the mental game.
Like a doctor can say
you're 100% cleared,
all your bones are
healed or what have you.
But like, being
ready to fall again,
being ready to take a slam is,
I don't know that's
a different timeframe
than actually healing an injury.
I was starting

to get frustrated.
I've done these tricks
before, why is it hard?
Well maybe because you
almost died five months ago
it's getting it back and
getting the rust off.
Try something
gnarly, take a slam,
you know like push yourself,
scare yourself a little bit.
Because then you like,
wake up, you know?
It's like having your
first sip of coffee
and being like alright,
I'm ready, I'm in this now.
[Man] How is he alive?
My body feels really
good but at the same time
I don't think it's
used to falling
the way you fall snowboarding
so everything is just
kind of like ugh.
[Man] You alright?
With everything
I've been through,
I think that I'm
gonna be dealing with
a little bit of pain
for the rest of my life
but as long as I
can do what I want,
that's all I care about.
(soft inspirational music)
Oh my word, just
like riding a bike.
Mark McMorris is back,
or riding a snowboard,
if you're Mark McMorris.
(speaking in a foreign language)
Here, yeah, we're athletes.
Snowboarding.

Yeah.

(whistles)

After going through
that long rehab process,
entering back into
the competition side
of snowboarding was
definitely a little bit
stressful because you
don't really know if
you're gonna still be able to
compete on the level you were.

Yeah.

All right, lets go
catch some feather.

I was excited and nervous
all at the same time
and felt like my body
was ready to be there.

It was not so much about
the riding but more about
dealing with the
pressures of competing.

Now at the top of the
ramp, Mark McMorris
with quite possibly the
most incredible come back
story of the century.

A broken femur, rehab,
return to competition, victory
and then while filming
in the back country
in Canada, a horrific crash
that nearly ended his life
and now about to drop in again.

What must be going through
this young lads mind?

(cheering)

(applauding)

[Announcer] He stomps it.

[Male] That was sick!

That was so scary.

Doing the frontside triple
cork on the first run

gave me a lot of confidence.
It's one of the trickiest
and freakiest triple corks
but definitely still nervous.
I obviously just wanted to get
it done on that second run.
[Announcer] And now
dropping in for his second run
run Mark McMorris.
(applauding)
I did what I came there to do.
I did the two tricks I
wanted to do on the first
two tries, is like
the ultimate feeling.
[Announcer] And
now for his third
and final run
anyone who
doesn't appreciate
how much of
a winner this
guy is just for
even competing here
[Announcer] Its like
he never stopped
are you kidding me.
Absolutely perfect
When I was standing
on the podium, it was
just sort of that feeling
of I had proved to myself
I was back and belonged
there but also put
it in everybody else's
heads like "Don't forget
"about me, I'm not dead
anymore, I'm back".
This is the magic
city of snowboarding.
I'd like to say it's
something I don't
think about all the time,
but the accident definitely

took a pretty big
toll on me mentally.
The trauma is gonna be
around for my whole life.
It was a snowboard accident
and I snowboard everyday.
How are you supposed to
really forget about it?
As time goes on, it lessens
a lot, so I feel better
and better each event and
better each time I strap
on my snowboard and definitely
less scared every time
I strap on my snowboard
and get my confidence back.
Mark is one of the
strongest if not the strongest
kid I know, mentally and
physically, I've never seen
anybody recover like that.
I don't know how he does that.
Like, how is he back now?
And riding well, like he's
back, he's fully back.
It's mind blowing.
I don't understand
how he does that.
Anytime you go through an
injury that's threatening
in any way, whether its
threatening to your snowboard
career, threatening to your
life in general, you get
really humbled by life.
You can see that in Mark.
He was a humble kid before this.
There was no doubt about
that and I think even more so
now he's just happy to be
for one, a professional
snowboarder and have
a career that he has.
But I think he's just got

an appreciation for living
life and thankful to be able
to live it to the fullest.
[Announcer] Make some
noise for Mark McMorris.
(cheering and screaming)
When he was lying
there, he was like
"My legs are fine,
my legs are fine".
I don't even know how
you speak with your
jaw hanging off your mouth.
The first thing he could
write down after being
in the hospital intensive
care, "I want to to go to
"the Olympics, can I
go to the Olympics?".
I mean, it's heavy.
Mark really wants it.
It will be a massive
milestone, the extent
of something that
was really truly
a life-threatening injury
to rise back to the pinnacle
of sporting performance.
Regardless of how he does,
to be back, to drop in,
and do what he does
will be special.
My whole life I've
loved snowboarding.
There's been times where
it's been harder to enjoy
the moment but this past
year its been so much
easier to love snowboarding
than ever because
I know it was so close to
being taken away from me
and snowboarding is
gonna always be there

for me and I just want to
love it like it's loved me.