



Michelle Parker in Retallack, British Columbia, where it was well below the ideal temperature for composting.

ALEX O'BRIEN, HANK DE VRE (RIGHT)

#### THE TRUTH

## MICHELLE PARKER

On Shane McConkey, compost, and recovering from two knee injuries.

As told to Megan Michelson



Lake Tahoe-based skier Michelle Parker got her start by following pros Scott Gaffney, J.T. Holmes, and the late Shane McConkey around Squaw Valley, California. A racer until age 15, she ventured into the park and, at 16, competed in her first U.S. Freeskiing Open. Since then, she's taken her tricks into the backcountry and attended a heli-guide school in Haines, Alaska. Now 22, Parker appears in this year's Matchstick Productions movie, *In Deep*, and is recovering from her second knee injury.

**When I blew my ACL** the first time, I thought it was the worst thing ever. But now I know there's no point in being negative. Visualize recovery. Don't have expectations. Especially when it comes to injuries. Then you won't be disappointed if you don't meet them.

**When I was a racer**, my coaches told me to train, don't go in the park, don't ski with boys. They said the older guys I was hanging out with were a bad influence on my skiing. Turns out, those boys taught me everything I know in the park.

**Growing up**, I remember being on the chair behind Shane, Gaffney, and J.T. Holmes. I would follow them and try to stay on their tails. I would go as fast as I could. I just wanted to see where they were skiing. I was their peanut gallery.

**When I competed** in my first U.S. Open, I didn't even know how to do a 360. I came home and learned how to do tricks. The next year, I went back and got third.

**Competitions are too much** for me sometimes. They make me lose my connection to the mountains.

**I graduated high school** and started skiing full-time. I kept saying I was just going to put off college for a year. That turned into five years. But I'm going back to school now, studying environmental science. I spend way more time on my homework than the students who've been going for a while.

**When I was barely 18**, I did my first portrait shoot. It was for *Freeskier Magazine*, and they wanted me to wear a bikini in a hot tub. People talked a lot of shit about it. I don't care about people talking shit.

**I'm into slow food** as opposed to fast food. I do all my shopping at farmers' markets. I think eating locally is more important than eating organic.

**I'm building a compost pile** at my house. You can't have one outdoors in Tahoe, because of the bears and the cold. Did you know composting works best above 55 degrees?

**I turned 21** at the Pioneer Bar in Haines, Alaska. I went into the bar, and the bartenders were like, "What the hell? You've been drinking here already." I rang the bell and bought everyone a round of drinks.

**I was on my way** to get knee surgery when I found out Shane died. My surgeon was also Shane's surgeon. He had a photo of Shane in his office. I didn't want to tell him the news.

**On a shoot with Matchstick** in 2008, Shane told me to hit him in the balls super-hard. I didn't want to, but he insisted. He even hit himself and said it didn't hurt. We did eight takes. He said he'd tucked them away. 🍅

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To read more about Michelle's injury and recovery, go to [skiingmag.com/michelleparker](http://skiingmag.com/michelleparker).