

Rob Kingwill

BANDANA-RAMA

How one snowboard legend is changing the bandana-face of snowboarding

IN SNOWBOARDING, PROS OFTEN COME AND GO, most of them going long before reaching anything resembling legend status. Obviously, becoming a legend isn't easy; it takes many years, numerous achievements, and a real stand out moment, like winning a big event. In snowboarding, that event is the US Open, and in 1998, in a field including the newly-crowned Olympic gold medalist and Terje Haakonsen, Rob Kingwill rode away with the win, and legend status.

Unfortunately, while being a snowboarding legend is a good way to pick up chicks at the bar, it doesn't come with much of a retirement plan. So after a career that included not only a US Open halfpipe win, but podiums at the X Games, Gravity Games, an overall title for the Grand Prix, and a podium at the Legendary Baker Banked Slalom, Kinger found himself in need of another way to make ends meet.

While working at Camp of Champions in British Columbia during the summer of 2005, Rob began making bandanas for the other coaches and campers. "Bandana Face" has been the steez in snowboarding for the past few years, thanks not just to Shaun White, but the fact that it is a functional way to keep warm when it's cold and avoid goggle tan when it's sunny. The standard cotton bandana though, has some major design flaws. Namely, when it gets wet, it freezes.

Rob's bandanas were developed using micro fiber mesh, making them breathable and functional in any conditions. The

original Bandarils were hand cut and printed using a block printing technique that Rob figured out. About 120 unique bandanas came to fruition that summer.

"I still see campers rocking them from time to time and it stokes me out," Rob said.

From a project to quell the boredom of downtime at summer camp, Rob has transitioned his bandanas into a full blown company, AVALON7.

"I wanted to start a little company I could run on my own that would primarily teach me the ins and outs of running my own business," Rob said. "I had all of this creative energy but nothing to focus it on, so I picked something fairly simple to produce, that I could make super unique and true to who I am. AVALON7 is 100% owned, funded, run, and slaved over by me."

Kinger lives in Jackson Hole, WY, and is still a competitive snowboarder. Last year, he traveled with the Grand Prix series, vying for a slot on the Olympic team. Though he fell short of that goal, he used traveling and competing as the ultimate marketing for his product.

"I thought it would be cool to make a bunch of AV7 flag bandanas to pass out to the crowds at the events. It was sweet to see all the fans waving their flag bandanas as the riders flew over their heads. I also passed the Patriot bandanas out to any of the riders who wanted one as a keepsake of the contest," he said.

The Patriot bandanas were as sought after by the riders as the spectators, including the O.G. bandana-fan, Shaun White. In New Jersey, Shaun finally got his hands on one, and told Rob he wanted to wear it in the Olympics. The IOC is very strict, so Rob gave him one, but assumed he would not actually be allowed to wear it in Torino. But a few weeks later, not only Shaun, but most of the US boardercross and women's halfpipe teams were wearing them

in front of NBC cameras and the rest of the world.

So far, Avalon 7 has just been a pet project for Kinger, entirely funded by his winnings from snowboard contests. Making bandanas also doesn't come with much of a retirement plan, but there are certainly other benefits.

"I am a one man show, which is a very fulfilling challenge," he said. "The coolest part is whenever I see someone with an AV7 sticker on their board, I know I probably gave it to them."

Each bandana is handmade in Jackson Hole, although Rob has had some of his friends design special editions. There are a few Kelly D. Williams and Ruckus limited edition bandanas out there. Every Avalon 7 product though, is its own work of art.

The bandanas are for sale at a few shops such as World Boards in Bozeman, ILL23 and the Village Cafe in Jackson, Radio Boardshop in Aspen, and 5-o boardshop in Idaho Falls. They can also be ordered directly through www.avalonseven.com or purchased from Kinger himself at any of the snowboard events he is competing in. At the Breckenridge Grand Prix, announcer Mark Sullivan hyped purchasing bandanas to help him get Kinger back to Jackson Hole. It worked. Rob made enough money selling them to pay for his gas money, there and back.

"As I start to see the possibility of AVALON7 actually turning a profit, I have decided that I might be able to use it to subsidize my travel budgets so I can get out and ride more, and hopefully if it ever goes really big, I can take my best bros and I heliboarding at least once a year. That would be the ultimate goal," he said.

Of course, that is probably a ways off. Right now, the income doesn't even subsidize the cost of producing the bandanas, much less traveling around to snowboard.

"Hopefully AV7 will be a good source of extra cash in the future," Rob said, "but right now it is mostly just a fun game to build a brand, make some cool stuff, and give it out to all my friends."



Kingwill

“ whenever I see someone with an AV7 sticker on their board, I know I probably gave it to them. ”

