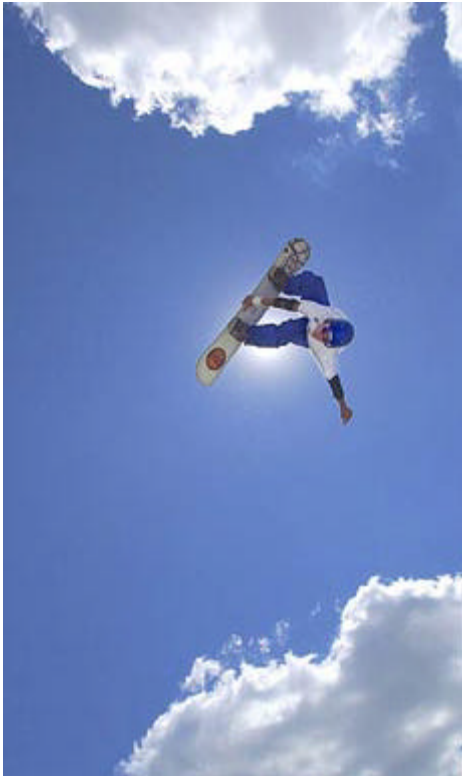


## **Pittsburgh Three Rivers Regatta: Skiers fly high, dry at Regatta ramp**

Friday, August 09, 2002

By Dave Gordon, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

About 200 spectators of all ages oohed and aahed yesterday as they watched Pittsburgh Three Rivers Regatta snowboarders and ski jumpers flip from a four-story ski ramp in Point State Park.



**Cory Altom of Mount Hood, Ore., executes a backflip during an acrobatic snowboarding demonstration yesterday at the opening of the Three Rivers Regatta at Point State Park. The show was presented by Salt Lake City-based Max-Air Productions, which has been producing thrill and extreme sport shows at fairs and festivals since 1985. (John Beale, Post-Gazette)**

In the middle of summer, fake snow stood in for the real thing. Jumpers slid off the ramp onto the ersatz snow, which looks like a white carpet, then landed on artificial turf at 35 mph.

Craig Peterson has been running this ski-jump road show for 18 years. His troupe, Max Air, has performed on venues that include "The Late Show With David Letterman."

Sarah Yourman, a trampolinist in yesterday's show, was the youngest performer at age 12. She has cystic fibrosis and juvenile diabetes, neither of which stopped her from becoming a member in training.

She began trampolining in June, but has been freestyle skiing for most of her life. Troupe beginners start on the trampoline and then work their way onto the ski ramp.

Cory Altom, 24, of Mount Hood, Ore., is one of four people in the world who works as an off-ramp jumper. Typically, it takes three years to train for the off ramp.

Amateurs were discouraged from trying such stunts on their own, but Altom encourages children to learn these activities as a sport.

"Kids get a chance to watch and learn in person instead of on TV," said the turquoise-haired snowboarder, who began learning on a whim six years ago. He said he has received no major injuries yet but has dislocated "some parts a few times."

He loves to do the "rodeo trick," twisting with a backflip.

Spectators were impressed.

"It's pretty cool," said 9-year-old Charles Speelman, who is doing recreational gymnastics after school. "I love the high jumps."

Eileen Speelman, his mother, enjoyed the aspect of watching winter sports in the summer and said her son appreciated the athleticism involved. "My son was inspired."

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