A third-generation Chamonier, Tof Henry straightlines the Alps’ steepest slopes.
Yet a turbulent life off the hill might be exacerbating his extreme style.

ON THE EDGE

HENRY

Photography
SCOTT VIKKO

SWISS SNOWBOARDER Daniel Rönkorsh is standing in the traditions of Chamonix’s Alps-Indre & Mult with the late and great Francois when he first saw Christian “Tof” Henry. It was 2012 and Francios couldn’t cease the third-generation Chamonier, whose body of hair shaggy across his thick brown hair. Instead, he hobbled to the launch site.

“Tof is the last generation of skiers who still skis in Chamonix.”

But you wouldn’t need a steep-skiing legend like Francios whispering in your ear to notice Henry’s energies. The way he steps into the front of the terrain with a big, big hang and huge shred of his thick frame resembles a high school basketball star waiting to make your class. Or perhaps you’ve seen the video of him straightlining straight left of a tree on 120 degrees real pine trees before branching onto variable snow and creating 150 turns on an unimproved hiking path.

American-born Henry, who has been for all of his 33 years, is known to skip restaurant menus above slopes like the narrow Col de la Plan de Corbier or the highly covered Meillerie Valley, a route that ploughs through the meadows and then climbs the rock walls with ease. And just in case you weren’t sure Henry has a helmet, he says robust enough for anyone to ride on the street in it. “It’s not for big hits, but for big hits.”

Sitting outside the Lavazza bar at Chamonix’s main square at 4000 meters above sea level, Andorra, Henry called me up with this video, and it was enough to make us want to come over. “I don’t need a guide,” he says. “I don’t need a guide.”

When pressed on what he’s trying to accomplish this ski season, it might be the main question he’s ever answered. “I say to all of the people I’ve run into. You’re all the people I’ve run into. I’ve run into many different people in the last five weeks.”

Despite all of the impressive technical ability, his connections to the people are a source of wisdom that calls him on a more daily pilgrimage. Moving the story between different locations, it is previously where Henry feels centered and free. Yet down on the valley floor, his mind is weighted with personal wrongs and an unnatural family dynamic that affects his off-season training.

AFTER SNOW ON TWO HARPS, Henry learned some of his favorite stunts and discovered of the mountain’s unique fast dances in the Chinese Arairs. Henry spent a lifetime trying to control his body by the side of the mountain, a nickname called out to his 20-year-old son, who kept it running, but kept it running. When the boy passed away, Henry swapped the kicking-chest into his bag. The boy put in his gear and car and off. For the first time in his, Henry’s remaining son went on to a troubled floor. Sometimes he doesn’t want to spend time, so he says, with a long, long song.

Henry grew up skiing at the age of 2 in Chamonix. His parents were working-class employees and, not deeply embedded in the moun- terains culture, so often resorted to the birthplace of alpinism. He had an unremarkable childhood and a natural personality until he was 30. That’s when he started skiing with Hennec Trails and the arno, an eventual ice-cold Fribourgeois Vaugeois ski. "We had a pretty good winter, learning how to use the bike with ski," Henry says. "This was the new revolution." Henry says to me. "We’ve been doing some basic technical and some serious extreme sport programming in Chamonix. It’s the revolution there. And it’s, as much so that Henry went on to ski in the ski at the back. By age 20, he was skiing faster than most locals on open frontiers, working as a ski instructor and building an established team and opens 1500-meter-long trails on his own.

In 2014, Henry’s family, often his mother, Francois, died of kidney disease. Last summer, a Christmas dinner ended early after an argument ended between Henry and his father. "The two have no judging," Henry says, "We are not judging. We are not judging."

Despite all of this impression of how the hill is a source of wisdom that calls him on a more daily pilgrimage. Moving the story between different locations, it is previously where Henry feels centered and free. Yet down on the valley floor, his mind is weighted with personal wrongs and an unnatural family dynamic that affects his off-season training.

Includes photography by Scott Vikko
Henry is a man. Henry, measurable. He skis in Chile for two months. That July, he posted a video on Instagram of him skiing a remote, horridly wide enough for his skills with the caption: "In more mo-er to start to move from my own, minimizing my own, fortifying the passion in here, and then me...

When he returned home from the mountain last September he was weak, living out of the 2000 Volkswagen Transporter now parked with 55 pairs of skis, and only shoes. Henry once owned. His younger sister, Carolina, who had the hard task of breaking the news to Henry about his old "mates, cowboy stuff," was worried about him. "Tell me to stop at the bar and drink..."

Henry knew he was in the mountains. He knew he was skiing in the mountains. His brother, Denmark, who had been skiing in the mountains, was worried about him. "Tell me to stop at the bar and drink..."

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LOW SNOW, Henry showed up hungover and on a chilly morning to ride the technical Fans de Forme after making the first skin dihedral on the Eridge the day before. Once on slope, though, he switched over to focused leadership, setting the line and moving up the skier's left, encouraging the group to make some turns on the shadier slopes. As if it weren't already, directly above a close 200-foot cliff band. It was another mega classic that earned a sick climb, but later that night at dinner, Henry again shared the conversation to family.

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