



## Building Tough in the Tetons

“Respect is what we look for in athletes.”

— Coach Rob Shaul

The mountain doesn't care, but Rob Shaul, coach and owner of the famed Mountain Athlete training center in Jackson, does. A native Wyoming resident, Shaul grew up in Pinedale, spent time in the Coast Guard and then moved back home to run a newspaper business for 10 years. His long-time dream was to open a facility to work with mountain athletes while staying in Wyoming—Jackson was the obvious choice. A self-proclaimed gym rat, he started coaching general fitness with recreational athletes in 2004 in addition to his full-time work. After

selling his business in Pinedale, Shaul started Mountain Athlete in early 2007.

Shaul and his staff train and support many athletes in the community including local youth competing in a variety of sports including football, hockey and ski racing, as well as professional skiers, climbers, runners and mountain guides. The coach does not recruit. Athletes come to him, he says, because “they are hungry for success, willing to work for it and know Mountain Athlete is where serious and professional athletes train. We don't charge money

“Respect the Mountain.  
Respect the Sport.”

— Mountain Athlete

to work with them, but it's not free. They have to commit, work very hard and be professional about their sport and career.”

Fit, strong and serious, with a commanding military presence, the coach is a natural leader who demands the highest level of performance from his athletes. It is understood through his authoritative demeanor that everyone must give 100 percent. His athletes see the proven return in their strong results in the field. There are no excuses and his views are unwavering as he shares, “The mountain doesn't care how cool you are, how many tattoos you have, or even how well you can ski, climb or ride. If you're not fit and able to survive the unexpected, you're not showing it the proper respect.”

Shaul runs a serious program as many of his teams begin training in June four days a week for the ski season. He helps athletes train through times of injury as well as maintain their fitness programs at the gym year-round. His members show their passion and respect for their personal sports through sacrifice, hard work, commitment and constant improvement. Shaul's mantras are simple and effective: “Be professional about your fitness. The mountain will hold you to it. There are no short cuts. The gym rewards simple, hard work. It's beautiful that way.”

With increased competition in the mountain sports arena, along with a lack of training tradition, Shaul believes that athletes who are professional about their fitness and who train in the off-season will rise to the top. Because of the inherent dangers involved in many mountain-based sports, the proper strength and conditioning can reduce the incidence and severity of injuries. Mountain Athlete is protecting its athletes and helping them build strong careers.

With vision and constant innovation, Shaul continues to grow Mountain Athlete. Branching out from traditional strength and conditioning, he is now offering his athletes technical coaching and mountain-skills instruction in the field, moving from a mountain-sports-focused strength and conditioning facility to a comprehensive Mountain Sports Institute. As his business grows and he works to broaden its scope, Shaul is creating partnerships with other mountain-sport industry leaders, including The North Face, that share this passion for mountain sports and the safety of mountain athletes, including product development and team specific training, because he believes, “there is a huge opportunity to do some great work.” ■