



## CHRIS BURANDT

Check out X games gold medalist in Snowmobile Freestyle in Munich for the Air and Style contest. Chris got second at this contest.



## Local boy shines in X-Games qualifier



Rogers finishes 2nd, earns spot in 2008 Winter X-Games

By FELICIA FRANK  
For the Gazette

Smooth and expertly executed tricks helped make Saturday afternoon a dream come true for Sam Rogers.

The 17-year-old Billings rider, in just his second year as a Freestyle Snowmobile competitor, finished second in Saturday's Winter X-Games qualifier at the MetraPark grandstand, earning a spot in next month's 2008 Winter X-Games in Aspen, Colo. "This is so crazy," said Rogers. "Now it gives me another month to work on my tricks, but it's like I've got a massive weight on my shoulders now."

PHOTO GALLERY

billingsgazette.com

To see more photos from the Winter X-Games qualifier, click the link in this story.

Rogers joined Levi LaVallee of Longville, Minn., Joe Parsons of Yakima, Wash., and Dane Ferguson of Anchorage, Alaska, as X-Games qualifiers from Saturday's field of eight competitors.

The top four finishers earned X-Games berths. LaVallee finished first, Parsons third and Ferguson fourth in front of an estimated crowd of 2,500 fans. They will compete against last year's top four finishers in the X-Games — Chris Burandt, Alexander Noedgaard, Heath Frisby and Daniel Bodin — who have automatic berths in this year's competition.

Please see X-Games. BB



## NATE HAAG

### X-Games

Continued from 1B

Nate Haag of Eden Valley, Minn., finished fifth.

Both Rogers and Ferguson are privateers, meaning they compete without sponsorship from the factories that produce their snowmobiles. This can be expensive for the racers, but competing in the X-Games can turn that all around.

"I had a bunch of deals pending on this and now that I'm in, it could be huge," said Rogers. "The advertising would be national so there will be the opportunity for major corporations to sign on."

Rogers is quickly making a

name for himself in the sport of Freestyle Snowmobile. At this year's MontanaFair at MetraPark, he successfully landed a backflip during the Go Fast Extreme Sports Fash, making him a crowd favorite. Saturday's event was no different.

"I'm pretty stoked that Sam made it in," said Tyler Johnson, the promoter of Saturday's event. "I believe in that kid. Sam has more potential than lots of those guys — he has Levi LaVallee potential."

Rogers completed tricks with crazy names like "cordova," "wale fish," "heel clicker" and "shaolin." His runs were filled with different combination tricks as well.

"I thought after watching Nate's run today that I'd have to

step it up and do a backflip but, somehow, I made it," said Rogers.

One of the competition's most insane tricks came from Parsons. The trick titled "Frisby Air" featured Parsons turning around in mid-air and landing backward on the seat.

Another impressive feat was the 11 successful backflips completed by Ferguson throughout the competition — nine occurred during practice and the other two were during the final round.

"I can actually do other tricks besides the backflip," said the 27-year-old Ferguson. "My sponsor hooked me up with a super powerful sled that I can't really handle yet, but the one trick I can do really well with it is the backflip."

So that's what I did."

Ferguson was impressed with the competition in Saturday's event.

"On any given day any of these guys could have qualified," he said. "I don't by any means think that I'm better than these guys because it's anyone's game. Really, it's whoever is wearing their lucky pants and woke up on the right side of the bed."

LaVallee, a professional Snowcross racer, is the first person in X-Games history to qualify for all three snowmobile events: Freestyle, Sled and Style and Snowcross.

"I'm just so excited," LaVallee said after his win. "I'm a Snowcross guy so just making it to the top four is amazing. I can't believe it."

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