

That Guy

Contributed by Adam Howard

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He was boogying rather well for a guy carrying a Jim and Coke and an extra 20 pounds. By around 11 p.m. he was well into backspin mode and there was a circle of women clapping and laughing around him. That Guy didn't hear the laughing.

After his first failed head-spin, I put down my drink thinking I wanted to be on my game when it came time for backboards and ambulances. Walking over to a few patrol buddies enjoying the show, I could see their delight turning to consternation as our dancer took a digger, jamming his knee into the deck.

But no sooner had he sprung back to his feet, clearly gearing up for another shot at glory, than the DJ cut into a slow song. Looking dejected, he walked over to the bar and got another drink, never to return to the dance-floor that evening.

"Wow, that guy must have been great in his day," my buddy commented. "He left it all on the floor."

The next time I ran into That Guy we were on a ski tour with some mutual friends in the Sawatch Range, off Monarch Pass in Southwestern Colorado. I was a little nervous when I learned he'd be joining us. The avalanche danger was moderate and I didn't know his skill level. But I was assured by the others that he wasn't really that guy at all - he was cool and composed, and solid in the backcountry.

A former NCAA Nordic racer, he broke trail like he danced, beer belly and all. It quickly became clear that he could bury any one of us on skis if not on the dance floor. And, struggling to keep up, I felt foolish for letting one encounter dictate my impression of him. Lagging well off his pace I was forced to confront all of the times I'd been "That Guy," overcompensating for a lack of confidence on the hill, or just plain over-partying at a wedding. My friends were right. And I was forced to admit that this guy had only been that guy on that night.

At the top of our descent route, we analyzed the snowpack. That Guy was the first to suggest we abort and take a safer route through the trees, and the others agreed. A bit conservative I thought. But I didn't argue. No sense being "That Guy" on this trip.