

STORY BY EMILY HARRELL • PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHAD ADAMS AND JP BEATO / THE BATTALION

“X-ploit the X-treme sports”

seems to be the rally cry among advertisers who want to appeal to the so-called “Generation X” — from makers of Mountain Dew to the manufacturers of the Nissan X-Terra — and the attention that has been given to these sports have not failed to touch the microcosm of Texas A&M.

But why this sudden explosion of high-flying, cargo-pant wearing, crash-helmet-bearing athletes?

Martha Muckleroy, a senior lecturer for the Health and Kinesiology Department who teaches several kinesiology classes at A&M including beginning mountain biking, venture dynamics and volleyball, said she believes the growth of the economy has allowed more college students to break into outdoor sports.

“The economy is so good, people have a lot of money. There’s people in this [beginning mountain biking] class

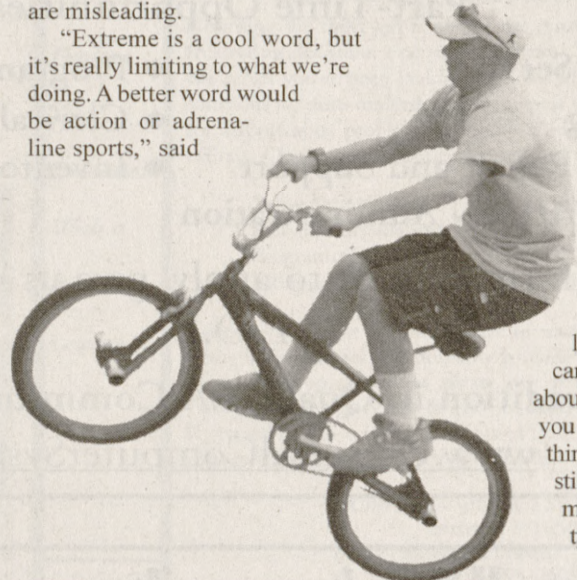
sports is another issue enthusiasts must deal with in order to participate. While most of the athletes admit that a certain degree of danger is inherent in their sports, they also agree that buzz words like “extreme sports” and “X-Games” are misleading.

“Extreme is a cool word, but it’s really limiting to what we’re doing. A better word would be action or adrenaline sports,” said

Heath said that some risks are unavoidable when skydiving, but that most are controlled by the skydiver.

“Some people don’t know very much about the safety concerns, but some are willing to do it regardless. It doesn’t matter what you tell them,” he said.

“But I looked at it, and I realized that the way I looked at it and the way that most people look at it was wrong. You can control more aspects about your environment than you think. Certainly not everything, and that’s what makes it still dangerous, but you determine what degree of difficulty you decide to undertake.”



# X-TREME

## AGGIES SEARCH FOR NEW THRILLS

with \$1,500 mountain bikes,” she said. “I also think that the design, the physics, the engineering maybe... the technology has gotten so good and affordable and safe to participate in these sports.”

Russell Heath, a licensed skydiver and a senior genetics major, is who said he agrees that the healthy economy allows more students to participate in outdoor sports.

Heath said he has made 42 jumps since he started skydiving. He said his certification cost about \$1,500 and that he has spent at least \$2,000 total including the gear that he has purchased.

“Once you get into it, it’s a pretty cheap sport day-to-day, but getting certified and all that equipment is a heck of a lot of money. You can’t get into the sport without at least a credit card,” he said. The danger involved in many of the

Andy Ambros, Class of ’94 and designer of Earthsports.com, a Website that sells gear and accessories relating to outdoor sports.

“Know your limits. My limits are different from the next guy. These sports are about challenging yourself, but you have to know your limits,” he said.

Muckleroy said the level of danger involved in outdoor sports is determined by the individual athletes.

“I think that the sports are as dangerous as you want them to be. And you can’t tell me it’s more dangerous than football. I don’t like the fear of panic,” she said.

“When you say ‘X-Games,’ it sounds like that’s what they’re in, but they’re not. They’re at a very high level in their sport, doing what they’ve been training to do. They don’t have to

Once athletes have come to terms with the danger involved with outdoor sports, they can concentrate on finding their favorite.

Muckleroy said that of all the sports she teaches, white water canoeing is her favorite.

“I really enjoy the coordination and the power of my body working if something is really hard, and you have to balance,” she said.

Ambros said that skateboarding while growing up made the transition to snowboarding natural.

“We’ve all at one point had a skateboard in our hand. My favorite [sport is] snowboarding,” he said. “It’s an unbelievable experience. I personally feel like you have more control.”

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# Everybody Scores!

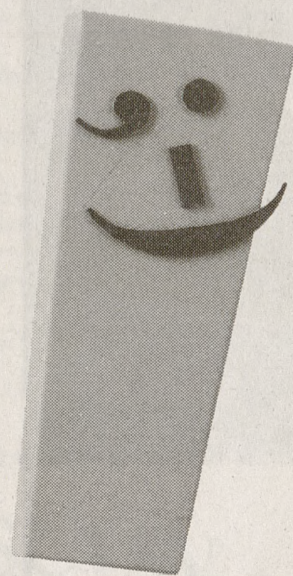
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