

# mountain man

**H**is claim to fame is rescuing a snowballed sheep high in the Hector Mountains, Otago.

Marlborough semi-professional skier Pete Oswald proved a media hit when he carried out one of the world's few sheep rescues on skis after an exhausted ewe slid into his life.

Pete and photographer Dan Power were on the last run of the day setting up for a shoot for *Snow Action Magazine* when Oswald saw a "little bundle of wool" tumbling head over feet over a rocky ridge and down the mountain.

Pete squatted down and lifted the 40-kilogram ewe on to his legs and skied slowly down the slope and left it on a grassy pasture.

The yarn is surely one to be re-told by the 29-year-old.

His passion started on the slopes of Rainbow Ski Field. At 5 he had gone skiing with his parents and quickly became hooked. "I still remember the day, I just loved it. I was trouble as a youngster. I loved going fast down a hill. I was a mini adventurer."

"My parents still tell the story I started on a hill and skied all day long.

"As a youngster I never raced nor took lessons but was constantly on the hunt for speed

and air."

Born in Blenheim, he grew up on a high country sheep farm in the Awatere Valley.

Oswald attended correspondence school until he was 11, then moved to Bohally Intermediate for two years and on to Christ's College in Christchurch.

He was one of only 30 people who got into the competitive Mount Aspiring College in Wanaka where he had the opportunity to ski three days a week.

As a semi-professional skier and cinematographer, he has skied and filmed in 11 countries around the world.

His career was nearly over at 21 when he underwent two knee surgeries and 12 months of rehabilitation. "It was the scariest time of my life. I thought I was never going to ski again."

He admits in his youth he was a risk taker but had mellowed just slightly.

Pete has undergone four knee surgeries, suffered a cracked sternum, separated shoulder joint, permanently broken ligaments in both thumbs, a broken collar bone and shoulder blade, slipped discs and bruised vertebrae and countless concussions.

"Hard knocks don't hold me back," he laughs.

Pete has battled blizzards and



**Ski supreme:** Semi-professional skier Pete Oswald from Blenheim learned on the slopes of Rainbow Ski Field. Photo: FILIP ALFVÄG

lightning storms and still took on some of the toughest terrain.

Hurting 100kmh down a mountain was a serene experience, he said.

"Being on top of a mountain

is an awesome experience of natural solitude. I feel very privileged and a sense of empowerment.

"It can be fun and really exciting to feelings of

nervousness worrying about the things that could go wrong. At the end of a ski run I feel a surge of relief."

■ You can follow Pete on his website [peteoswald.co.nz](http://peteoswald.co.nz)