

How you can ski with Howie D

LUPUS FOUNDATION: Backstreet Boy hits Whistler to raise funds

BY TOM HARRISON
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Howie Dorough is best known as Howie D of the Backstreet Boys.

But he wears many hats — as DJ, actor, solo recording act, manager. Right now, he's wearing that of fundraiser.

His sister, Caroline Dorough-Cochran, died of lupus in 1998. Since then, Howie has established the DLF, the Dorough Lupus Foundation, for research into a cure for the mysterious disease. To that end, he'll be at Whistler from tomorrow to the 30th raising money for the DLF. Registrants can ski with Howie and participate in a celebrity meet and greet. Howie will also be a guest DJ. (More info at www.dlfcanda.com/Whistler.html)

Although rock stars, such as Bono, have used their popularity as political leverage, it's rare that anybody hears of a pop star doing the same. As such, Howie Dorough stands out.

He shies from the attention, though.

"I don't try to make people think that it's all me doing this," he says modestly, citing various acts who have appeared with him at fundraising concerts — Jon Secada, The Monkees, Pointer Sisters, Rascal Flatts . . .

"But it's a shame. More people should do more. I've been blessed. We've had so much success that we can do this."

Thus, he uses what little time is available to promote the DLF. With an album due from Backstreet in June, his finishing of a solo album that explores his Latin roots, and continuing management of Canadian pop singer George, that isn't much. He admits that he is a workaholic.

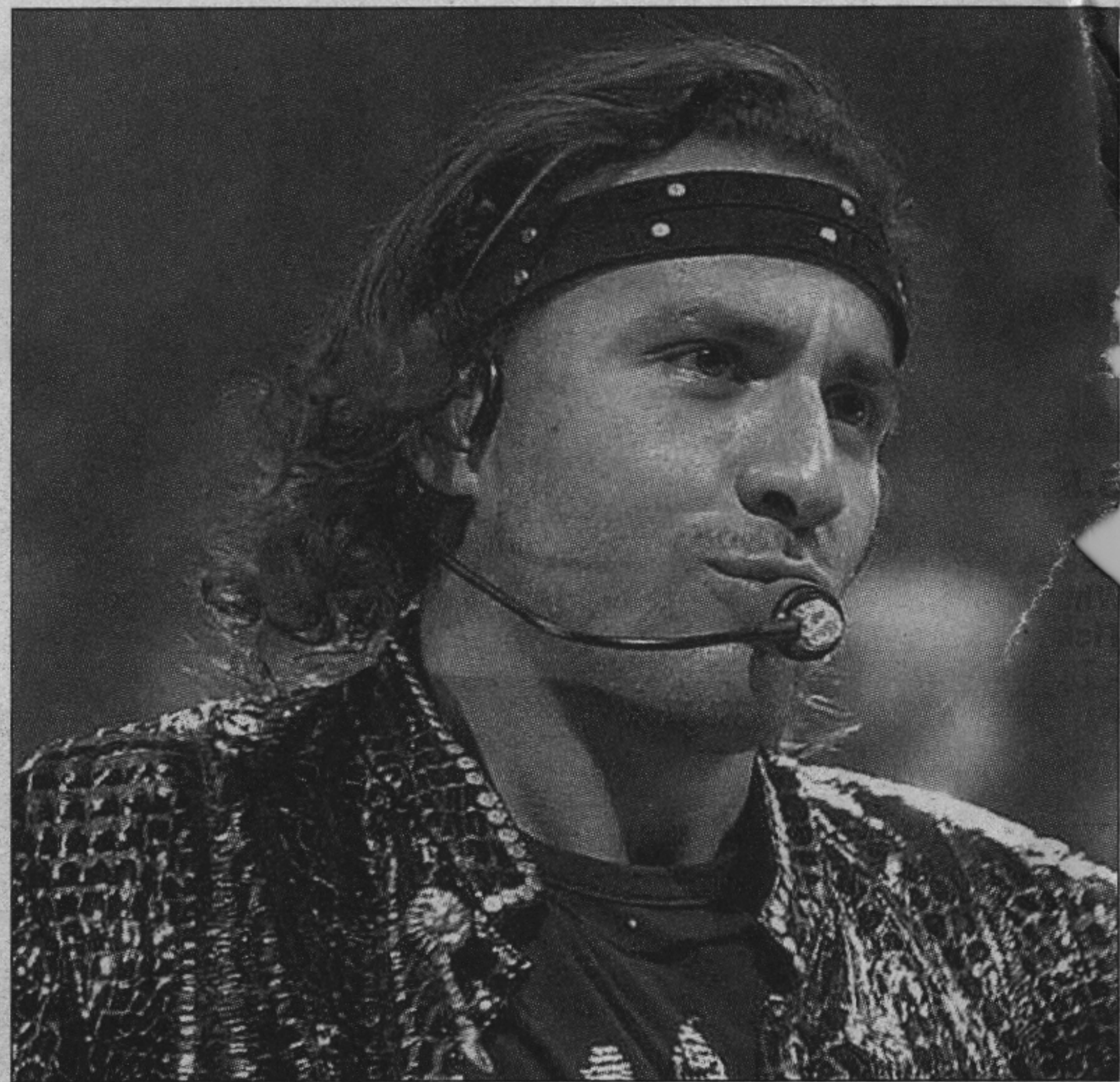
"Oh, entirely," Dorough concurs. "But I love what I do. It's my whole life. We do our best to create a positive situation. It's weird that something as big as lupus is so little known."

Lupus is so little known because medical science knows so little. It is a debilitating disease whose most obvious symptom is a severe and very sensitive skin rash but it shares so many other symptoms with other diseases, it's often misdiagnosed and sometimes sufferers will have lupus for years and not know it. Scientists don't know the cause of lupus and barely know how to treat it. Despite the efforts of the DLF, lupus remains an unknown.

"I knew about the disease through my sister," Dorough recalls. "She didn't want anyone to know she had it, so she kept quiet about it. When she passed away, my family got to know more about it."

The family's increasing awareness moved Howie to set up the DLF, but what he learned shocked him.

"The people [with lupus] are out there. The numbers are really unbe-



Howie D (shown here at a Backstreet Boys concert in 2001) will shed the headband (we hope) when he hits the local slopes. — AP

lievable."

And so the DLF is more than a fundraising foundation for research; it's also making the public more aware. This has worked for Crohn's disease, for example. More people are more knowledgeable about Crohn's, which makes the disease easier to talk about, if not treat.

So the work goes on, even when he has to change hats and provide the harmony voice for the Backstreet Boys.

"I don't have a problem with what I do," he insists. "I enjoy it. First of all, I enjoy life."

In June, Backstreet Boys will follow the album that ended a four-year hiatus, during which the group sued the corporation, Zomba, that owned the Jive Record label for \$10 million

and won. The break turned out to be a blessing — the group was allowed to grow up, to explore different avenues and try different styles of music. More importantly, the fans were still there, which is unusual for a "boy band." It enabled Howie to try personal management — George's *Believe* album has been a modest success — and, with Jon Secada, branch out from Backstreet pop by making a solo album that will reflect his upbringing. He was born in Florida, after all, and his mother is Puerto Rican. The direction of his album is natural to him, for which he'll have to wear another, different kind of hat.

For information on the Canadian DLF, go to www.dlfcanda.com
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