

32 DEGREES

THE JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTION | *Spring 2014*

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Do You Have What It Takes to
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Teaching Tip

Help Riders Rock this
Terrain-based Trick

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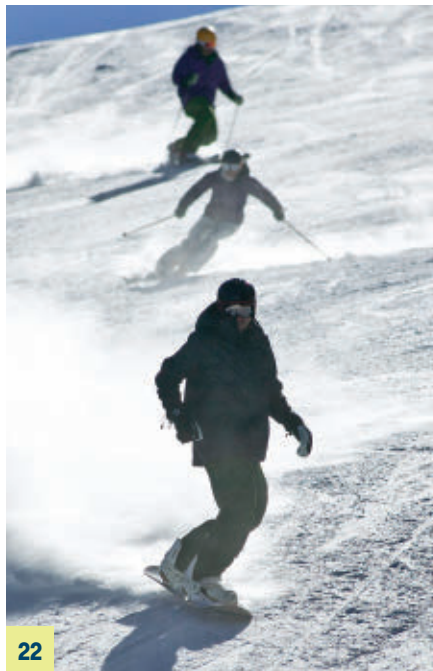
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Cover Shot: Emily Heikkinen, a Telemark Level III and Alpine Level III instructor at Colorado's Beaver Creek Resort, shares her home turf and surf with PSIA Nordic Team Coach J. Scott McGee.

32 DEGREES

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RULE THE MOUNTAIN



National, Division Leaders Sow Seeds to Serve You Better

By Eric Sheckleton, PSIA-AASI Chairman of the Board

If you're not growing, you're dying." This quote by life coach and motivational speaker Tony Robbins has resonated with me throughout my life. Relevant in so many ways, both personally and professionally, it reminds me that the growth process is a life-long endeavor that, though never fully completed, shapes one's success and satisfaction with anything worth pursuing.

Think of a piece of fruit that, while still on the tree, continues to grow. Once picked, it begins to die, even if slowly and imperceptibly at first. In a way, the same is true for people. When one stops striving for new experiences or knowledge, the vibrancy of life can start to dim. In my mind, growth takes the form of any mental and/or physical challenge and leads to positive outcomes, including increased passion, excitement, drive, advancement, and improvement.

As ski and snowboard instructors, we all find value in teaching others and sharing our passion for the sport. Most of us have also spent a lot of time learning through manuals, videos, clinics, and exams. If you're like me, you might feel the need to have a goal or two (or five) each season, whether it's mastering a more difficult run, earning a higher level of certification, or learning a new sport. Without goals like these, I feel complacent and unchallenged. My skills don't advance, and that can actually seem like a step backward.

The same is true for PSIA-AASI. Together, your leaders at the division and national level are working to improve the services you're offered. PSIA-AASI is a dynamic association, and we want it to grow more vibrant so you can get even more out of your membership. This includes new methods for providing content, like social media channels, as well as improving the ease with which

you can access services. We're also focused on improving education and making certification more relevant to you, your employers, and your guests.

This year's PSIA-AASI Fall Conference at Copper Mountain, Colorado, is a great example of the national association bringing together division leaders in education for all disciplines, in order to chart a course for improvement. The course includes simplification, clarification, and greater consistency of the education and certification concepts. Please see "Conference Groups Examine Areas of Need" on page 12 for more information on the outcomes of this gathering.

Your PSIA-AASI Board of Directors is also growing and improving. Not content with the status quo, we're committed to adapting best practices for governance policy and are striving to implement advances that make your association better suit your needs, now and in the future. In particular, the board is focused on:

- Mapping out the organization's top priorities and developing a process to measure our success in achieving those priorities.
- Clarifying the role of the board, officers, committees, and staff, including delegation of responsibilities and the CEO's scope of authority.
- Improving the relationship between the volunteer leadership and you, the member.

During the October 2013 work session at Fall Conference, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors took the initial step toward implementation of "Policy Governance®" – a model created by Dr. John Carver (a former adjunct professor in the University of Georgia Institute for Nonprofit Organizations) to help boards of directors fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organization they govern. The model's integrated concepts and principles outline the manner in which boards can be more successful in their servant-leadership role.

The two work session days spent taking this first step will lead to clearly defined and understood roles; a better understanding of the CEO's limitations, accountability, and evaluation; and a renewed commitment to listen to and engage members in formal and informal ways. Subsequent steps in this process will be taken during our February meeting, which occurs as this issue of *32 Degrees* is going to press. For more background information as well as the most up-to-date information on progress on this front, please go to TheSnowPros.org and click on the "PSIA-AASI Governance Information" link on the homepage.

Fruit trees have their best yield when well cared for in a climate that promotes growth. Just as PSIA-AASI wants to make improvements that better serve its members needs, I hope you spend some time considering how *you* would like to improve this season. Set some goals and make a plan for achieving them. For example, if you plan to seek a higher level of certification, you might wish to find a mentor who can help you work toward that. (You'll find great insight on that in "Mentors: How to Find, Approach, and Be One," page 42.) After all, even if you don't reach your goals this season, you'll grow through the actions you take in that direction. **32°**

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Keep Experienced Skiers and Snowboarders Interested in Instruction

BY SHERMAN WHITE

In the Winter 2012 issue of *32 Degrees* I read some excellent articles about attracting more advanced skiers and riders into ski school programs. It got me thinking about the next step in the process; once someone's curiosity is piqued, how do we as instructors provide them with an experience that makes them come back for more lessons?

Find Out Why They Showed Up

It's almost impossible to meet a guest's expectations if you don't know why they showed up in the first place. Most experienced skiers/riders are *not* motivated to buy a ski school product, so something had to have prompted them to buy a lesson. Sometimes your student may not really know what that reason is until you help him or her find it. Try asking these questions to get to the bottom of it.

1. When does their confidence start to go downhill (pun intended)?
2. Is there something about the way they ski or ride that they don't like?
3. Does their reason tie in to some social, non-technical reason, such as skiing more difficult terrain with friends and/or family, or preparing for a special event or trip?

Finding out what your students' goals are will allow you to plan out the lesson in order accomplish as much as possible in the time you have. If you have several people in a group, asking these questions is also a great way to see how compatible the group is. Once you've unearthed their motivations and goals, everything you do for the session should relate to those.

Focus on the Will, not the Skill

Oftentimes a skier or snowboarder's *will* becomes much more important than their



Sherman White cruises in his finest skiing attire after winning the "Hook 'Em" award given by his home resort, Smugglers' Notch, VT.

skill in a lesson. If you haven't seen the Swedish Interski 2011 presentation about Will/Skill/Hill, do yourself a favor and check it out (search Interski 2011 Sweden Key Lecture on YouTube/thesnowpros). There is a reason for the old adage "if there is a will, there is a way."

Here's a great example of a group I skied with that drives home this point. I had three experienced skiers in the 40-60 age range who wanted to spend time skiing glades and bumps. I also had a less experienced skier in his late 20s who

wanted to learn to ski trees and bumps. Once we got skiing, it was clear that his skill was nowhere near that of the others, but he had the will (plus a much younger body). If I had initially gone by his demonstrated skill as a skier, I would have passed him off to slower group that would have stayed on groomed blue trails and worked to build up his skills. As a result, he would have left frustrated at not having come anywhere near meeting his goals. Instead, we spent the morning skiing trees and bumps. The others in the group got in

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on the coaching act as well. At the end of two hours, everyone left feeling they had gotten their money's worth.

Coaching Vs. Instructing

In my mind, instructing uses a different approach than coaching. You'll usually use both in any given lesson depending on the day, the terrain, and, most importantly, the students. I tend to think of instructing as being more teacher-centered, where the instructor makes the decisions about what the group does. I typically instruct more with less

experienced and less skilled students. Being more teacher-centered can help bridge the gap between experience and goals.

To me, coaching is more student-centered. With more experiences and skilled students, you need to build on what they bring to the session in order to help them reach their goals. With more experienced students, I will step back and coach more. As a coach, I know the session is working when I get that feeling of being a bystander, observing what is going on, and stepping in with some quick thoughts as needed. Coaching also implies a trusting, long-term relationship with your students. If you approach each session as a step in building that relationship, repeat sessions will happen.

Keep Teaching Simple and Goal-Oriented

Rome wasn't built in a day, and you might not change a student's skiing and meet every goal in a day either. The experience they bring to the session can be a barrier to making the changes that you see as important in working toward their goals. Prioritize the things you think need to change, and focus on only one thing at a time. Focus on the one thing you can work on that will have the most effect for this lesson. If you have multiple students, be prepared to have at least a couple of different focus points. Make sure you reinforce their goals, and how what they are doing is related to that goal. If your session time is fairly short, the change may not be complete, but your

WHAT PSIA-AASI HAS DONE FOR ME

BY GREG DEHAVEN



COURTESY OF GREG DEHAVEN

My incredible experience with PSIA-AASI affirms that dreams can come true if you dedicate yourself to them. In 2009, the state of the economy negatively impacted my profession as a landscape designer and contractor and I needed to find a supplementary source of income. Having been creatively fulfilled by making

beautiful outdoor spaces for my clients, I wanted to find something else that was also of meaning to me. After exploring many possibilities, my wife Ann suggested that I look into employment at Mt. Hood Meadows near our home in Oregon, knowing of my passion for the mountains and for skiing.

I followed her advice and landed a job with Mt. Hood Meadows Ski & Snowboard School, teaching part-time in 2009. I was hired to teach full-time for the 2010-11 season. Income was still an issue, so I committed to a very full schedule, often working 12-hour shifts. While teaching at Mt. Hood I was lucky to meet a very special person, Michael Birch-Jones, who opened my mind to the possibility that I could become certified through PSIA-AASI. With ceaseless encouragement from Michael, I began to study – something I wasn't great at. What happened as a result still gives me goose-bumps. In a matter of 17 months I was able to accomplish the following:

- December 2010, passed the Senior Specialist Foundations Clinic
- January 2011, passed the Alpine Level I Certification Clinic
- March 2011, passed the written test for Alpine Level II
- April 2011, passed Alpine Level II teaching and skiing

- April 2011, passed Adaptive Cognitive/Visual Level I
- February 2012, passed Senior Specialist 1
- March 2012, passed the written test for Level III

Then in April 2012, with strong encouragement and support from my ski school directors and peers, I passed the Level III teaching and skiing exam. Later that month I earned my Senior Specialist 2 credential.

After all of this, I realize there is still so much more to learn and I hope my journey inspires others to deepen their knowledge and experience. I am deeply impressed by the tireless devotion, commitment, and personal sacrifice shown by every examiner, clinic leader, tech teamer, and division clinic leader with whom I have been fortunate to interact. I am currently employed at Meadows full-time, and am pursuing further PSIA-AASI education. As I gain more experience, I am discovering, like so many of you have, the magic of our guests' "breakthrough" moments.

I asked most of my guests to sign my employee handbook, which I carried with me. By the end of the season, guests from 52 countries had signed it and made positive comments. It gradually became clear to me that every guest arrives with expectations of fun and improvement, many having gone to great expense and planning, some seeing snow for the very first time. My understanding of the responsibility placed in my hands with each new guest has lead me to give each lesson "all I got." ❄️

Greg DeHaven started skiing when he was 12 and shortly got into ski racing and later race coaching. He is entering his fifth year teaching at Mt. Hood Meadows in Oregon. He is currently advancing his education in adaptive instructing and would like to become more involved in PSIA-AASI's Adaptive Program.



COURTESY OF SHERMAN WHITE

Counting heads after a powder run through the trees — always a good thing to do.

students should all be able to do some self-coaching when they are done with the session. If you are successful here with self-coaching, it will almost always lead to future sessions.

Guided Practice on Chosen Terrain

Guided practice can overcome your students' old habits, the ones you're

trying to replace with better ones. With experienced skiers and riders, it's important to do as much of the coaching as possible on the terrain they want to ski. If your students want to get more confident skiing on ungroomed terrain and trees, don't spend your time talking about how the drills you are doing on groomed blue terrain will help them on the ungroomed stuff. If you have the option, start off on easier ungroomed terrain to start the coaching, and gradually progress to more difficult situations as their confidence increases.

While you are observing them, provide relevant and effective feedback. The most effective way to test the effectiveness of your feedback is to ask your students to tell you what they understand about whatever you are doing. Don't be afraid to ask your students what kind of feedback delivery works for them, so you can choose your coaching technique.

Finally, Celebrate Success

Learning and changing are difficult for all of us. If student are pushing themselves to make changes, their confidence is going to

get dinged at some point. Think of all the changes you have made in your skiing or riding over the years, and how frustrating it was. Frustration is normal but no fun. Celebrating the small advances and pointing out little changes as they occur will go a long way toward minimizing that frustration and maximizing your students' satisfaction. If your students come away from a session with a clearly stated goal, a self-coaching tip they can use on their own, and a little more confidence, they will remember their session with you as valuable and fun, and they will come back for more. ☺

Sherm White started skiing at Northeast Ski Slopes in Vermont (the oldest continuously operating rope tow in North America) in the mid-1950s. After ski racing and patrolling, he began teaching in 1971 and found that he enjoyed coaching people almost as much as he enjoyed skiing. Sherm holds Alpine Level III certification and is a Lifetime member of PSIA-AASI. He has taught at Smugglers' Notch Resort in Vermont for the past 40 years.

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News of Note

Conference Groups Examine Areas of Need

PSIA-AASI members looking to achieve breakthroughs in coming seasons will benefit from the efforts of division education representatives, including members of the Education Advisory Committee (EAC), who gathered in October at PSIA-AASI Fall Conference 2013 in Copper Mountain, CO. There, discipline-based work groups met to revise standards, create content, and update education materials.

The alpine group sought to establish consistency in minimum certification standards, set a new format to allow for comparison, and tie certification to teaching and testing.

The snowboard group sought greater consistency throughout the standards, (particularly with regard to tasks and descriptions) as well as simpler terminology to ease evaluation. They also clarified the “initial, elementary, and mature” model of performance assessment.

With the divisions closely aligned on the telemark front, the group focused on updates for movement analysis and teaching standards rather than a major overhaul. Minor changes clarified and narrowed the standards’ scope while making them more consistent with the written test.

The cross country group focused on development of a new technical manual and a new skills model that, in keeping with United States Ski and Snowboard Association approaches, emphasizes the three skills of push-off, weight transfer, and glide (all working with continual forward motion). The intent for the current year is to let the divisions play with this new model and revise the standards next year.

From an adaptive perspective, the alpine focus was on establishing consistent

equivalencies across ability and equipment types (e.g., sit versus stand unity). The focus of the adaptive snowboard contingent explored a more efficient method to tether snowboarders using a climbing harness with tethers on the hips (not the board) to encourage effective steering. Adaptive representatives also incorporated additional cross-disciplinary knowledge into their work on best practices.

The children’s group worked on the standards, created a reference guide, and reviewed educational theorist Benjamin Bloom’s teaching steps (teach, apply, and create) in light of incorporating new material into lessons. They also sought to create a rubric to support the application of national standards to local events.



DANNY COFFEY

With national freestyle standards approved in January 2013, the freestyle educators didn’t tackle major revisions, but snowboard representatives discussed division differences and goals. The group favored the creation of movement analysis tools and creating video (i.e., “jibisodes”) to view during teaching/exam situations.

The most current national standards – including revised Alpine, Snowboard, and Telemark standards submitted to and approved by the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors at its February meeting – are available at TheSnowPros.org.

SIA Snow Show Report: Top Trends and Women on Snow

The PSIA-AASI staff took full advantage of January’s SnowSports Industries America Snow Show in Denver, meeting with the

great equipment and accessories partners eager to find more ways to work with instructors and attending trend-spotting presentations.

According to SIA Director of Research Kelly Davis, alpine ski inventories are down, sales of fat flat skis are soaring, and women’s alpine equipment sales are particularly healthy, especially in the AT category.

Speaking of women, Codie Costello and Kathy Norford from Spawn – an Alaska-based ad agency – presented quantitative and qualitative research on female outdoor enthusiast’s behavior and said, “With women (or men!), your brand is at risk when you focus on stereotypes or extremes, emphasizing gender over behavior.” Plainly put, not all women like pink. Here are some points from their insightful findings.

- Make what women love doing more accessible (Snow pro hint – let’s make it easier for women and moms to get on the mountain!)
- Less is more – women want to participate in lots of different sports, but don’t always want to commit to buying the gear for each sport. (Snow pro hint – help women try out different gear in lessons by showing them how to demo different equipment.)
- As consumers, women look to these resources when buying: 1) friends, 2) consumer recommendations, 3) in-store experts, 4) best-of lists, 5) articles.





And when you’re focusing on woman, don’t forget the moms. According to the Snow Show’s “Moms Matter” panel discussion, when it comes to spending, moms account for \$2.4 trillion dollars of economic clout, and the ski and snowboard industry would be wise to take notice.

As one panel member put it, “Keep mom happy and they’ll keep coming back... with the kids.”

Here are just a few things that make moms happy:

- Website sources for what to bring and what kids need for ski school.
- Employees who relate to moms.
- Value-added programs like a free or discounted lesson for mom that starts an hour after they put their kids in ski school. ☺

Locker Room Talk

	Name/Area/Certification	Member Since/Division	What inspired you to become an instructor?	What advice do you have for new instructors?	Who is your favorite PSIA-AASI Official Supplier – and why?	What is your biggest accomplishment as an instructor?
	Andrea Reilly Breckenridge, CO Alpine Level II Children's Specialist I, Snowboard Level I	2005 Rocky Mountain	I skied with some friends in college who signed up to be part-time instructors at Whitetail in PA. I thought to myself, "I'm as good as them," so I signed up for the same program. When I graduated from college and didn't have a job, I chose to move to Vermont and pursue instructing full-time.	It's always a fun idea to be a ski bum for a year, but give teaching more of a chance than that. The rewards are far greater than you may have first thought.	I just bought some new Smith goggles through the PSIA-AASI <i>Accessories Catalog</i> . Not only are they amazing goggles that I adore, but the shipping was free!	Earning the respect of my peers at Breckenridge. When I first arrived, I had <i>some</i> experience but had a lot to learn. Being a young female at the adult lineup had its challenges. I worked hard, put in the training hours, taught in the nastiest conditions, and took on difficult students. Now I feel like my friends and colleagues at lineup respect my skills as a teacher and a skier.
	Robert Hakkinen Indianhead Mountain, MI Alpine Level III	1962 Central	The Pin! The certification pins worn by my skiing heroes from Europe to Eastern Division to Central and Rocky Mountain. Those skiers with the almost mystical ability to whip down the slope in control, at speed, and with enviable style and grace – they all had the pin.	Mileage will hone your skills and help you handle any situation. Get as many teaching hours as possible and take every workshop you can.	Smith helmets and goggles. Safety first!	All of my former students, racers, and family members that are now addicted to skiing and are sharing that fun with others.
	Nathan Chapple Snowbird, UT Snowboard Level III, Alpine Level I	2006 Inter-mountain	The discounted season pass, plus my dad was going to teach – and who doesn't want to hang out and charge the mountain with their dad?	Just remember to keep having fun. Don't get stressed out about getting your next certification and knowing everything. And don't let getting your next certification make you feel like now you DO know everything.	Burton. Not only are they cool to instructors, but they help out with a lot of research and development when it comes to teaching the sport. And you can't ignore their integral contribution in getting snowboarding solidly into the public mindset.	Getting my Level III allowed me to do what I've always wanted and travel somewhere new to teach and ride. Being able to call up Snowbird and tell them I had a Level III certification with PSIA-AASI, and then get a job with no problems was sweet.
	Christine Feehan Burke Mountain Academy, VT Alpine Level II	1997 Eastern	Love for the sport of skiing and the ability to teach.	If you're having fun, keep doing it.	The Patagonia Pro Form, obviously!	Keeping a smile on my face during a rainy day on the mountain in the East.

ROAD TRIP WORTH TAKING

Summer Shredding at Mt. Hood

Oregon's Timberline Ski Area has been at the epicenter of America's summer shred scene for more than 70 years. One of the original hubs of adaptive skiing, a perpetual hothouse of the top trends in snowboarding, and one of the best places ever to eyeball existing and up and coming alpine legends, the Palmer Snowfield and nearby Government Camp are the place for snow fans to be in the middle of July. So, go and grab a clinic or just hit the chairs for a morning. Don't be surprised if you see a few members of the PSIA-AASI Teams while you're there.



Show us where you read 32 Degrees by Instagramming a photo of you with the magazine. Make sure to include @thesnowpros and hashtag #snowpros to be entered to win a \$20 catalog gift certificate!

FAVORITE *Member Benefit:*



"There are so many benefits to choose from when you become a PSIA-AASI member. For me, the best benefit is all the training we get from going to an event. My favorite is National Academy, which I try to attend every year. There are so many activities to choose from and the

instructors you meet – whether they are your trainers, examiners, or other instructors that are there for the same experience – will always be remembered. Everyone will return to their mountain a better coach."

—Lori Charron, Alpine Level III; Saddleback Mountain, ME

Editor's note: PSIA-AASI members can register for National Academy 2014 at TheSnowPros.org. (See page 81 for details.)

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT



Dale of Norway

Location: Dale, Norway

Years In the Biz: Founded in 1879, Dale has been in business for 134 years.

Website: Daleofnorway.com and Dale of Norways' pro purchase program can be accessed via the member login at the TheSnowPros.com.

Why They Rock: Dale of Norway has been making lasting sweaters for more than 100 years, using only the best of outerwear's original technical material – wool.

What You May Not Know: Dale of Norway supplied the first Olympic Sweater to the Norwegian team in 1956. The team thought the sweaters to be their lucky charms since they won so many medals that year. Ever since, the Norwegian teams have worn Dale of Norway sweaters to every Olympics and every Alpine World Championships. In 57 years, it appears the luck still has hasn't worn out!

Rad

Sad



Volunteering for your local adaptive program.



Keeping all your on-snow time to yourself.



Cross country skiing for fitness and fun.



Thinking the only way to enjoy the snow is off the lift.



Finishing the season strong.



Heading to the beach when your mountain's still open.



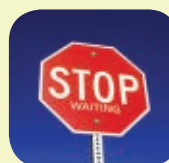
Learning a new language.



Only knowing how to say "snow" in English.



Taking a road trip to a different ski area.



Waiting until "next year" to do it.

IMAGES BY THINKSTOCK

REASON TO GET EXCITED:

New Technical Manuals Are Being Developed!

As you roll into the 2014-15 season, you just might have to free up room in your brain for a knowledge boost. That's because PSIA-AASI is developing new technical manuals for alpine, snowboarding, and telemark instructors. Filled with the best instructional techniques, student-centered insight, and state-of-the-art teaching tips, these breakthrough books will supercharge your already awesome lesson plans while taking your own skiing and riding to the next level. Stay tuned to TheSnowPros.org for updates in preparation for the exciting introductions this fall.



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ProFile:

HOLLY ANNE ANDERSEN

Snowboard Level III, Adaptive Snowboard Level II, Alpine Level II Instructor, and Snowboard Examiner for Eastern Division; Mount Snow, Vermont

Both your parents were ski instructors. How did that influence you?

Tremendously. They both gave me the sense of what it was like to give up your free time to help people who want to be outside and active during the winter. Growing up, I watched them make other people's lives better through skiing and that made a pretty deep impression on me. I really don't know what people do during the winter if they aren't on the mountain.

How has snowboarding improved your life?

In too many ways to count; it has brought me lifelong friends, given me a winter family that I can rely on (even when it's not winter), inspired me to move forward in other areas of my life when things get rough, and humbled me. The struggles each of us go through in our daily lives

seem manageable when you step outside of what seems comfortable and look at everyone else around you. What I mean is that it has shown me that anything is possible, regardless of an individual's particular circumstances. When you watch a kid turn for the first time, or watch a mono-skier rip through the bumps, the rest of life becomes incredibly manageable.

Why is it important to you to share the sport with other people?

Every aspect of the sport has taught me something. Being hurt. Being cold. Being with friends. It has taught me that if I can do this, I can do anything, and we all can. I would love for everyone who has a desire to be outside have the opportunity to enjoy my sport. I know it's corny, but I sometimes think of what Kennedy said about not asking what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your

country, and I feel the same way about snowboarding. I'm really proud to be able to give something back to the sport, because it has given me so much.

Your kids' initials spell JIB and CAB – are you really that snowboard crazy? Got any other fun examples of your snowboard mania?

Yes, my poor children were named, in part, so that they would have cool snowboarding initials. My parents gave my sister and me cool initials too. Both of my babies have been hauled off to PSIA-AASI events, clinics, exams, and were pulled around on boards when they were not even one-year-old yet. My first daughter, JIB, made her first turns at six-weeks-old when we had a snowstorm and I strapped skis on her stroller and took her for a ride. I don't care if they are good; I just want them to love it.

What other sports do you do, and how do they inform your world?

I spend as much time outside as I can. I am an avid fisherman, I love to camp and to hike. Riding my mountain bike is the best time ever. Having two small children makes this challenging, but always doable. The alternative does not seem to me to be very much fun.

PSIA-AASI members talk a lot about passion, What does that word mean to you?

It means coming back to riding even after bad injuries. It means that when people ask you why you would ever go back to a sport that caused you two shoulder surgeries and one back surgery (from being run into) you have no idea what they are talking about. How can you not come back to this? How can I not be outside, playing on the bumps, teaching a student on the greens, or just turning left and right with friends? Maybe being passionate about our sport means having a general lack of common sense? I don't know.

Where do you see yourself in this sport in 10 years? In 20?

I love that snowboarding is the type of sport that keeps evolving, keeps changing. I am not going anywhere. I will be around to the bitter end. ☺

COURTESY OF HOLLY ANNE ANDERSEN



STRAY

FROM THE BEATEN PATH



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Where Do You Read 32 DEGREES?

We love to see you reading *32 Degrees* – whether it be during your daily routine or ripping it up internationally. We’re humbled to see some of the awesome locales PSIA-AASI members have taken their trusty copy of the magazine in order to stay informed on all things snowsports instruction. Be prepared to be jealous – or inspired – by some of these members’ recent activities.

Where have *you* carved out some time amidst your travels to read *32 Degrees*? Send us an email with a photo of you and your copy, along with a brief explanation, to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org.



“I made sure to bring a copy of *32 Degrees* while on safari in Africa! See if you can spot the cheetah over my shoulder!”

– Kevin Jordan, *Alpine Level III, Children’s Specialist 2, Freestyle Specialist 3; Aspen, CO*



“Enjoying a break at The Palace of Versailles in France, reading and sharing *32 Degrees* with the residents of the Gardens of Versailles. Tres bien!”

– Ruth Innes, *PSIA Level Alpine Level II, Cross Country Level I; Bretton Woods, NH*



“Lonafjordur (fjord) in Hornstrandir National Park, Iceland. We were skinning and skiing with Borea Adventures, traveling and sleeping on the 60-foot sailboat Aurora out of Isafjordur. The routine: take a Zodiac boat to shore, skin up whilst the Aurora sailed around to the next fjord, ski down to the fjord shoreline and the seaweed, and then Zodiac to the ship. Eat a fish dinner. Repeat the next day.”

– Howard Child, *Alpine Level III, Telemark Level II, Cross Country Level I; Sandpoint, ID*



“I’m an apheresis donor at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA. In an apheresis donation, your blood is drawn, the platelets are spun out (in that machine attached to my arm), and the rest of your blood is pumped back into you with anti-coagulant. The process takes two hours and I usually donate a “double” and sometimes a “triple,” which is enough for two or three cancer patients. I go through this process every two weeks. Although there is an incredible list of movies to watch in the donation center, I took the most recent issue of *32 Degrees* so that I could study the latest PSIA-AASI pronouncements for the upcoming season.

Platelets only last for five days after donation before they must be discarded, so the need from them is constant. I encourage all of my ski instructor brothers and sisters to donate platelets, whether it be to the Red Cross or a local hospital. Those of us healthy enough to do it must help out those in need. “

– Jamie Rosencranz, *Alpine Level II; Wildcat, NH*



“Giving the seaplane a break and relaxing with *32 Degrees* in one of Wisconsin’s many lakes.”

– Mike Felske, *Alpine Level II; Alpine Valley, WI*



“Early September at Kurgistan’s international airport, on a military aircraft charter to bring some U.S. troops back from Afghanistan. If you look closely, you can see the Himalayan ‘foothills’ in the far distance, still covered in plenty of snow. Seeing all that snow got me thinking about the upcoming winter, and what better time to catch up on some articles from *32 Degrees*?”
 – Stephen Otsuki, *Alpine Level III*; Northstar, CA



“Checking out *32 Degrees* at an Eastern Division jump clinic at the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid, NY. Climb up 30 stairs, ski down plastic mats, go off a “small” jump, and land in a swimming pool. All while doing whatever airborne maneuver one is capable of.”
 – Bruce Bassett, *Alpine Level III*, *Children’s Specialist 1*; Bolton Valley, VT



“I know you ask for interesting travels and places where we might read *32 Degrees*, but I read it during slow times at the hospital, where I do volunteer work – mostly delivering fresh flower arrangements to patients. I never tire of seeing sick patients light up when I bring them flowers. I’ve been a part-time ski instructor for 17 years, and also never get tired of seeing my students smile when learning something new on the slopes. I always see myself as a ski instructor and volunteer – both with great rewards.”
 – Pam Singer, *Alpine Level I* Whitetail, PA



“When the snow melts in the spring, I trade my four edges for four tires and work at Lime Rock Park in Lakeville, CT. In my down time I get a chance to catch up on *32 Degrees*.”
 – Anthony Percivalle, *Alpine Level I*; Ski Butternut, MA



“I read *32 Degrees* whenever I get the chance – waiting for my hair to set seems as good a time as any. I find myself actually moving my feet and ankles as I read about edge angles and forward/lateral movements.”
 – Judi Bruns, *Alpine Level II*; Cataloochee Ski Area, NC



“I go around the world reading *32 Degrees*, such as while taking time out from hiking the Great Wall in China. Climbing the many steps to the long, winding Great Wall definitely got my legs in shape for what I hope is a long, snowy season in the East.”
 – Jane Tobey, *Alpine Level II*, *Children’s Specialist 2*; Wachusett Mountain, MA



What's In Your Quiver?

PSIA-AASI Freestyle Specialist Ryan Christofferson

Home area: Northstar Tahoe, CA



VÖLKL MANTRA

VÖLKL WALL

LEKI MUSTANG POLES



Skis

Northstar is known for park features that range from mini parks for the future jibbers to big booters, technical rails, and super pipe for those advanced park skiers. The Völkl Wall ski is built for more advanced riders, but is not out of place sessioning those smaller features. It has traditional camber with a full symmetrical shape for skiers who like to ski backwards just as much as going forward.

The Völkl Mantra is the ski you'll most likely catch me on outside of the park. Northstar is full of long groomers, bumps, and lots of off-piste and trees. The Mantra's traditional camber and tip rocker – and 98mm waist width – make it a very versatile ski. The tip rocker combined with its width make it fun to blast through the trees and the off-piste terrain. Having camber under the foot also makes it a great ski for groomer days and arcing big long turns.

Poles

The Leki S-Trigger system is popular for all-mountain skiing, but is also a big hit in the park. For me, poles equal style. Not only do the Leki Mustang poles look the part, but the S-Trigger locking system allows jibbers and jumpers to reach down and grab a handful of ski without having to worry about maintaining a grip on the poles at the same time.



Boots

Technica's Cochise 130 Pro is a great boot for someone looking to do a little of everything. With a 130 flex, it has a high-performance feel that will take you through any kind of skiing.

It's lightweight, which gives park skiing a natural feel, especially when I'm spending a lot of time in the air. This boot also comes with a shock-absorbing heel that's worth every penny when you land a little harder than planned. Yet another perk is the walk-mode feature that makes hiking for turns or just strolling through the village a lot easier.

Gloves



The Hestra Seth Morrison Pro glove has been my favorite winter glove for years. Hestra's quality is unmatched and their gloves even stand up to park skiers who spend as much time grabbing their skis as they do their poles. The Seth glove keeps

me warm on the coldest days but also breathes when I need it to. The longer cuff tucks nicely into my jacket and keeps the snow out when shredding in powder or dragging my hands jibbing around the park.



Goggles

The Smith V/OX is my go-everywhere goggle. Its really wide

lens allows for max peripheral vision, which helps me see obstacles on the hill or when taking off or landing switch in the park. I really dig the Blackout lens for sunny California, but when it's a storm day the lens switch is super convenient and only takes about 30 seconds to switch out.

GRAPHIC DETAILS

They say the only time you should look back is to see how far you've come. It's fun to see where PSIA-AASI has been and where the association is now; it's amazing what can get accomplished in 10 years!



PSIA-AASI BY THE NUMBERS

Thanks to you, over the last decade we've made some progress. Big progress.

2003/04

2012/13

29,109



NUMBER OF MEMBERS

31,445



30

NUMBER OF SPONSORS AND ALL THE PERKS THAT COME WITH THEM

50



150 MILLION



CONSUMER PRESS COVERAGE MENTIONING PSIA-AASI (circulation)



574 MILLION

ZERO

"GO WITH A PRO" TELEVISION SHOW VIEWERSHIP

123 MILLION VIEWERS (reach of 42 million homes)



ZIP

NUMBER OF LESSONS SOLD attributable to Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month

150K



ZILCH

Number of MOVEMENT MATRIX videos posted online



NADA

COMPLIMENTARY member Movement Matrix subscriptions



NIL

Revenue from CONTRIBUTIONS to the Foundation to help us help others



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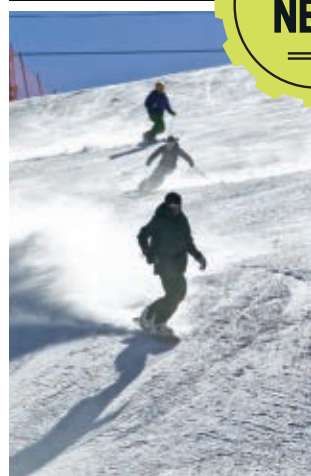


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TEXT BY PETER KRAY;
PHOTOS BY DANN COFFEY



WHAT'S NEXT: PSIA-AASI Teams Set Course for the Future of Ski and Snowboard Instruction

As it turns out, what's good for the goose *is* good for the gander – but it's also good for PSIA-AASI as it refines the educational approaches that help make you so good at what you do.

PSIA Nordic Team Coach Scott McGee opened the association's Fall Workshop 2013 with a lesson on why team building and cooperation are so important to the success of migrating geese. "As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird following," McGee said. "By flying in a 'V' formation, the whole flock adds 71 percent greater flying range than if one bird flew alone."

The lesson learned, McGee said, is that "People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where

they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the strength of one another."

It was an important reminder of how critical cooperation – and communication – is to the success of not just the PSIA-AASI teams, but to all members of this association. By working together, and consistently sharing everything from top instructional tactics to emerging trends, PSIA-AASI can continue to grow and thrive.

Which is why the teams worked so hard at Copper Mountain this past November, to ensure that you receive the most value from the insights they share at TheSnowPros.org website, in the pages of this magazine, and also in the clinics they give at your home mountain.



Fall Workshop 2013 — and the Fall Conference that followed it — provided invaluable opportunities on snow and within indoor sessions to focus on the ski and snowboard skills and instructional tenets that serve as the foundation for rock-solid lessons.

MAKING SIMPLE SEXY

One common thread to this year's workshop — for skiers *and* snowboarders — wove through themes like simplicity, fundamentals, and, as more than one team member has said, "focusing on what works."

Whether that focus was on beginners to intermediates to the highest levels of the sport, that means the on-snow action at Copper was happening at a considerably slower pace than it has in the past. Team members were so determined to dial in the definition of the best practices for every level of lesson that they kept breaking down the basics to ensure they had the best foundation for everyone.

"We want to be able to provide the most consistent message we can, and be able to define what is happening on snow in its simplest form," said PSIA Alpine Team member Eric Lipton. "Our goal is to be able to help all instructors, and all their guests, be able to do exactly what they want to do, no matter what kind of skiing it is that they want to be doing."

It may not be the sexiest message for anyone hoping for some "PSIA Alpine Team Skis on the Moon" kind of headline. But it also spoke volumes just to say that some of the best skiers in the association realize they need to provide the best tools for every level of instruction.

Basics also factored into the thought process motivating the AASI Snowboard Team. With an aggressive goal of growing snowboarding for everyone — instructors and future riders alike — the team came to the conclusion that focusing on some of the

little things that make all the difference between an okay and a great beginner lesson might have more impact on the long run.

The team was "working on ways to give instructors more tips they can really use in their lessons," said AASI Snowboard Team Coach Lane Clegg. "One example might be identifying the terrain traps at their area, and making them aware of the need to avoid them. That's the kind of thing they probably won't hear from their directors, or learn on the path to certification. But it is definitely the kind of thing we should be sharing."

"AS EACH BIRD FLAPS ITS WINGS, IT CREATES UPLIFT FOR THE BIRD FOLLOWING," MCGEE SAID. "BY FLYING IN A 'V' FORMATION, THE WHOLE FLOCK ADDS 71 PERCENT GREATER FLYING RANGE THAN IF ONE BIRD FLEW ALONE."

In a sport where technology keeps advancing, focusing on the simplest and most effective instructional concepts that work could very well be the smartest thing snow pros could be doing. Here is a discipline-by-discipline breakdown on the highlights from all the hard work the teams put in at PSIA-AASI Fall Workshop 2013, with an emphasis on just how it may impact and enhance the lessons you're teaching.



Above left: PSIA Alpine Team members Jennifer Simpson and Heidi Ettlinger share with Fall Conference attendees the fundamentals they worked on during Fall Workshop. Above right: Alpine Team Coach Rob Sogard jots down a few notes at an on-snow workshop session.

THE FUTURE OF ALPINE SKIING

It's all but impossible to measure what it takes to become a member of PSIA's Alpine Team. There are the countless days on the hill, crafting a million billion perfect turns, the untold hours of lessons, and the ability to communicate and explain to create a better, more masterful on-snow experience for instructors and students.

Most importantly, there is a sense of responsibility – the idea that your tenure on the team should matter, and that you should contribute to advancing the techniques and tactics of U.S. instruction. Here, PSIA Alpine Team Coach Rob Sogard and team members Eric Lipton and Michael Rogan share what they think PSIA-AASI Fall Workshop 2013 will mean for instructors in the long run.

1 How will this season's Workshop impact the future of instruction?

Hopefully it will simplify and clarify technical content. We recognize an incredible diversity in American skiing. Culture and modern equipment impact a wide variety of desired ski performance, shaping the way people want to ski.

But it is not possible or effective for an organization of 30,000 teachers to simply adopt a policy that "it's all good." We need a common foundation to add clarity and consistency to teaching our sport. With so much change in skiing, we need to focus on the things that don't change – the essential actions of the skis, physics, and biomechanics as well as the fundamental movements that must happen to ski well no matter the gear, the terrain, or the snow conditions. Rather than

confusing students with a diverse menu of fancy movements, our goal is to link lesson content to a few simple fundamentals that need to be done really, really well.

2 What will it mean to members, and how will it help improve their instruction?

Clarity and simplicity; everything an instructor needs to teach can be boiled down to helping their students maintain fore/aft balance over (or ahead of) their feet and manage lateral balance from outside ski to outside ski (pressure control), turn their legs underneath (against) their upper body (rotational control), and change their edges (edge control).

Any relevant technical lesson content should address one of these functions to tip the skis, turn the skis, and manage pressure on the skis. Instructors may desire a "big bag of tricks" to teach skiing, but the focus of those tricks can be traced back to one of a few simple, essential outcomes.

3 Any other highlights?

Yes, that the importance of a mastery of fundamentals is preached by teachers and coaches in every sport, yet the basics can seem "boring." Students of skiing, and many teachers and coaches look for more exciting and glamorous aspects of the sport. The fundamentals of skiing are simple, they are just really difficult to perform well – especially as speeds increase, the hill gets steeper, and the snow gets challenging. But nothing will help improve skiing in these conditions as much as a dedicated focus on the simple fundamentals.

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Dynamic fun underscores the efforts of PSIA-AASI's snowboard and nordic teams.

THE FUTURE OF SNOWBOARDING

The AASI Snowboard Team came into the Fall Workshop 2013 with fire in their eyes, determined to do their part to slow or even stem the tide of declining numbers in terms of snowboard participation. Here's what they accomplished during the week at Copper, and what Lane Clegg and AASI Snowboard Team member Eric Rolls said it means for the future of snowboarding.

1 How will this season's Workshop impact the future of snowboard instruction?

We are hoping to have a huge impact on new instructors – those with one to three years teaching experience. We see this as a place where we can improve as an industry to foster their growth and development, *and* encourage them to make a career out of snowsports instead of leaving during those first three years.

This is going to take effort on the part of everyone from resort management through training managers to all AASI members. But with buy-in, we can hopefully slow the revolving door of instructors into and out of the industry. We believe that by keeping good instructors in the industry we can affect change with students, including better conversion rates for new students and more excitement for current riders to grow the overall snowboard participation numbers.

2 What will it mean to members, and how will it help improve their instruction?

Members should feel great support from the organization right now. We are looking at ways we can help support the newer instructor with resort management. We want to make sure that we allow them to see and use the “fun” part of the snowboard culture, as this will also resonate with their students. We are focusing on training tools that will help keep this fun instead of boring. For the veteran instructors, we are hoping to find ways to encourage them to teach new students as their proven success will capture them and turn them into lifelong participants. Resort management can have an impact on the desire for veterans to teach new students through incentive programs and we encourage them to explore ways to do this.

3 Any other highlights?

Yes, we're looking into more ways to clearly demonstrate to members the benefits of setting a personal path in this profession, with short-term and long-term goals in mind. And in brainstorming ways to welcome more people into the snowboard community, we're discussing the best practices for hooking the first-time student, then keeping their participation up so snowboarding becomes a lifelong sport for them.



THE FUTURE OF NORDIC SKIING

PSIA's Nordic Team members are some of the most dynamic people on snow. Whether it's arcing telemark turns off the lift, skating across the flats, or practicing classic technique on the snow-covered Copper Mountain golf course, it seems as if they are always in motion.

PSIA Nordic Team Coach Scott McGee and team member David Lawrence sat down only just long enough to talk about their week at Fall Workshop 2013, and what it means for the future of cross-country skiing.

1 How will this season's Workshop impact the future of instruction?

During team training, we wrestled with changing the way we teach and think about nordic skiing. We were hammering, kicking, and exploring a new XC technical model that combines the United States Ski and Snowboard Association model of fundamental athletic body position, fundamental movement, rhythm, timing, and power with PSIA teaching models. Specifically, we were exploring nordic-specific skills like push-off, weight transfer, and glide. This work is influencing and steering XC national standards and a new movement analysis model.

2 What will it mean to members, and how will it help improve their instruction?

The new XC technical model will give new and current members access to a unified model that opens the door for a deeper understanding of cross country skiing. Additionally, the proposed model goes a long way to incorporate current USSA standards, bridging the diversity of cross country members – from volunteer parent coaches to full-time instructors, and from elite racers starting to coach to PSIA divisional examiners.

3 Any other highlights?

The PSIA Nordic Team is a dynamic combination of cross country team members and telemark specialists. The combination is generating an inter-team cross-pollination, culminating in a synergy of energy and perspective, knowledge, and experience. We often pinch ourselves because of our luck and fortune to be working at something we love and with such a special collection of people. The highlight of the year is knowing we are continuing a legacy and leaving a legacy behind.



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PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team member Geoff Krill (in purple jacket) fits right in with other “eternal students of anything to do with sliding on snow,” each with a passion to fine-tune new ideas and innovation.

THE FUTURE OF ADAPTIVE TEACHING

PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team member Geoff Krill had a busy week at Copper Mountain during the Workshop and Fall Conference. On the snow during Workshop, he split his time with members of the alpine and snowboard teams, exploring technical commonalities and how existing skill sets could be transferred to adaptive instruction.

Off the snow, he was busy narrowing down standards for the future of instruction. Here’s his wrap up of the event-filled week.

1 What did this week mean to the team?

Workshop always brings together a think tank of all those who are eternal students of anything to do with sliding on snow. This week is the time that members from across the disciplines of alpine, snowboard, nordic, freestyle, and adaptive come together to share concepts and ideas conceptualized over the past year. It’s our opportunity to put theory and idea to practice while growing and pushing the sport we all love.

To bring together a talent pool of this caliber is amazing and presents teams with the excitement of creating and driving the next great concept. The ability to learn from all types of sliders brings the best out in all of the teams.

2 How will this week’s Workshop impact the future of instruction?

The present teams have such a desire to learn from each other while having the utmost respect for their areas of expertise. With the diversity of equipment on the hill today, the ability to take technology and concepts from each other is pushing the way our students are taught. The reality is that today’s instructors have to be versatile and open to the multitude of shapes, sizes, and concepts that exist on the slopes across the country. The

fact that all the teams train together fits this model of what we see every day in snowsports.

3 What will it mean to members, and how will it help improve their instruction?

When you bring the best minds in snowsports together, the theories and concepts are put to the test and implemented into the ever-increasing rhetoric of our evolving sport. Team members leave this week inspired to write articles and develop progressions to bring about the very best in our members. The light bulbs are constantly going off around here and it is that light that is passed on to our membership to carry the torch to the industry that is sliding on snow.

4 Any other highlights?

For the first time I am seeing a cross-discipline approach to the standards associated with the disciplines. The continuity will truly help grow the professional product that is PSIA-AASI.

Of course, what’s amazing about this process is how all of the team members are busy fine-tuning each of these new ideas and innovations as they travel the country and share time on snow with each of you. From there, more interaction will inspire more innovation, and the fine line between teaching and learning will be crossed again and again as we all seek to improve the experience of skiing and snowboarding for our students, for each other, and also for ourselves. ☺

Peter Kray is the lead content officer for PSIA-AASI, focusing on emerging ski and snowboarding trends and on-snow innovations. He skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is co-founder of the Gear Institute (gearinstitute.com), a website founded to professionalize the testing of outdoor equipment.



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THE SNOWBOARD SOLUTION

How Snow Pros Can Stop Snowboarding's Drop in Participation

BY PETER KRAY

Snowboarding is one of the greatest things that ever happened to the sport of skiing. It inspired fat skis, terrain parks, and a whole new genre of freestyle riding. It also enticed a new generation of snowsports enthusiasts to hit the slopes, swelling the liftlines with the kind of energy and innovation that, frankly, hadn't been seen for years on the two-plank side of the equation. (And, of course, some riders would insist that snowboarding is one of the greatest things that ever happened, period.)

But now, after nearly three decades of explosive growth, the sport is in steady decline. According to the *Kottke National End of Season Survey* (produced by the National Ski Areas Association and RRC Associates, and released in July 2013), snowboarding trended down for the third consecutive season last year, declining to 29.6 percent of total visits in 2012-13, down from 30.3 percent in 2011-12, 31.0 percent in 2010-11, and 32.0 percent in 2009-10.

The drop-off has been greatest in the Pacific Southwest and Midwest, where snowboarding visits declined by 3 percentage points (in terms of share of total visits). Snowboarding participation also dipped in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific

Northwest regions, while holding relatively steady in the Southeast and Northeast.

The Pacific Southwest still has the highest rate of snowboarding participation of any region (42.5 percent of total visits last season), followed by the Pacific Northwest (36.7 percent), Midwest (35.5 percent), and Southeast (34.5 percent). A lower share of total visits from snowboarding is seen in the Northeast (26.4 percent) and Rocky Mountain region (23.7 percent).

STAKEHOLDERS TAKE AIM

The hardgoods industry is taking notice. SnowSports Industries America created a Snowboard Committee comprised of manufacturers, resorts, and specialty retailers to address the issue. At a meeting in November, the group discussed how to involve all stakeholders in the snowboard market to review and expand current snowboard research, focus on inspired programs and messaging, and reinvigorate the snowboard community.

"The Snowboard Committee meetings this year have proven that the industry is committed to work together to address the issues affecting snowboard participation and sales," said SIA President David Ingemie.

Reports from the mainstream media about the imminent demise of the sport aren't helping. Newspapers and websites from the *Boston Globe* to *Outside Magazine* and *ESPN* have devoted significant page space to the issue without offering any potential solutions. And last January, the *New York Times* ran a feature story titled, "Has Snowboarding Lost its Edge?" which pointed out that the first wave of snowboard participants had grown up and started families, while fewer young people were taking up the sport and women were hanging up their boards at a higher rate than men.

It also ran on oft-repeated quote from Nate Fristoe, RRC Associates' director of operations, who, writing in the *NSAA Journal*, said, "Today, there is every indication that the growth in snowboarding we took for granted has stalled, and visitation from snowboarding is headed toward a path of substantial decline."

The sport is still a young person's game. According to SIA research, nearly 80 percent of the snowboarders in the U.S. are 34 years old or younger, compared to about 60 percent of skiers. But that may also be changing. The story in the *Boston Globe*, titled "Snowboarding Appears to Be in Serious Decline," said that because of innovations like rocker technology, (which, of course, is available in skis *and* snowboards) more potential riders are taking up skiing.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL EQUATION

None of this is good news for instructors, and the AASI Snowboard Team faced the issue head-on at the 2013 Fall Workshop and Fall Conference, taking an active role in identifying the root causes of the trend, as well what actions the industry – especially snow pros – might take to counteract them.

AASI Snowboard Team Coach Lane Clegg and team member Scott Anfang sat down with ski and snowboard school directors from around the country to present their findings, and to discuss potential solutions.

"The sport has seen such steady growth for so many years that this might just be a normal – and expected – fluctuation," Clegg told the assembled directors. "But whether it's a matter of keeping students or retaining quality instructors, we do need to address the situation."

Here are some of the highlights of that discussion.

Potential Reasons for the Decline

- ◆ Economics. In the country's recent economic downturn, snowboarding participation may have taken a bigger hit than alpine skiing, particularly because of the relative youth of the market.
- ◆ It's a normal part of a growth cycle. Given the sport's incredible growth over the past four decades, the decline is a natural part of the sport's cycle... which will continue to show signs of both growth and decline.
- ◆ Freeskiing. Much of the energy around the present freeski market has been at the expense of snowboarding. As Clegg noted, it has certainly been inspired by snowboarding and is "awesome."
- ◆ Other reasons. Given the lack of in-depth data, this is an issue we will need to continue to study – with the idea that there are still many lessons to learn.



AASI Snowboard Team Coach Lane Clegg is keen to address the downward tick in snowboarding, and retaining quality instructors is a top priority.

DANN COFFEY

Potential Solutions

- ◆ Marketing. Encouraging areas and manufacturers to continue to market the fun, community, and benefits of snowboarding is in everybody's interest.
- ◆ Ticket pricing. Gains could be made by working with areas to establish either promotional ticket rates or park and pipe-based pricing to reflect the specific features of an area that snowboarders are accessing.
- ◆ Park crew/amenities. Helping to build superior park features and services to encourage media coverage could attract additional snowboard participation.
- ◆ Ski and ride schools. As Clegg and Anfang noted, this is the area in which our members have the most leverage, and in which they can continue to make a difference in participation and conversion.

The Snow Pro Difference

- ◆ Connect with staff. In addition to keeping new riders in the sport, more could be done to keep new *instructors* engaged for the long-term. By understanding and respecting the desires and goals of professional snowboard instructors, we can all do a better job of retaining them.



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AASI snowboard examiners David Seelbinder (Central Division) and Ben Daniel (Northern Rocky Mountain Division) were among the Fall Conference attendees focused on the future of their sport.

(The same can be said of understanding their desires and managing expectations.)

- ◆ Promote the image and culture of snowboarding. This was an especially insightful section of the discussion, because although some people view the apparel snowboarders wear as something that simply represents their culture, there are many functional reasons why they wear what they do, including the ability to reach their equipment more easily, move more freely in the park and pipe, and keep warm while sitting in the snow awaiting their next chance to session.

Every sliding sport, including alpine skiing, telemark, and snowboarding, has its cycles – from hot to not and back again. And while it's clear snowboarding isn't going away, where it does go in the future will have a lot to do with how snow pros support and celebrate snowboard instruction. We certainly plan to support all of those snow pros, in this magazine, at TheSnowPros.org, and through all the social media channels available to them. ☞

Peter Kray is the lead content officer for PSIA-AASI, focusing on emerging ski and snowboarding trends and on-snow innovations. He skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

- ◆ Invest in the future. By giving snowboard instructors the tools they need to succeed, whether it be professional education or on-hill tools, we can also help retain and inspire them.

RETAINING TOP TALENT



DANN COFFEY

Mark "Spike" Eisenman, manager of the snowboard programs at Colorado's Beaver Creek Ski & Snowboard School, says sharing his passion for snowboarding is a full-time job, which goes way beyond his on-snow time. When it

comes to keeping a snowboard school's staff and students stoked year round, he has some great recommendations.

For starters, put stock in communication.

"If you want to keep your staff happy, know what they want," Eisenman said. "And the only way to know that is to talk to them. Some will walk right into your office and spill the beans, while you have to ask others. Finding out who their mentors or heroes are often gives you insight into what they're thinking." By developing greater insight into what makes them tick, you'll be in a better position to make helpful changes or devote even more energy to what keeps them psyched about their jobs.

Eisenman also emphasizes full-on commitment to the student's experience. "I don't think of us as a snowboard school. We're out there teaching a lifestyle, and the sooner you can get people up on the hill riding on the mountain, the sooner they'll feel like they're part of that lifestyle," he said. "Sometimes instructors have to hold their students' hands to help them learn to balance or turn. That's also

part of welcoming them into this sport we're sharing."

Of course, the student's experience extends beyond their time on snow, and Eisenman recommends that instructor training take a big picture view. "I love training," he said. "In our training program we spend one whole day walking around the village looking at the bars, restaurants, and hotels so our instructors know where they can take their class for lunch and introduce them to the mountain lifestyle."

Retaining top talent also relies to a certain extent on the camaraderie the school can represent. "At Beaver Creek, we're lucky because everything is centrally located – the offices, the lifts, food, and bathrooms," said Eisenman. "It gives us an advantage with students and instructors, because we don't have to travel far to reach anything. For other areas, doing whatever you can to create that sense of closeness builds a sense of teamwork when you're teaching."

You might say that the allure of snowboard teaching is strongest when instructors see themselves as part of something bigger than themselves. "The sense of community and family is crucial to communicate to instructors, because it's important for them to be able to see their future in this profession," said Eisenman. "Once they know their ski and snowboard school cares about them and they get a couple certs under their belt, I think it's easier for them to see themselves doing this for a long time. But you have to make that clear to them from the beginning." —Peter Kray

FINDING LESSONS



COURTESY OF BURTON SNOWBOARDS

To make it easier for potential or current snowboarders to find the perfect riding program for them, Burton Snowboards has added a new microsite on its website. Found at Burton.com/learntoride, the site is an invaluable resource for accessing instructional and Learn to Ride programs.

“Teaching people how to snowboard is at the soul of Burton and it is without doubt the most gratifying thing I do in my job,” Jake Burton, founder and CEO of Burton Snowboards, said in a statement announcing the new microsite. “New programs are detailed for 3- to 6-year-olds (Riglet Parks) and for 7- to 12-year-olds (12 & Under). As a result of improvements in kids’ snowboard equipment and teaching techniques, there has been a significant spike in this youth demographic. We’ve also seen increased demand for women’s-specific programs, and we’ve responded.”

The site includes quick-link directions to partner resorts and three top-level sections: Adult, Women, and Kids. For beginners, it also includes information on layering, outerwear, tips on how to rent or buy equipment, and how to size yourself for the appropriate board or boots. One big highlight is the Kids section. Geared toward parents with kids 12 and under, this section features information on Burton’s LTR and Riglet Park programs, age-specific gear advice, and an LTR Center Finder. There’s even a Riglet Event Calendar that lists special upcoming events so prospective riders can more quickly engage with the snowboard community and see what kind of deals or special programs might be available to them. —Peter Kray

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What's Current, What's Coming?

3 SNOWSPORTS SCHOOL DIRECTORS SET THE SCENE

BY PETER KRAY

Specialty lessons, better terrain, and a focus on kids. Those are just a few of the approaches you'll likely see gain traction as ski and ride schools help shape the future of snowsports.

PSIA-AASI Fall Conference 2013 launched a new ski and snowboard school directors program, offering sessions designed to help managers improve their instructional programs. Covering everything from changes in skier and snowboarder demographics to how to build your dream staff and recruit and retain guests, the targeted presentations and discussions were all designed to help improve the business of teaching.

Here, three of the directors who attended the conference discuss what's working at their respective areas, as well as what potential opportunities and challenges they see on the horizon.

SEAN BOLD

Crystal Mountain Ski Area, WA

How do you break down the business at your school (i.e., the ratio of beginner to intermediate to advance lessons you're doing)?

Daily walk-in lessons – including kids' lessons, adult groups, and privates – are 40 percent beginner, 40 percent intermediate, and 20 percent advanced. Our consecutive-week lessons, which include six- to eight-week sessions with individuals and school groups are 20 percent beginner, 45 percent intermediate, and 35 percent advanced.

What are the top trends in terms of the lessons being taught?

Our consecutive-week lesson programs for kids are growing at a rate of 10-15 percent per year. There is definitely a baby boom going on right now. This is especially true of our advanced youngsters. We have Little (ages 7-10) and High (ages 11-17) Adventure programs for kids wanting to learn to ski the whole hill. Most of these kids' parents are locals and they're really getting on board with these advanced kids lessons, which sell out very fast.

What are your most recent lesson innovations or new programs?

The Pro Series is a clinic series designed around the idea of showing our experienced guests how the pros go about skiing and riding – with technique and tactics for the whole mountain, including high-alpine bowls and steep chutes, and, when the conditions are less than stellar, how to find the good groomers. We have four programs within this series: Blue to Black, Conditions D'Jour, Women's, and Steeps and Off Piste.

We also take a look at gear to make sure it's modified to the guest's individual needs, and shoot video for the purpose of video analysis. At the end of the session, our guests are given three prescriptions: what to change in their technique, tactical awareness of the areas they are trying to master, and an analysis of what to tweak in their ski and snowboard gear to set them up for success.

The Crystal Mountain Free Ride Team is a program for 9- to 18-year-olds that mirrors our race program, except it's for big-mountain terrain and those wishing to compete in freeride competitions.

Advancements in ski technology has opened steep terrain skiing to a multitude of ski and ride ability levels, such that the steep and deep is no longer just for the athletically talented expert skier. We have a mountaintop demo shop that specializes in stocking boards that are cutting-edge for skiing and snowboarding in our steep terrain.

Snow skating is also an area a bunch of our mountain riders have been taking up to make less than stellar days fun and challenging. If you have never ridden down a mountain strapless, then you are missing the thrill of being on the edge. It's not for everyone, but anyone with a sideways sliding background – like the surfers and skateboarders – are quite good.

What are the main challenges for lessons at your area?

Terrain is our biggest limiting factor. We have very good beginner-zone terrain. Unfortunately, our graduation terrain to the harder

SEAN BOLD



greens are like blue runs in Colorado. So we have to over-train folks so we don't over-terrain them.

We will be putting \$4 million into terrain expansion for next year. We're going to shorten and re-align our beginner lift to access a better fall line and build a 200-foot-long covered Magic Carpet below the new beginner lift. In addition, we're going to shorten, upgrade, and re-grade an existing lift and run that we call Quicksilver to better accommodate second- and third-day skiers and riders. This will be a huge move in the right direction for skier and rider retention *and* overall guest satisfaction.

We are also challenged with not having enough qualified staff members to teach in our growing programs.

What are the main opportunities?

Recruiting, training, and retention (RTR) are our biggest opportunities. I need to recruit more qualified staff, train my existing staff more effectively, and retain instructors long enough for them to get really good. That will help match the growth of our school specific to some of our specialty program growth.

Any big trends or new opportunities you see on the horizon?

Freeride will take racing over in the next 10 years!

MARYLU CIANGIOLD

Chicago Snow Studio, Chicago, IL

How do you break down the business at your school?

It's 20 percent beginner, 65 percent intermediate, and 15 percent advanced.

What are the top trends in terms of the lessons being taught?

People have the wider rocker skis to go off-piste, but want to make sure they have the skills to handle that ungroomed terrain.

What are your most recent lesson innovations or new programs?

This season we are starting a Snowboarder to Skier lesson package with our ski club parents. It's targeted at clients age 35 and older who used to snowboard but have not snowboarded in more than



MARYLU CIANCIOLO

DANN COFFEY



DEE BYRNE

DANN COFFEY

five years and now feel that the sport is physically too challenging for their bodies, especially since they spend their work day at desks.

What are the main challenges for lessons at your area?

We have unique challenges because we're a ski deck ski school. So while many think the idea of taking lessons inside where it's warm is ideal, there is a perception that a ski deck ski school is not a challenge.

What are the main opportunities?

I am close to a significant skier base – downtown Chicago – who have the resources to take a snowsports vacation *and* pay for lessons.

Any big trends or new opportunities you see on the horizon?

Skier-oriented fitness classes. We're starting them now and will be putting them on YouTube during the season.

Anything else?

I think for the smaller areas, in particular, daycare and integrated children's centers will be the client magnet of the next few years.

DEE BYRNE

Squaw Valley Ski and Snowboard School, CA

How do you break down the business at your school these days?

Group lessons for kids (ages 3 to 13) make up 57 percent of our business, and we break those out by age group rather than level. Children age 3 to 4 represent 25 percent of those lessons, ages 5 to 7 represent 43 percent, and ages 8 to 13 represent 32 percent. The mix of snowboarders to skiers is 10 percent.

Group lessons for adults and teens (that is, for those age 13 and above) make up 28 percent of our business, with first-time beginners representing 51 percent, advanced beginners to intermediates 41 percent, and advanced to expert students representing 8 percent. The mix of snowboard to ski is 13 percent.

Private lessons – half of which are kids and half of which are adults – represent the remaining 15 percent of our business.

What are the top trends in terms of the lessons being taught?

Kids! Kids! Kids! Both group and private lesson demand is growing for ages 3 to 13.

First-time adult beginner groups are on the rise, and snowboard lesson sales are flat (not shrinking!). We're also seeing a move to season-long, multi-day programs for kids.

What are your most recent lesson innovations or new programs?

Daily Specialty Clinics focused on guest demographics (women and seniors) and situational skiing/riding experiences (terrain parks and guided hiking). Also season-long programs for adults as well as kids.

What are the main challenges for lessons at your area?

Even at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows, where the skiing/riding is very challenging, folks think they don't need lessons!

What are the main opportunities?

Capturing new season-pass holders. As more folks transition to pass products, we need to develop more products and programs that are enticing to them.

Any big trends or new opportunities you see on the horizon?

Using technology to enhance and improve the learning experience. The trend will be to make it faster, easier, and more entertaining. Our sports, regardless of how great the equipment is, are complex.

Anything else?

Relative to the ski/snowboard school business, the demand on people's time will continue to increase. The need for quality recreational experiences will also increase. I think the family unit will continue to desire more time and quality experiences together.

Specialization and diversification of children's learning programs will likely keep improving and expanding. I see action-based, adventure vacations remaining popular, and the trend to seek out the side/backcountry will continue. As we get smarter, we gain more appreciation for competency.

All of these dynamics will fuel continued – and greater – interest in lessons. I'm very optimistic that our future is bright. ☺

Peter Kray is the lead content officer for PSIA-AASI, focusing on emerging ski and snowboarding trends and on-snow innovations. He skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is co-founder of the Gear Institute (gearinstitute.com), a website founded to professionalize the testing of outdoor equipment.

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EMERGING LEADERS

ARE PRIMED TO CARRY THEIR PASSION FORWARD

By Candice Dungan

PSIA-AASI MEMBERSHIP, MARKETING, AND ADVERTISING COORDINATOR

SHERRI HARKIN

In PSIA-AASI's Emerging Leaders series featured on TheSnowPros.org, we profiled seven up-and-coming instructors under the age of 30 and one innovative ski school. All were nominated by their peers for the innovative work they're doing, and for their potential to impact ski and snowboard instruction in the future. Don't be surprised if you see their names pop up again in the wide world of snowsports.

▼▲ DEREK ALTHOF

Derek Althof gave up an office career to spend his days on the slopes spreading happiness through "A-ha!" moments. Althof, 29, got his start at Illinois' Chestnut Mountain and has since spent 10 seasons instructing at Park City, Utah. He believes connecting with students should be the number one goal during a ski or snowboard lesson.

"At the end of the day, the guest isn't so concerned with how you taught them to turn, but with the experience they had," he said. "It's extremely important that, regardless of how successful they are in skiing and riding, we're able to keep them smiling, laughing and having fun enjoying the mountain."

Although Althof loves instructing, his true passion is in training. In order to pass along his customer-centric teaching style, he gives instructors the same experience he wants them to give guests – fun and exciting lessons, so they can see the benefits first hand.

Althof is a PSIA-AASI certified Level III alpine instructor and hopes to be a candidate at PSIA-AASI Team Selection in 2016.

▼▲ GRANT BISHOP

Grant Bishop grew up around the world; Austria, Ecuador, Italy – and he speaks the language of each of those countries. But Jackson Hole, WY, will always be his home.

"When I was young in Jackson I always skied at Snow King in town, and it wasn't until I got a job as a ski photographer for a year, then as an instructor, that I skied Jackson Hole," said Bishop. "I immediately fell in love with the terrain there and, starting at the age of 21, have been there for the past nine years."

In nine years, Bishop has worked to achieve his Level III alpine and nordic certifications, his Children's Specialist and Freestyle Specialist certificates (on telemark skis!) and is a telemark examiner for Intermountain Division.



COURTESY OF DEREK ALTHOF

**DEREK
ALTHOF**



COURTESY OF ANGIE CRUM

**ANGIE
CRUM**

"I'm kind of the Swiss Army knife of the ski school," said Bishop. "I teach telemark, adaptive, alpine, skate skiing, classic, steep and deep, and pretty much any age group or ability you can think of."

▼▲ **ANGIE CRUM**

To keep children pumped about snowboarding, 21-year-old Angie Crum, a Level I snowboard instructor at Ohio's Boston Mills Brandywine, draws upon her beginner aspirations to incorporate freestyle into every lesson. Crum, who's entering her fourth season of riding and third season of instructing, still remembers what it's like to see snowboarding for the first time.

Inspired by television coverage of the men's halfpipe competition at the 2010 Winter Olympics, she began snowboarding with the ultimate goal of throwing down in the terrain park. For better or worse – mostly worse – she opted out of the traditional, learn-to-turn beginner lesson in favor of her own self-taught approach.

"I should've taken a lesson," said Crum. "I was so bad my first time that I got stuck under a fence."

Although her riding ability has increased exponentially since then, (she recently competed in the 2013 X Games amateur rail jam) Crum recognizes that beginner mentality in her students. She believes most children and young adults don't take up snowboarding to become a great freerider. Rather, they want to emulate the professionals they see on TV.

Crum incorporates freestyle into every lesson to keep her students enthusiastic about the sport. Whether it's a simple standing ollie or flat ground spin, she believes it not only increases the "fun" factor of the lesson, but the students' general riding skills as well.

She said, "It keeps them coming back and gets them excited about learning something new."

▼▲ **ARLIN GOSS**

Arlin Goss, 27, holds a degree in adventure education, which helps him better serve his students and other instructors. His degree comes into use not only when teaching snowboarding at New Hampshire's Loon Mountain, but also when running Kingston's Adventure Camp, a summer camp for kids age 10 to 15.

"Because of my schooling, I know how to teach difficult movements and have the confidence to get in front of people and teach them something," said Goss.

Through his education – and some trial by error – Goss has found that guided discovery (a technique PSIA-AASI members may recognize from the *Children's Instruction Manual*) works best when teaching students and other instructors.

"I let them mostly figure it out on their own with some direction from me," said Goss. "I feel when they do that, the knowledge is more true to them and it will stick better."

Goss is currently a PSIA-AASI Level II snowboard instructor and hopes to attain his Level III this year. Goss takes advantage of all the education opportunities his resort and PSIA-AASI have to offer, and he additionally furthers his education through many outside resources.

▼▲ **DANNY MURAWINKSI**

Danny Murawinski, 27, from Virginia's Wintergreen Resort, believes that an open mind is the key to progression. As an instructor of seven years, he feels that taking that approach through every scenario not only better students, but the instructors as well.

"Don't get caught up in the step-by-step process. There are always different ways of doing the same thing," he said. "If you go in with an open mind, it promotes your students to have an open mind."

Murawinski finds that many students come into a lesson with one major goal, but will often lack the skill to accomplish it. To help these students reach their goals and stay excited about snowboarding, he presents information through lateral learning, which shows students how all aspects of the sport relate.

Murawinski has earned the following credentials: Snowboard Level III, Alpine Level I, Freestyle Specialist 2 and Children's Specialist 2. He recently applied to coach with the U.S. Olympic Team.

▼▲ **EMILY SEDLAK**

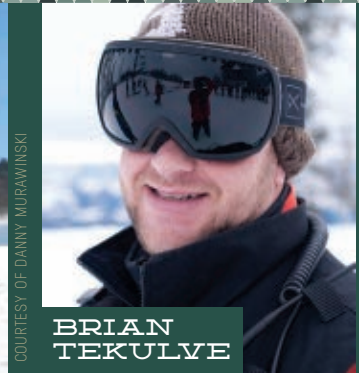
Emily Sedlak believes that when it comes to skiing, the more the merrier. The 24-year-old Level II alpine instructor has an



ARLIN GOSS



DANNY MURAWINSKI



BRIAN TEKULVE

KATIE DONER

COURTESY OF DANNY MURAWINSKI

COURTESY OF BRIAN TEKULVE

undeniable passion for the snowsports industry, which she is busy promoting on the front lines this winter at Colorado's Vail Mountain.

"This is such a cool industry that I want everyone to be a part of it," she said. "I want to be able to spread my passion for doing something different in the winter time."

Emphasizing that instructors can make or break the industry, Sedlak said, "As ski instructors, we need to remember that guests come first. If we ensure that they have a really good experience that first time, they will come back and our industry will grow."

Sedlak uses different teaching tactics depending on the age group. For instance, in order to build rapport with children, she pays attention to the current pop culture to which they're exposed. By having some knowledge of their interests, Sedlak is able to relate to them on their level and incorporate their interests into skiing.

To connect with adults, Sedlak spends time educating them about the ski industry. She explains what keeps the industry going, and how it can fit into their lives. For example, she'll tell parents how great skiing is for family vacations.

No matter the age group, each of Sedlak's lessons shares one key factor: fun.

▼▲ BRIAN TEKULVE

It's no surprise Brian Tekulve, 28, has emerged as a leader in the ski and snowboard industry. As the director of snowsports at Mt. Ashland in Oregon, he wears many hats; including overseeing the rental and repair shop, the terrain park, the ski and ride school, the race and special events departments, the after-school program, group sales, and an environmental youth program.

Ski Area Management has taken notice of Tekulve as well, naming him one of the industry's "Young Guns."

Tekulve is a PSIA-AASI Level III snowboard instructor and Level I alpine instructor. From his experiences, he offers advice on resort management, ski and ride school programs, and instructing.

Tekulve sees an advantage for the mountain staff to be trained in different jobs within the resort. For example, if the ski area is short on lift operators but has an abundance of instructors, he'll ask an instructor to be a liftee for the day. "By cross-training staff, we're able to give our guests the experience they expect without being short on help," he said. "It also gets the staff on board with helping each other and building teamwork throughout the mountain, not just in our own departments."

According to Tekulve, one of Mt. Ashland's many success stories is the ski and ride school's My Turn program, which offers first-time beginners a three-lesson package with lift tickets and

rentals through the season. Almost half of the students who complete the program buy season passes the following winter.

"They get past that first frustrating day, and they actually get to where they can ski or snowboard by the end of the program," Tekulve said.

▼▲ SCHENECTADY SKI SCHOOL

Maple Ski Ridge's Schenectady Ski School in New York understands the value of the next generation. Its Leadership Training Program, which was created by Lifetime PSIA-AASI member Freddie Anderson, 92, trains teenage instructors ages 14–16 through mentorship and education.

"They learn to give direction to peers and to delegate," said Christina Anderson, Freddie's daughter and Leadership Training Program director. "They learn responsibility and leadership. And they learn that there is more out there than what goes on in their high school halls."

In the three-year training program, the teens (who are called coaches) rise through the ranks from apprentice to junior and, finally, senior. Typically, three coaches work together to teach a group of children enrolled in the resort's Snowcats Program for kids.

Jim Schaefer, supervisor of the Snowcats Program, explained that the Leadership Training Program aims to create a mentorship environment. "The apprentices admire the lead instructors, and the lead instructors admire the supervisors," he said.

Running the program alongside Jim is his wife, Kim, who said "Everyone supports everyone; we've become a big family."

Apprentices begin their training in October at the area's hiring clinic, where they meet with Anderson. The apprentices continue training throughout the year in clinics, indoor training, and shadowing. They learn from supervisors, certified instructors, and junior/senior instructors.

Throughout the three-year process, the focus is on the quality of instructors versus the quantity. As a result, instructors are extremely well qualified for their PSIA-AASI Level I exams by the time they complete their third year in the Leadership Training Program. ❧

YOUR TIME TO SHINE

Check out TheSnowPros.org to learn more about your fellow PSIA-AASI members in the Member Spotlight series, highlighting instructors from across the country. If you want to get in on getting some well-deserved shine, read the latest Member Spotlight on the website and you'll find a link to a form at the bottom of the page. See you in the spotlight, snow pros!

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mentors: HOW TO FIND, APPROACH, & BE ONE



COURTESY OF STOWE MOUNTAIN RESORT

BY MARK AIKEN

You've heard the adage: The best teachers are those who are always learning. It's true, no matter how long you've been instructing, additional training can make you better. But have you ever heard (or had) one of these complaints?

- "I don't have time to train; I'm always teaching." (Or the addendum: "When I'm not working here at my resort, I'm working at my other job.")
- "I'd love to go to that PSIA-AASI event, but I'm a little short on cash for the travel and lodging." (This one, of course, also has an addendum: "... and I missed the deadline to apply for one of the scholarship opportunities available through the national organization or my division.")
- Or simply, "Aren't there any other resources available to me?"

Yes there are – and they're everywhere, if you work at a ski or ride school. One of the best things you can do for your professional development is find a mentor. A Yoda to your Luke Skywalker. "Mentors are individuals in an organization who guide or train – intentionally or unintentionally – others to develop skills or expertise," says Ellie Byers, a career and job search counselor from Winooski, Vermont.

While mentors can be managers or trainers, they don't have to be. Mentors, says Byers, can be anyone: a veteran coach with years of experience, a colleague who has a way with kids, or a co-worker who skis or rides at a higher level.

Having a mentor (or mentors) can help you learn and develop in ways that training programs and manuals can't. But how do you find good mentors? And how do you approach them and

best utilize their knowledge? Finally, how do *you* become a good mentor yourself?

HONING DIFFERENT SKILL SETS

Mentoring is important because some skills are complicated and require time, discussion, and insight in order to develop. According to Byers, there are three categories of skills:

- **Content** – specific knowledge necessary to perform your job duties (for example, milestones in skiing and riding, a sample beginner progression, learning preferences and teaching styles, your school's policies and procedures)
- **Abilities** – things you inherently do at work (for example, listening, problem-solving, counseling, analyzing, organizing)
- **Qualities** – personal traits that help you accomplish tasks (for example, intelligence, being conscientious, being caring and kind, being focused)

In order to be successful, you need to have all three kinds of skills. “My clients don't just want training in content,” Byers says. “They want to learn the abilities and qualities.” Learning these more subtle and complicated skills takes a different kind of training – a kind of training that involves a relationship and not necessarily an instructor standing in front of a group. (Of course, a skilled trainer *can* teach abilities and qualities, but these sorts of skills may need to develop over time. This is where a mentor would come in.)

All ski and ride schools offer training programs for instructors. Whether free or for a fee, in the early season only or ongoing, instructors can usually find opportunities to prep for upcoming certification exams, expand their teaching knowledge, or improve their personal skiing and riding. I have never heard of a school, however, that offers a formalized mentoring program – that is, a program that matches or connects new instructors with seasoned pros or knowledge-filled veterans in order to grow or develop the abilities and qualities that are so important in performing our jobs.

According to Byers, the snowsports business is not alone. “In my experience, there is very little formal mentoring happening in the workplace right now,” Byers says. In fact, the complaint she hears most often from her clients – people who are looking to change their career – in regard to management or leadership at their jobs is that they are not receiving any mentoring. What, then, should an employee do?

First off, take Byers' advice the next time you change jobs in any field: When you are offered a new job, ask what mentoring opportunities will be available. Then be sure to discuss those areas of your professional life that you'd like to continue to grow. Most readers holding this magazine, however, already have jobs in snowsports instruction. For those of you who never talked to your employer at your time of hire, what should you do?



MARK AIKEN

MY CLIENTS DON'T JUST WANT TRAINING IN CONTENT, THEY WANT TO LEARN THE ABILITIES AND QUALITIES. — ELLIE BYERS

“Sometimes employees need to seek out mentoring opportunities,” Byers says. “They don't always come to you.” One logical place to look is to your snowsports school's leadership. In many cases, our directors, training managers, and supervisors serve as mentors – teaching us, taking us under their wings, guiding us. After all, they have the knowledge, expertise, and experience we're looking for. What they might not always have, however, is time. Across the spectrum of workplaces, says Byers, people – and particularly managers – are being asked to do more with fewer resources. Mentoring takes time, and – whether they want to help or not – bosses can have serious demands on theirs.

So, where do you turn next? The first step in identifying a worthy mentor is to look within. “Ask yourself what, specifically, do I want to improve?” Byers says. Then look around you. Who do you see? Your colleagues. Maybe you have trouble holding kids' attention for six hours in full-day lessons. You observe a colleague, however, whose groups are always enraptured. The colleague seems to have a way with kids and a gift for presenting information in a kid-friendly way. *That* is someone you should be talking to!

Maybe you're a part-time instructor who works only at the busiest times of the season – when the lodges and slopes are jammed and there are even lifelines in lesson express lanes. You observe a veteran who never loses his cool, who navigates the chaos with seeming ease. That is a potential guide for you!

Do you want a Level III pin like the instructor two lockers down in the changing room? Do you wish you could ski powder like one of your colleagues does? Do you need ideas for how to manage students with behavioral issues? Whatever skill you want to acquire, there is probably someone in your ski and ride school who would be happy to help. But you won't find a mentor unless you know what you want to improve.

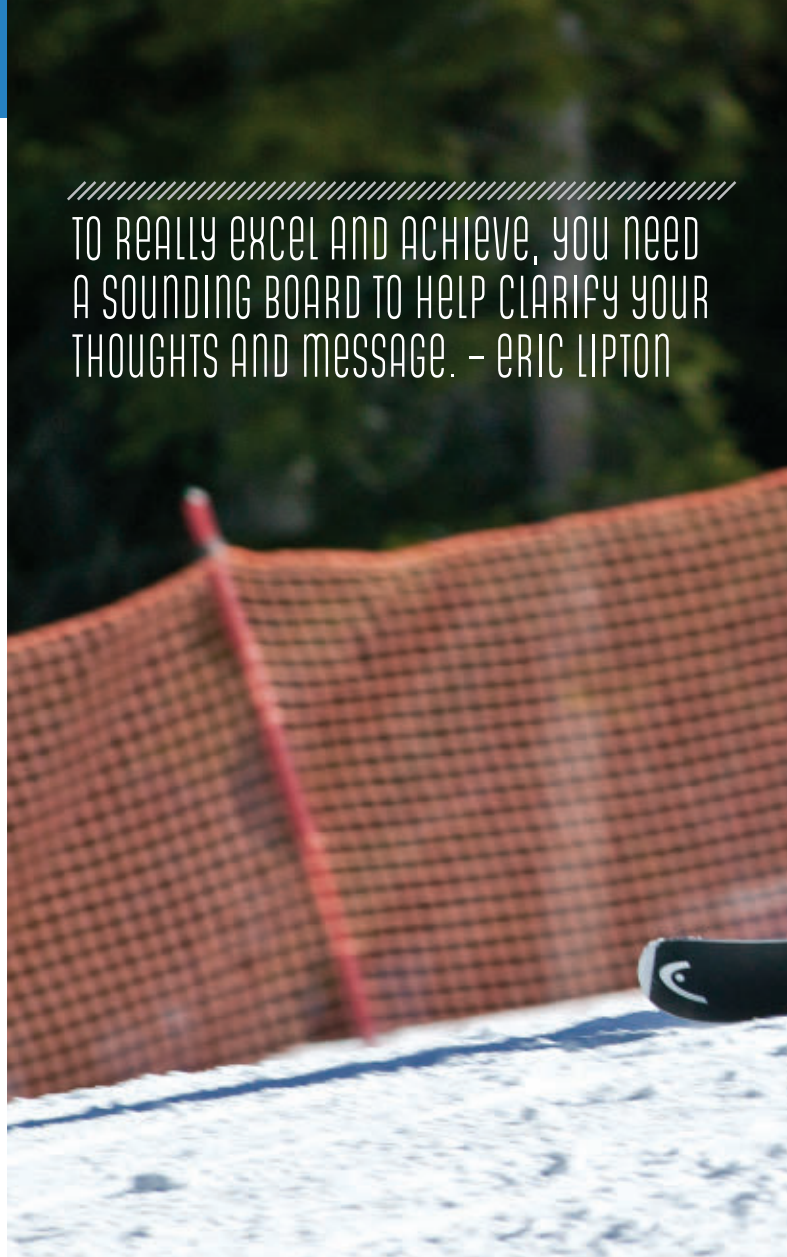
APPROACHING A MENTOR – AND ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP

In addition to serving two terms on the PSIA-AASI Alpine Team, Eric Lipton also helps run his family's furniture business in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. He has had a worthy mentor in both careers. "My dad, Ian Lipton, is a 45-year member of PSIA," says the younger Lipton. From his dad, he learned more by osmosis than through structured lessons, and more through observation than explanation. Lipton considers his dad – and other mentors he has had throughout his life – to be critical cogs in his development. "To really excel and achieve, you need a sounding board to help clarify your thoughts and message," he says.

If your dad doesn't happen to be a Level III instructor, how do you develop a valuable relationship with a mentor? Byers and Lipton have several suggestions.

- **Formalize it.** People like to help others, so it's likely that when you approach that veteran instructor you admire so much, he or she will say, "Sure, I have time right now. What do you need to know?" Stop, says Byers. "Thank them but tell them that now's not great, and then set up another time to meet," she says. The idea is that right there and then too often doesn't turn out to be enough time to really give your questions the time they need. A formal meeting – even if over coffee or for a run on the hill – establishes that your questions are important and really require attention.
- **Be sensitive of their time.** When you have known your mentor for a while, you don't need to be so formal; probably suggestions over the water cooler or on the chairlift are okay. But at least in the early going, as you develop a relationship, make sure you don't waste your mentor's time. "Whatever you can do to get what you need from the person without causing more work for them helps," says Byers.
- **Bring suggestions.** Your mentor has already made time for you. Don't leave your learning up to them too. "The onus is on you to have a plan for how you're going to get to where you want to go," says Byers. Before meeting with a mentor (particularly for the first time), give thought to the form you think would make the partnership successful. For example, one approach would be to use the first meeting to gather information. Then ask the mentor if you could observe him or her in a lesson. Finally, maybe he or she would be available to help you practice what it is you hope to learn after your observation session.
- **Be committed.** A mentor might bring knowledge and experience, but the mentee brings dedication. "The mentee needs to demonstrate commitment – to the sport, to the job, to the issue, to the question. That's when the mentor's best stuff comes out; when the mentee has demonstrated commitment," says Lipton. "Going through the motions only gets you so far." But being all in and showing it – that's when you get the most from a mentor.

TO REALLY EXCEL AND ACHIEVE, YOU NEED A SOUNDING BOARD TO HELP CLARIFY YOUR THOUGHTS AND MESSAGE. – ERIC LIPTON



- **Be open to criticism.** "Be willing to share, and be willing to listen," says Lipton. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Adds Byers, "It's important not just to hear what you're doing well. Respond to constructive feedback without argument, without emotion." In order for your mentor to truly help you, he or she needs to give feedback on your weak areas; that's why you are there. Listen. Be open.

The relationship between mentor and mentee is based on give-and-take, say Lipton and Byers. "It's not the bucket analogy, where one bucket is full and the other is empty, and the mentor dumps what he knows into your bucket," says Lipton. Relationships are built on trust. For your mentor to trust you, you need to do your part. What's your part? Taking steps to help yourself.

BEING A GOOD MENTOR

"Not only do I hear people say they want a mentor, the same people want to be mentors," says Byers. "And I think it's all connected."



DANN COFFEY


What are the characteristics of good mentors? “They are passionate, generous, and wise,” says Byers. “They don’t feel the need to protect what they know, and they have learned and grown from their own mistakes. They aren’t stagnating; they are still growing, learning, and taking risks themselves.”

Good mentors ask good questions. And how do you learn to do that? By working to learn and making a commitment to develop yourself. “Ask what it is you’re not thinking of,” says Lipton. “Ask if there’s anything else you should be asking.” Meanwhile, sometimes a mentor – rather than just give an answer – should help a mentee examine a question. What brought them to ask this question, asks Lipton. What are they ultimately trying to accomplish by exploring this question?

According to Lipton, many of the traits that make good mentors also make good leaders. He points to the example his father and mentor, Ian, sets at their furniture business. “My dad taught me never to ask someone to do something I wouldn’t do,” he says. If an employee needs help, Ian is willing to help. “He’ll jump right up on a truck and help unload sofas,” Lipton says. “He’s 69-years-old!” No matter how much you have paid your

dues, you have to demonstrate this over and over and over. “We can all stand to dial back a little on the ‘cool’ factor,” Lipton says. “Be humble.”

With all of the resources available to us as we develop, chase certifications, and advance in our careers, mentors can add depth and meaning to our growth. Some may view mentoring others as a drain or a time-suck. “That’s because we don’t take the long view sometimes,” says Byers. “Somehow, some way, when you mentor someone, you get 100 percent back.” That’s because when we mentor someone, we are showing faith in that person’s abilities and potential – and that is a gift.

Mentoring can bring out the best in a person. That’s what leaders do. Indeed, says Lipton, “Mentors – like good leaders – will have the ability to inspire.” 

Mark Aiken supervises in the ski and ride school at Stowe, Vermont. He is a Level III alpine and Level I snowboard and telemark instructor, and he serves on the Eastern Division ACE (advanced children’s educator) and Division Clinic Leader teams. A marathon runner, he and his wife recently took on a new endurance sport – parenthood.

WHO WERE THEIR MENTORS?

BY MARK AIKEN



DANN COFFEY

MICHAEL ROGAN

- Five-term member and captain of the PSIA Alpine Team
- Fundamental Skills & Technique Coach, USSA Academy
- Director of Instruction, *SKI* magazine
- Operations Manager, Ski Portillo (Chile)
- Ski teacher, Heavenly (CA)



JONATHAN SELKOWITZ

Mentors: Brian Dolin, Joe Wood, Stu Campbell*, Jimmy Ackerson

"One of the best traits about great mentors is that they are not always worried about being your friend. They see your potential and demand you reach for it always."

**Featured in photo above*



DANN COFFEY

DAVE MERRIAM

- Former head coach of the PSIA Alpine Team
- Director of Mountain Recreation, Stowe Mountain Resort (VT)



SHERRI HARKIN

Mentor: Mike Porter

"Simply put... I trusted him. You will never let go of something you believe to be true, right or wrong, unless you trust your coach. As your learning curve goes up, your performance curve often wanes, and if you don't trust your coach you will go right back to the way you have always done it. Trust is the foundation, and I trusted Mike."



MATT FLUTS

KIM SEEVERS

- Coach of the PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team
- Program Development & Grants Director, Adaptive Sports Foundation at Windham Mountain (NY)
- Guide for Staci Mannella, US Paralympics Alpine National Team



U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Mentor: Danelle Umstead

"Despite the double challenges of having MS and a degenerative eye disease that will rob her of all her sight, Danelle takes time to share her knowledge of the adaptive racing world with newer athletes. She is always accessible to Staci and me and not only celebrates our successes, but helps us see the positive takeaways in our defeats. She is one of the most genuine and caring women I've ever known."



DANN COFFEY

TOMMY MORSCH

- Two-term member of the AASI Snowboard Team
- Terrain Parks Manager/Snowboard Director, Bristol Mountain (NY)



DANN COFFEY

Mentor: K.C. Gandee

"K.C.'s passion for snowboarding and the way he conducts himself professionally have truly been great examples to follow."



SHERRI HARKIN

ERIC LIPTON

- Two-term member of the PSIA Alpine Team
- Ski instructor, Blue Mountain (Pennsylvania) and Yellowstone Club (WY)



ERIC LIPTON

Mentor: Ian Lipton

"My father has always had great perspective. It's as if he can see the world from a million miles away, yet still advise me on the 'here and now.' He's a teacher and a role model."



DANN COFFEY

HEIDI ETTLINGER

- Member of the PSIA Alpine Team
- Instructor/trainer, Heavenly (CA) and Mt. Hotham (Australia)
- Member of PSIA-AASI Western Division board of directors and examiner staff



TERRY PETERS

Mentor: Steve Evenson

"Steve taught me the value of humble and approachable trainers and how quickly they can convert the passion of those around them into lifelong instructors. His zest for skiing has been an irresistible lure for many young instructors who diverted their career paths to join him."



COURTESY OF MAGGIE LORING

MAGGIE LORING

- Mountain School Director, Snowbird (UT)
- Examiner, PSIA-AASI Intermountain Division



PATRICK BRAGG

Mentor: Mermer Blakeslee

"Mermer gave me confidence in my ability to learn and grow and contribute. She was always open and available, and while she coached me intensely, she always asked me to coach her and give her feedback as well. This was a huge lesson in coaching; the more open you are to learning yourself, the better teacher you become. Most importantly, she taught me to stand up for what I believe. That's much more than teaching skiing."

You Had Me at Special: How to Make Events, Well, Eventful

BY MARK ELLING

So there I was last Fall, perusing my division newsletter like a good member should, when my attention was drawn to Winter Blast, a two-day event at Crystal Mountain, Washington, to be lead by PSIA Alpine Team members past and present. Now, I'm the sort of guy who waits as long as possible to attend an event for ed credits and tries to keep it local and keep it cheap. But here was an event that required eight hours of travel, plus food and lodging – not to mention the \$325 event fee – and yet I was interested in attending. I was surprised at my own interest, actually.

I signed up. I made the trip. I ripped some fun lines with the best instructors of instructors and improved my skiing, too. That's a success by any measure. But the thing that kept coming to the forefront for me was the simple fact that *I had wanted to go*; there was something about this style of workshop that captured my interest and compelled me to pull out the credit card. I started to think about the differences between the traditional *lesson* and the *instructional special event*, and whether there was something inherent in the event format that held particular sway with hard-to-reach customers like me.

I went back through my experience at Winter Blast with an eye toward deconstructing its parts. What were the core elements that made the event *special* enough for me to bite down on the price of admission and come out the other side feeling like I'd gotten a great value? And beyond that, were these components also building blocks that any of us could use to design a great educational experience?

Third-Party Expertise (Real Or Perceived)

The essence of snowsports instruction is expertise – a willing student seeks out the



COURTESY OF CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

Sure, the setting and snow at Washington's Crystal Mountain may be enough to entice attendance at its events and clinics, but going the extra mile to make them special helps seal the deal. The same can be said of lessons.

instructor for guidance – and it’s at the heart of a successful event. This is where the hook gets baited; the presence of the *outside expert, the guest speaker, or hired gun* is the defining characteristic of the instructional special event.

For me, the promise of skiing with Alpine Team members was the expertise threshold I needed to cross in order to take the next step of coughing up the cash. Each potential student’s perception of what qualifies as a valid third-party resource is subjective, but without a legitimate third-party authority’s involvement, the event is just a re-packaged lesson product – *lipstick on a pig*. No offense to all the excellent lesson products out there.

But the idea of “outside” expertise does not necessarily mean *outsider* expertise – it really means *separate, different, or above* the expectations a customer has of the snowsports school. There is no reason that the Winter Blast model couldn’t be replicated on a local scale by identifying particular individuals with specialized skills, certifications, or backgrounds within the snowsports school or local community

that make them attractive speakers or consultants to lead a homegrown event. And at the level of lessons for the public, the cachet – and request lessons – that come with being an expert is plenty of incentive to climb the certification ladder or get your children’s or freestyle specialist credential.

Challenge (Goal)

For the skier or snowboarder who has moved beyond the typical reach of instructors, it may be a real challenge to lure him or her back. Finding a way to connect with snowsports athletes’ goals is essential. For me, the idea of skiing steep, technical, Crystal Mountain terrain under the maybe judgmental eye of the Alpine Team member was the challenge. *How would I hang with the group? What would he or she think of my skiing? What would I need to work on?*

For me, these unknowns were part of the thrill. At other ski areas, with other experts, there’s no limit to what the challenges might be: training gates with a USSA coach, skiing in a mono-ski with legit adaptive clinicians, taking the

ground-bound into the park, skiing in the trees for two full days – who knows?

The tempting challenge is in the eye of the beholder, so expressing the specifics of where and how the event will be conducted is critical to attracting athletes who will be excited by that potential. A large part of perceived value (aka feeling like you got what you paid for) is having a rough idea of what you’re gonna get in the first place.

Focused Timeframe (Immersion)

Most special events are not weekly programs but one-hit wonders – focused and intensive episodes that may require a bigger chunk of time invested over a weekend, let’s say, but will not require the organizational effort of scheduling time over a multitude of weeks. This works well for busy professionals who are interested in snowsports instruction but perhaps not in committing to two hours per week over the course of a month or two. In terms of the cost effectiveness, all parties win – two, six-hour sessions equal two trips to the hill, not six, and staffing is more straightforward.

NICK STUART GETTING HIS DAILY PERSPECTIVE PRE-WORK // LANCE KOUDELE

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For skiers and snowboarders who would find the event's third-party expert and challenge of interest, the more intensive, immersion-style learning environment may be especially well-suited. At Winter Blast, I had the good fortune to work with former Alpine Team member Andy Docken, of Aspen Highlands, who spent a lot of time identifying each group member's goals and observing his or her skiing before defining what our general task or challenge would be.

There's a reason that clubs in the big city like to maintain a line of people outside their doors waiting to get in.

Once in task mode, we spent the rest of day one and all of day two hammering on the same thing – which happened to be in some sick terrain – but with a single, individualized focus for each of us. This seems too simple almost, too lean a menu, but it was perfect. The *fewer things, more time* model translated to more skiing and more *figuring it out for me*, and I'd venture this approach works well for others within the special-event framework.

Exclusivity (Price & Group Size)

Failing to charge enough to make a event financially viable is entirely avoidable – *charge more*. The price tag for Winter Blast was a healthy chunk for me to throw down, but I will admit it added to a feel of exclusivity, and the fact that the higher price was tied to an advertised small group size increased my perception of value.

In fact, my registration process wasn't entirely seamless, as the event filled in short order and I was placed on a waiting list. Northwest Division Executive Director Kirsten Huotte assured me that she was working to bring in additional clinicians to allow the wait-listed to attend. She stuck to

her guns on the coach-to-participant ratio and this too bumped up the exclusivity factor. There's a reason that clubs in the big city like to maintain a line of people outside their doors waiting to get in.

Appropriate Social Environment (Marketing & Group Formation)

How and where a special event is marketed will have a large impact on the social viability of the attendee group when the time comes. Since Winter Blast was pitched at divisional membership, our crew was a ski instructor-centric bunch with plenty of Level IIIs, Tech Team members, and divisional trainers in attendance. While the individual goals of the overall group were vast, there remained an element of common experience and interest that made

it easy for the group to gel both on the hill and at lunch and après ski get-togethers. It may seem obvious, but strategic marketing to socially compatible targets helps make an event successful.

Beyond social grouping, skill- and goal-based group division is important for creating a proper learning environment with a blend of challenge, appropriate pacing, and safety. At Winter Blast we were lucky that all the skiers were strong, with similar goals; and we also had one local participant who served as our private off-piste guide to the mountain.

That said, all the best event planning can be derailed when the final group "splits" create unintended mismatches. Having a plan to be fleet-of-foot with running personnel changes is important, as time is limited and the window of opportunity is narrow for making tweaks to group composition. The better formed the groups are ahead of time, the more time can be spent getting on with the task at hand.

Objective Benefits

The best special event does not rely on the ongoing education credits or targeted

discounts earned through attendance as the primary draw – though these objective benefits may serve as an initial lure toward participation. This embedded benefit does add value to the event and helps offset the perceived cost of attendance, but don't short-change the value of the commemorative t-shirt or trucker cap. This sort of SWAG (Stuff We All Get, pronounced *schwag*) is a low-cost way to promote a good vibe and generate some ongoing marketing punch. Free breakfast? Hosted après snacks or lunch? Bring it on!

Of course nothing is free, as these costs are written into the fee to attend. But these small touches do help enhance the *special* in a special event.

At Winter Blast, Huotte did a masterful job of managing all these little details. We should all remember that while the team of outside experts who lead the shindig are in the spotlight and may be the headlining bait, any good special event has a logistics coordinator like Huotte operating the machine in the background.

I have attended a National Academy and been party to many division events over the years, and I coordinate educational events as a function of one of my jobs. I think the most successful (and fun) events share the components identified here. While developing or participating in a big event is an exciting prospect, the thing that really strikes me now is how *scalable* this format is – from national to divisional, down to local, the event framework remains about the same.

This descending hierarchy, of course, begs the next question; how can every "lesson" event be made more special for a student? The best instructor-oriented clinics and workshops – and each lesson you teach – are rooted in the same ground, made fertile by expertise, an overriding sense of value, and an emphasis on making the experience a special event. ☑

Mark Elling is a Level III alpine and Level II nordic snowsports education veteran who coordinates Masterfit University's bootfitting instructional workshops in the U.S., Europe, and Australia. He is also the coordinator for the America's Best Bootfitters annual boot product test at Mt. Bachelor, OR, where he works on the hill as a bootfitter and alignment technician.

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Purposeful Practice and Experience Paves the Way to Instructional Eminence

BY GEORGE FISH

If you love to ski or ride – and relish opportunities to learn all you can, whenever you can, about teaching the sport you love so much – you just might have what it takes to be a truly exceptional instructor. But it's going to take some time, and lots and lots of practice!

Fortunately, the experience you gain along the way could shorten that road to greatness. That's the message behind heuristics, which Peter Kray mentioned in his article "The Benefits of Heuristics: Can Instructors Turn a 'Trap' Into a Tool for Teaching?" (Spring 2013). Heuristics are basically experience-based techniques for problem solving, learning, and discovery that amount to hardwired shortcuts based on lived experience. Kray's article closes with a brief description of Malcolm Gladwell's "10,000-Hour Rule" and touches on the idea that 10,000 hours of practice in a given discipline is essentially a prerequisite for eminence. In the context of ski or snowboard instruction, if you worked/skied 500 hours per season you'd need to teach for 20 seasons to achieve 10,000 hours. However, it might take only 10 years for an instructor working back-to-back winters between hemispheres.

This basically means that to get really good at anything, you have to do it a lot!

In his fascinating book *Bounce: Mozart, Federer, Picasso, Beckham, and the Science of Success*, Matthew Syed, an award-winning journalist and a former British Olympic table tennis player, explains that as young fathers, both Earl Woods (father of Tiger) and Richard Williams (father of Venus and Serena) were obsessed by the idea that practice creates greatness. Understanding this, three kids from southern Los Angeles accumulated

thousands of hours of practice, in their specific disciplines, in one small period, between birth and adolescence. All went on to excel. But beyond the fact that Tiger is currently dating U.S. Ski Team member Lindsey Vonn, what does any of this have to do with skiing? Quite a lot, it turns out.

Novice, Adept, and Eminent

Gladwell's 10,000-Hour Rule draws upon Swedish psychologist K. Anders Ericsson's studies on the role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. Indeed, connections between the nature and development of expert performance over time have been applied by many scholars across various fields. Harvard scholar Robert Thomas has even linked Ericsson's work to the field of leadership, asserting that performance traits of novice, adept, and eminent develop over time (fig. 1).

With respect to snowsports instruction, I'd contend that members of PSIA-AASI's Teams and their respective selectors are toward the peak of the eminent curve. This implies that any reasonable claim to eminence within snowsports instruction must be considered against the standard of the organization's elite – the respective national teams.

To illustrate this point, I did a little comparative research. Meet Jonathan Ballou and Don Oakes. Ballou is a member of the PSIA Alpine Team and is the training manager for the Ski & Snowboard Schools of Aspen/Snowmass. An examiner in PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division, he is chairman of that division's alpine committee and is also an examiner and education coordinator for the New Zealand Ski Instructors Alliance. Ballou has been teaching skiing for 33 seasons over the course of 23 years,



SHERRI HARKIN

PSIA Alpine Team member Jonathan Ballou's technique has obviously benefited from more than 19,000 hours on snow.

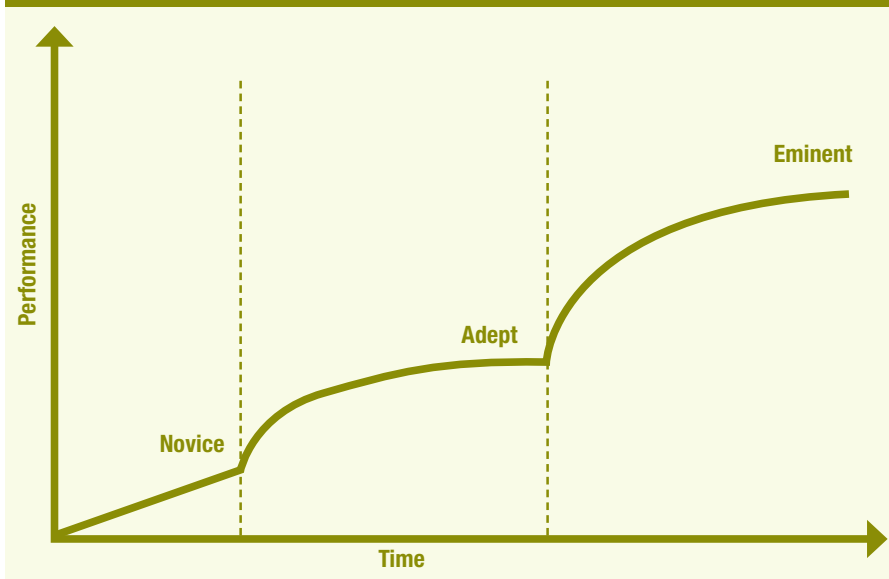
and roughly estimates his time on snow (including lift riding time and stopping) to be in the region of 19,550 hours.

Captain Don Oakes is an ex Naval aviator who has been flying commercially for US Airways since 1986 and has logged around 28,000 hours of flight time over the course of a distinguished career. Oakes is a Level III alpine instructor and has also spent the last 15 winters working with Maine's Sugarloaf Ski Club.

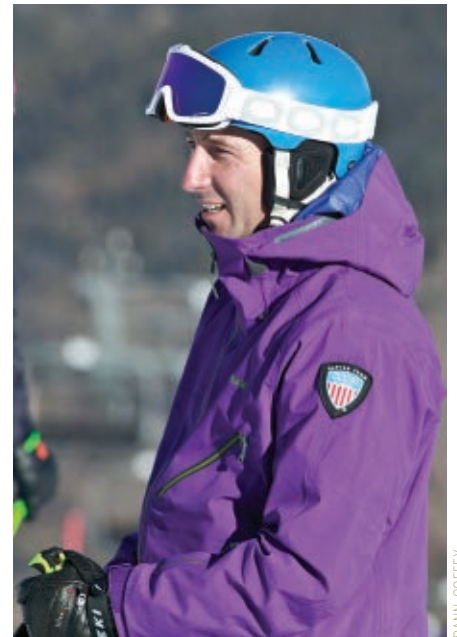
The Deliberate Nature of Practice

According to Ericsson, Gladwell, Syed and others, focused repetition is essential

Figure 1: Ericsson's Levels of Achievement in Performance



Source: Thomas, R. J. *Crucibles of Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business Press (2008), 66.



DANN COFFEY

Ballou's personal motto of "No lazy turns" defines his approach to improvement.

to eminence. However, Thomas also addresses the importance of *practicing* while performing. This is not to suggest that we should compromise our guests' safety and enjoyment, of course, but to heed (as much as we can) Thomas's advice that, "when you don't have time to practice and yet you seek to improve your performance, you have to learn how to practice while you perform."

This is acknowledged by Ballou whom, when asked about his 19,550 hours, self-deprecatingly observed, "That certainly does not represent focused or perfect practice time, hence my ridiculously bad habits and annoying stylistic affectations." If a current PSIA Alpine Team member has such alarming self-awareness, perhaps we should seek the same from ourselves.

"My personal way of improving my skiing closely ties into my (overall) goal of simplicity," said Ballou. "I always try to ski with focus; my personal motto is 'No lazy turns, or no turns without intent.' This doesn't mean that I spend all my time working on drills. That would probably be pretty boring, and I really like skiing. While drills and focused practice are important, I try to insert whatever my simple focus is into my skiing at all times. A key for me is to maintain the same focus for some period of time through many applications."

In this sense, Ballou's training is both non-linear and linear, because it's deliberately structured to be both specific and

emergent. This basically means that because of his accumulated hours, he is blending his movement patterns relative to desired outcome(s). He does this with a clear purpose and intent – itself a result of previous practice. So for Ballou, (as with Thomas) "Practice needs to have a blend of flexibility and play, as well as focus and specificity. Practice needs to be focused, or perfect."

While it's fair to say that what constitutes perfect practice depends on both the situation and individual, it's also based on more simple truths that embrace fundamental movement patterns. In Ballou's case, he is clearly constantly working to improve, and is constantly *learning* as he improves. This increases his innate ability to adapt and allows him to respond to the complexity of his environment better than most.

As Syed suggests, "the cues being processed by experts – in sport or elsewhere – are so subtle and relate to each other in such complex ways that it would take forever to codify them in their mind-boggling totality." This is known as combinatorial explosion and is a theory based on the importance of discipline-specific practice and immersion. For Syed, this equates to "tasks that are determined, first and foremost, by superiority in software (pattern recognition and sophisticated motor programs) rather than hardware (simple speed or strength)."

In effect, this means that eminence is a consequence of prolonged, perfect, and (at a minimum) accurate repetition.

Indeed, as Kray acknowledged in regard to avalanche expert Bruce Tremper "the more experience someone has in a given field, the more likely they are to make split-second decisions more accurately." This clearly suggests individuals with 10,000 hours of purposeful practice are better conditioned for success – whatever the field.

Just ask Don Oakes – who knows a thing or two about combinatorial explosion. Oakes has flown with Captain Chesley Sullenberger, hero of the "miracle on the Hudson" and, according to Oakes, a pilot who had "around 30,000 hours of actual flight time, and maybe 1,000 hours in the simulator" at the time of his most famous combinatorial (non) explosion. When I asked Oakes to compare the skill sets of a recreational pilot (50 hours minimum) and Sullenberger, he stated the obvious: "There is basically no comparison." In this *truly* remarkable instance, Sullenberger expertly applied and distilled thousands of hours of expertise into one brief and apparently "miraculous" application in space and time.

An eminent pilot himself, Oakes has a wonderfully understated and remarkably simple view on Sullenberger. "Sully" according to Oakes, "did a great job."

What About Heurism, 10,000 Hours, and Teaching?

Conversely, in an industry occasionally prone to hyperbole, terms such as “expert” can get thrown around a little loosely at most lineups – not to mention upper-level splits. Of course, we can’t put up signs at afternoon lineup that read “Only 9,998 hours to go.” That would be as absurd as it would be self-defeating. But we *can* constructively illuminate and develop our own (and our guests’) understanding of the merits of lifelong learning, irrespective of “level,” and encourage a commitment to enjoy that process. Ballou agrees. “To be a teacher, one must first be a student,” he said, adding, “To be a *great* teacher one must never stop being a student. I really like [renowned snowboard coach] Bud Keene’s advice to ‘Learn all there is to know about the sport you coach.’ This is a process that is without end.”

What’s great about this notion is that it requires a sobering amount of humility, and is complimented by the crucial understanding that knowledge is often co-produced. This is an incredibly important distinction, which Kray touched upon in his article by noting that PSIA Alpine Team member Michael Rogan, PSIA Nordic Team Coach Scott McGee, and AASI Snowboard Team member Tommy Morsch believe “the best implementation of heuristics is based on information that each student provides about themselves.” Put simply, the concept of experiential learning also comes into play. As Ballou told me, “I had the opportunity to participate in a workshop with Horst Abraham last year called ‘Anything that is worth learning is unteachable; anything teachable is inconsequential.’ I love this statement because, to me, it basically advocates discovery based or experiential learning as a way to create deep and inspiring learning.”

An Outline for Success

So, are you up for a slice of heurism with a drop of experiential learning during what’s left of this season? People most effectively



COURTESY OF DON OAKES

A Level III alpine instructor – and US Airways pilot with more than 25,000 hours in the cockpit – Don Oakes knows a thing or two about the eminence that comes from experience.

relate to what you’re telling them to do when what you’re telling them is familiar.

This is very similar to teaching for transfer, and applies not only to real-time experiential learning (or perfectish practice) but also to our ability as instructors and communicators to share in a mutually beneficial learning journey; one that draws on the very best of our shared and accumulated experience in meaningful partnership with our guests. It offers multiple ways to connect. A gifted instructor who can engagingly articulate this as part of a shared learning journey – across ages, experiences, and demographics – is well positioned to succeed. It’s basically intelligent, applied, and shared guided discovery.

This means that when you commit to purposeful practice, and focus on the “co-production” of learning, while striving to establish effective and genuine connections, you greatly improve your own (and your guests’) learning and overall enjoyment. In effect, as you strive for eminence you might even set the stage for breakthroughs in your own skiing and teaching similar to landing an airplane on water. ☺

George Fish is a Level III alpine instructor with Children’s Specialist 2 and Freestyle Specialist 1 credentials. He has taught at Stratton

Mountain (Vermont), Aspen (Colorado), The Canyons (Utah) and Sunday River (Maine) as well as in New Zealand. Fish has a master’s degrees in sports management from the University of the West of England and is currently teaching sports management at the University of Southern Maine. While in Maine he is also reading for a second master’s degree in Leadership and Organizational Studies. He wishes to thank Jonathan Ballou and Captain Don Oakes for their generosity and time, as well as acknowledge the cerebral (and much appreciated) advice of Daniel Richard Benac. Fish has donated his fee for this article to the PSIA-AASI Education Foundation.

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A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats: The Role You Play in Conversion

BY HEIDI ETLINGER



HEIDI ETLINGER

In snowsports circles, whenever the conversation turns to conversion – that is, turning first-timers into lifelong skiers or riders – the emphasis is usually on reducing the staggering 83 percent dropout rate of beginners. That’s a noble pursuit, with a lot of moving parts.

For example, boosting the overall growth of the industry hinges, to a certain extent, on business models that foster long-term growth over short-term profits. Immediate investments in creating terrain-based learning features, updating rental fleets, and implementing *Conversion Cookbook* strategies developed by the National Ski Areas Association are part of the solution. So is a commitment from all area employees – owners, instructors, and everyone in between – to the guest experience.

According to Dave Rathburn, president and general manager of Oregon’s Mt. Bachelor, “Conversion is a top-down initiative. If the resort leader is not totally committed to the outcome, how can you expect the rest of the company to be? Every employee needs to be all-in.”

Like that of owners, the vital role of instructors is woven into almost every aspect of conversion. The development and implementation of progressive and innovative lessons have been identified as

crucial links to helping guests get better faster. Our ability to transform the entry pathway could be the key element that produces a cascading effect benefiting the entire ski and snowboarding industry.

Barriers to Recruitment and Retention

So, what are some of the barriers to beginner recruitment and retention, and, more important, how can instructors help overcome them? Think back to the last new endeavor *you* tried. You probably wanted to know what equipment you’d need and what to expect from the learning experience. It’s the same with beginner skiers and riders. Letting students know what to expect and how to prepare for their lesson improves their success rate and casts a positive light on what they report to their friends and family after the lesson.

The rental shop is often the guest’s first point of contact with skiing or riding, and many areas are looking to make it as easy as possible to get gear... and the right gear at that. Minimizing crowding/wait times and ensuring proper boot fit are strongly linked to the likelihood of conversion. Some resorts staff their boot-fitting areas with instructors well versed in how equipment can support (or hinder) what the skier or rider wants to do on snow.

Figure 1: Keys to Conversion



Provide a better rental experience.



Enhance students’ awareness of equipment innovations.



Tout togetherness and ease of learning.



Let students know what to expect and how to prepare for their lesson.



Promote lessons as a means to explore the mountain.

DREAMSTIME

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HEIDI ETLINGER

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Recent innovations in equipment and technology make it easier to learn than ever before, but newbies don't necessarily know that. When you take the time to raise your students' awareness about new equipment and how it aids learning, you provide a confidence boost they can carry into future lessons.

According to industry research, most people report that "spending time with family and friends" is the single most positive aspect of snowsports. And yet skiing and snowboarding are often portrayed in the media as being challenging and hard to learn. You can help dispel that notion by providing fun, safe, and effective lessons.

It's interesting to note, too, that many people report "not having someone to go with" as the main reason for not participating in skiing or snowboarding. Maybe there's an opportunity to tout lessons as a means to explore the mountain with other like-minded skiers and riders.

NSAA's Recipe for Success

As you might expect, the National Ski Areas Association has long been at the forefront of efforts to promote the growth of skiing and snowboarding in the United States. In its *Conversion Cookbook*, the organization offers 10 recommended strategies for boosting beginner conversion.

1. Provide information to new participants about what to expect before arrival.
2. Improve the arrival experience with signage and greeters.
3. Focus on boot fit and providing extra attention in the rental shop.
4. Make lesson registration easy and limit class size.
5. Group lesson participants by athleticism and learning goals.
6. Focus on personalized lesson closure.
7. Provide roving instructors on beginner terrain.
8. Staff beginner lessons with the *best* instructors.
9. Follow up with ski and ride school students and invite them back.
10. Create a resort culture with all staff valuing beginners.

Clearly, many of the winning strategies (which are more fully outlined at http://www.nsaa.org/media/22284/conversion_cookbook.pdf) put a lot of stock in quality lessons. You and your fellow instructors are

PROFICIENCY = PARTICIPATION

According to SnowSports Industries America, most beginners report that "it's not fun unless you are good" and that they want to "get better faster." This, of course, is where quality instruction can have the biggest impact. Here's a quick peek at what many areas, as well as PSIA-AASI, are doing to address this.

- Terrain-based learning features built in the beginner areas are helping first-timers achieve the thrill of sliding without feeling like they're out of their comfort zone, with skiers and riders often reporting huge success on their first day.
- In addition to providing the education materials and certification pathway that support an American teaching approach second to none, PSIA-AASI once again threw its support behind Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month and the Bring a Friend Challenge. Both initiatives are credited with boosting participation in lessons and the overall snowsports culture.
- In PSIA-AASI's Central Division, a new program is underway to educate member schools on how to deliver "Great Beginner Lessons." The division has partnered with the Midwest Ski Areas Association to provide these clinics in several states.
- The Eastern Division's "More Fun Starts Here" initiative is spreading the word that we are the leaders of fun, and educating the public on the value of professional instruction.

— Heidi Ettlinger

crucial to the health of the ski and snowboard industry going forward. According to SIA, the data continues to suggest that, "When the consumer feels their proficiency at skiing/snowboarding is increasing, they feel more confident, they participate more, and they spend more dollars."

So, What You Can Do... Now?

As a skilled instructor, you can adjust your lesson plans to streamline the learning curve for each student and make them feel like they're making real progress. Here are a few suggestions for how you can make a difference at your resort.

- Expand your bag of tricks and learn a variety of ways to teach skills to guests.
- Work with your fellow instructors to be creative with class handling options that allow guests to progress at their own pace.
- Utilize magic carpets to avoid sidestepping when possible.
- If your area includes terrain-based teaching features, learn how best to use them. If your area lacks such features, look for natural terrain features, such as undulations in terrain and banked areas, to fit the bill.
- Stay current with industry initiatives like Learn to Ski and Snowboard

Month and the Bring a Friend Challenge.

- Attend professional development clinics and/or pursue another level of certification.

We as instructors have the potential to have a lasting effect on creating lifelong ski and snowboard enthusiasts. Are you up for the challenge?

PSIA Alpine Team member Heidi Ettlinger has devoted her career to growing the snowsports industry. She is an ambassador for Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, develops and leads instructor training programs, and produces resources for the trade (gearingtogo.com) to improve the retention of new skiers and riders.

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Best Solutions To Problems You Encounter on the Hill

BY STEPHANIE PRINCE, PSIA-AASI SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

Is “Problem Solver” a skill listed on your resume? If not, it probably should be. Instructors deal with all kinds of interesting issues that arise in lessons. Take, for instance, the couple that signed up for lessons together, but whose tempers flare when one progresses faster than the other.

Or the independent-minded teens who try to give you the slip every chance they get. And what about the family that wants to stay together despite varying skill levels, equipment, and terrain preferences or the flu-ridden child who throws up on you – on the lift?

Here are some instructors’ best solutions to these common challenges you might encounter out there in the expansive, unpredictable world of ski and snowboard instruction.

Surviving the Split

At some point, you’ll find yourself teaching a group of students with varying athletic and ski or snowboard abilities, wondering how you’ll cater to all of them. “You could have one student with little or no athletic ability in the same lesson with a world-class figure skater. Both of them on skis for the first time, but you can only imagine how much faster the skater will progress,” points out Level III Alpine instructor, Gary Elliott from Mammoth Mountain, CA. Here’s some insight from seasoned split survivors.

“Years ago, my ski school director held a pro clinic called “Coaching to the Split” – still the best pro lesson I’ve ever attended. You’re generally dealing with one of three things: speed split, technique/ability split, or anxiety split. We all have various drills to deal with these; so figure out what kind

of split you’re dealing with, and coach to it. In a speed split, for example, have the faster guys make big, wide S-turns, ask the slower ones to make shorter turns, and the rule is no one passes anyone else. The faster guys learn speed control, the slower guys don’t get embarrassed by the faster guys passing them, and everyone skis better!”

— *Gerry Bell, Alpine Level II; Sunday River, ME*

“Have the more advanced students do all of the exercises and runs switch. This

keeps the beginner terrain from getting too boring.”

— *Ben Baldassare, Snowboard Level I, Alpine Level I, Children’s Specialist I; Homewood Mountain Resort, CA*

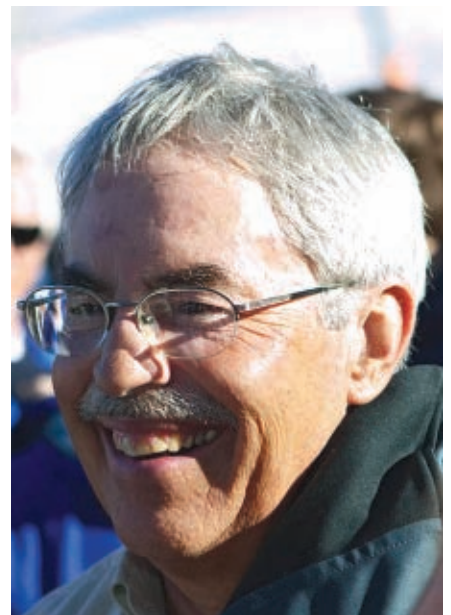
“Make the best of it and don’t let your frustration show on your face, because your students will see it. Keep the terrain geared to the lower end of the group, but focus on skills and drills for the students who are more advanced.”

— *Ryan Ellison, Alpine Level II; Deer Valley, UT*

“Attitude and common goals are more important than ability in assessing the cohesiveness of a group. There may be a significant difference in ability, but common motivation, attitude, and physical ability. If the ability is just too much, and you can’t find someone to split the



Ben Baldassare



Sherman White



Eriks Grivins

group with, seek out terrain where you can alternate working on specific tasks (like advanced and intermediate trails that intersect) with the individuals in the group.”

— *Sherman White, Alpine Level III; Smugglers’ Notch Resort, VT*

“Splits challenge us to use our full bag of tricks. Different variations of similar drills, creative use of terrain, having students learn from each other, and practicing tasks with variations of D.I.R.T. [duration, intensity, rate, and timing] are all things that help me deal with splits. Open conversation with your group can help highlight similarities and differences in technique and skill. Often, the more advanced students can share information and techniques that have helped them. Students who ski slower may have good turn shape and speed control, which can help others concentrate on more accurate movements. Split lessons require us to be creative in order to be relevant to every student in the group.”

— *Eriks Grivins, Telemark Level 1, Alpine Level I, Snowboard I; Stevensville, MT*

Tough Teens

You might encounter some disrespectful or uninterested teenagers in your lessons. Whether you’ve got a flight risk or one you just *wish* would disappear, keep your cool and give them some sense of independence.



Gary Elliott

“The main reason the teens are apt to try to ditch you is that you haven’t done an effective job of finding out what their goals and motivations are, and then designing the session around those goals. This can be tough with teens, who are probably not skiing or riding with you of their own free will, but if you take some time, show respect for their objectives, and maybe ask for some time to show them that you do care about them, most of them will stick with you.”

— *Sherman White*

“My dog needs discipline, exercise, and affection — and so do teens. When they’re unruly, ask yourself, ‘*What are they looking for?*’ Then, in a professional way, give it to them. Discipline? Try this: ‘Guys, every year I have one group who thinks I don’t mean what I say. This year, it looks like it’s going to be you. Do you really want to test me?’ Exercise? They want to ski, so let them! Within sight, and in control, of course. Let them watch you ski, while you give a few — very few — pointers on how you’re doing it. They learn new dances watching the other kids; they’ll learn skiing watching you. Affection? Teenagers are usually so self-absorbed they internalize every criticism they receive and brood about it ad infinitum. However, they can go for weeks on the most modest positive reinforcement. So give it to them: ‘Sue, that was exactly what I was talking

about; great job!’ ‘Bill, that’s part of it, it’s a big step up; let’s keep it going!’ Teens are not difficult duty — just think of my dog example!”

— *Gerry Bell*

“I like to show them something they cannot do, like a ballet trick (I used to compete in freestyle). Then they may continue to bug you to teach them how to do it. Above all you have to keep them from being bored. Challenge them. They have to think they are going to miss out on something if they leave. Find out what they are interested in and try to bring it into the lesson. Put them out in front and let them lead the class. Keep them engaged.”

— *Gary Elliott*

The Flu-Ridden Kid

Has this happened to you? A young student turns to you on the chairlift and says he or she isn’t feeling well; and before you can get them somewhere safe, they’ve puked all over you. Maybe they didn’t necessarily vomit, but you could tell the little guy wasn’t doing well. What is best way to handle that?

“The answer is not ‘Clean him up, clean yourself up, get him back to the lodge, and pawn him off on someone else.’ Honestly, were you ever six years old? More than feeling sick and lousy, the kid is probably humiliated. How would you like to be treated in that situation? How would you like your child or your grandchild treated? The answer here isn’t about ski instruction — it’s about compassion. Try this: ‘Billy, do you feel better now, or do you still feel bad? I want to get you back downhill so we can get you feeling better and call your parents. Do you think you want to ski back with me, or would you like an adventure ride on a sled?’”

— *Gerry Bell*

“With younger kids, it’s important to make them feel like it’s not their fault. Usually this situation is a result of parents putting them into class when they don’t feel well. This can be avoided by asking questions at lineup while their parents are still there, like ‘What did you have for breakfast this morning?’ If they say ‘nothing,’ ask them if it’s because they

don't feel well. Then question the parents a bit more."

— *Sherman White*

"This would be a great time for a hot chocolate break for the rest of the class. You need to go in to clean everyone up and notify the parents. Do whatever is necessary to keep the child from feeling guilty or bad about what happened. A lot depends on the child. Is it a little girl who is very emotionally upset over the incident or a little boy who thinks it is funny? The child and the parents should make the decision whether to have the child continue with the class. If the child appears too sick to continue, could be unsafe riding a chair, or could be a health risk to the other children then the ski school should not allow the child to continue with the class."

— *Gary Elliott*

"With a flu-ridden kid, call your supervisor and have them cover for you while you clean the puke off of the kid and yourself. Then call a parent and see where they can meet you to pick up their child and rejoin your class ASAP. That night, be sure to wash your uniform and call the parents to see how the student is doing. Letting them know you care should be a priority."

— *Anne Royar Kerber, Alpine Level II, Children's Specialist 2; Snow Creek, MO*

Coupled Bliss (Not)

Let's face it, couples that ski together don't always stay together. You can't be their marriage counselor, but you can do your part to make sure their lift ticket doesn't double as an express ticket to divorce court.

"Separate them. The better one is exasperated that the less-experienced one isn't getting it (probably because they are following the better one's failed attempt at teaching). The less-experienced mate is frustrated, embarrassed, and probably

angry (and maybe ready to give up the sport.) Keeping them together is like smashing two pieces of plutonium together; worst case is an atomic explosion, best case is you die of radiation poisoning. So alternate your attention: 'Bob, make the short turns we talked about down to the trail sign while I work with Sally a bit.' Then, 'Sally, practice the turn initiation we practiced while I work with Bob on his pole touch.' Above all else, end the lesson on a slope where they can ski together comfortably, have fun, and enjoy each other. That's why they took the lesson!"

— *Gerry Bell*

"You are the coach, guide, and boss of the lesson. You may need to call a time out, and do some counseling if their behavior is getting in the way of having an enjoyable, productive time, which won't happen if you just let them go."

— *Sherman White*

"Give the slower-progressing student easier tasks that can be completed successfully and give the faster progressing student tasks that are a little more challenging. The goal here is to make it appear that they are both doing equally well. Compliment both of them equally on their success. Do whatever is necessary to keep one of them from thinking they are falling behind. Emphasize that couples may learn differently and progress at different levels, but there is no reason they cannot eventually reach the same level. Remember who won the race between the tortoise and the hare. Usually men will show more physical ability and women more technical ability. Don't be afraid to point out the different strengths of each skier and always keep it positive."

— *Gary Elliott*

Fun with Family Dynamics

"Make them a team! Start with a slope for the lowest ability, describe the task, and say, 'Chuck, show your Mom how it's done.' Then, 'Mom, show Chuck what you learned from him.' Go from there, working your way to a common-denominator slope they can all enjoy together. This situation isn't really about ski instruction; it's about psychology. You have to deal with people the way they are, not the way you'd like them to be."

— *Gerry Bell*



Gerry Bell

"A lot depends on the ages of the kids and what the goals and motivations of the family are, which will likely differ from one family member to the next. You need to actively involve yourself in helping them define a reasonable goal for the session. Is it to coach the parents in how to teach their kids? Is it for everyone to find some improvement in their skiing? Or are they looking for a knowledgeable guide who can show them appropriate, fun places for the whole family to enjoy? Ask questions."

— *Sherman White*

"The key here is that they want to stay together. Most important, keep them on safe terrain but do fun things with them. Play games. Create some friendly competitions between the family members. Let each person have a chance to lead the group. Keeping safety in mind, give them challenging tasks on easy terrain. You might want to consider taking them into a freestyle park if one is available and you can do it safely. Some can go over small jumps while others ski around them. Select terrain that will satisfy the higher-level skier but still be safe for the lower-level skier. Look for a run that has been partially groomed on one side so that some can ski the groomed side and some the side with bumps." ³²

— *Gary Elliott*



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Adaptive Spotlight Shines on Snow, Online, and on Film

BY PETER KRAY, PSIA-AASI LEAD CONTENT OFFICER

A lot has been happening on the adaptive ski and snowboard front lately. The equipment and gear continue to evolve, and so do the programs, instructors, and ski schools that support adaptive athletes in their quest to feel the stoke of skiing and snowboarding, regardless of their disability.

Vermont Offers New Mecca for Adaptive Athletes

Officials from Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports and the Pico Ski Education Foundation officially opened the doors to their new home, the Andrea Mead Lawrence Lodge at Pico Mountain, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 8, 2013.

Vermont Adaptive is the largest non-profit organization in Vermont, offering daily, year-round adaptive sports programs to people with disabilities. The Pico Ski Education Foundation is an alpine ski racing non-profit dedicated to providing young athletes with the resources to pursue their dreams. The two organizations partnered in 2011 to build this new facility at Pico Mountain in order to fulfill their missions and meet organizational growth needs.

“The outpouring of support for creating this facility has been amazing,” Erin Fernandez, executive director of Vermont Adaptive, said in a statement. “We can’t even begin to thank everyone who has been involved in the project. It’s the athletes who will benefit from that generosity and support. Sports are for everybody. This building symbolizes that and will provide a training outlet and playground for those athletes to pursue their dreams, whatever those may be.”

The \$1.3 million, 6,000-square-foot, multi-use building is located between

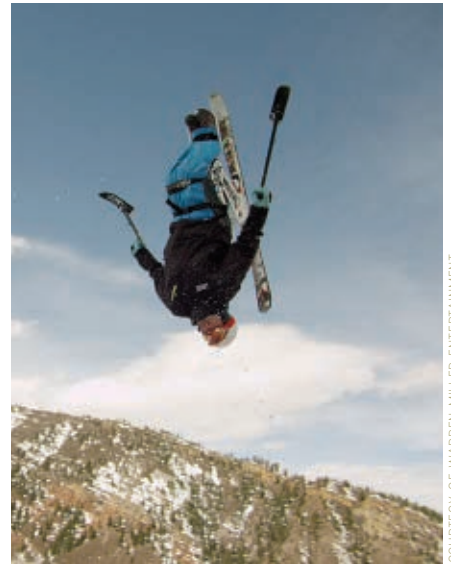
the existing Pico Ski Club building and the Pico Base Lodge, and is connected to both buildings via outdoor balconies and decks on the second floor. The building is specifically designed for participants in Vermont Adaptive’s programs, providing easy accessibility for people of all abilities. An elevator connects the first and second floors.

The lodge is named after Olympic champion and Pico Mountain skiing legend Andrea Mead Lawrence. The “Access for All” elevator and foyer is named in honor of U.S. Paralympian Champion Sarah Will, who also hails from Pico and is a Pico Ski Club alumnus. The Turtle Ridge Foundation, founded by Olympic and World Champion Bode Miller, his sister Kyla, and family, has donated \$100,000 to the building. The first floor of the building is named the Turtle Ridge Center, home of Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports.

Adaptive Snowboard Guide is Updated... and Free

The newly updated *Adaptive Snowboard Guide* is available for a free download at TheSnowPros.org. A snowboarding-specific resource for adaptive instructors, this guide presents a diverse, creative, and unique collection of crossover teaching techniques that help adaptive students enjoy success as snowboarders.

With the new updates, this resource is intended to be a comprehensive and



You'll flip for PSIA-AASI member Trey Humphrey's sit-ski acrobatics in Warren Miller's latest film.

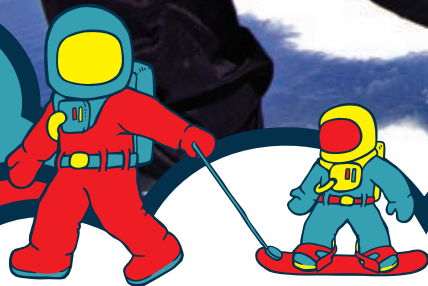
innovative reference for the adaptive snowboarding community. To download this free guide, click on the “Publications, Videos & Resources” link at TheSnowPros.org, then choose the Adaptive Educational Resources link in the drop-down menu for Resources.

PSIA-AASI Member Rocks Warren Miller's *Ticket to Ride*

If you're looking for a little extra stoke to fuel your spring riding, be sure to check out Warren Miller's *Ticket to Ride* film when you're not crushing it on the snow. This season's installment in the Miller canon features PSIA-AASI member and War in Afghanistan veteran Trey Humphrey pulling off a backflip in his sit-ski. Humphrey, who lost the lower part of his right leg to an improvised explosive device, recently launched his own learn-to-ski-and-snowboard course to certify other wounded warriors to teach adaptive lessons at Reno-based ski area Sky Tavern. ☺

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—Mike Chait
Snowboard Manager, Smugglers' Notch Resort
Snow Sports University

What Came First, The Pole Touch or the Turn?

BY JOE HOFSTETTER

In my first year of ski instructing I treated myself to a pair of first-generation, full carbon fiber poles and I didn't look back. They were black and orange, thin as a pencil, and lighter than anything I had used before.

After almost 20 years of clinics, lessons, and ski trips with that purchase – and having taped the baskets back together, wearing through the straps, and practically stripping all the rubber from the grips – I decided maybe it's time to retire this last piece of gear from my early years of teaching.

As a mogul enthusiast, I'm often jealous of those hard-core mogul skiers who plow through bumps with ultra-short poles that let them keep their hands from getting hung up while their feet glide effortlessly through the deep troughs of the zipper-

line. For that reason, I decided to buy two-section adjustable poles that would allow me to switch between a traditional and short length for those days I might find a great mogul line to ski for hours. This experimentation got me thinking; are we leaving the ski pole behind while we ride the technology boom of shaped skis, rocker skis, and the boots that drive them?

For those of you who didn't slide much on straight skis during the 1980s and 90s, you may be unaware of a method called the “up, touch, and turn.” These movements belonged to the section of

the turn we then called the “preparation phase.” Just about everyone on the hill was teaching an upward turn movement – for skiers at every level. It was a kind of reset button; the movement helped us move forward and set up for the significant effort we needed to put into steering those old straight skis into the turn. Nothing complimented this set of movements quite as well as a perfectly timed pole touch, which helped stabilize the upper body and unload that counter movement to get those long, straight boards pointing down the hill. A lot of people claimed then that the turn started with the center of mass moving down the hill. The pole touch initiated this movement and was often viewed as the distinctive beginning of the turn; it took turn preparation into turn initiation.



First, try finding your turning rhythm without poles.



Next, bring pole swing into your turns using short poles to help you determine where the pole touch should occur.



Finally, adjust your pole length to match up with the snow while maintaining flow through your turns.

PHOTOS BY JENNIFER GANDEE



Joe Hofstetter makes some turns using his refined pole touch technique.

JENNIFER GANDÉE

As we all know, shaped skis blew this type of pole touch out of the water. The large shovel and rockered tip features have made turn initiation much faster and easier, and helped reduce many of the unwanted movements created to make a straight ski turn. New equipment has revolutionized how we talk about the beginning of the turn. In my opinion the most important change in skiing is the acceptance that the turn truly starts from the ground up. That said, do we still use the pole touch in the same fashion and, if we don't, are we using the right poles?

Do We Need the Pole Touch?

In short, yes. Whether we are using the pole touch as a blocking mechanism when redirecting our skis through rotation, or relying on the proper pole timing when carving – the pole touch is a critical link between our upper body and the ground. Yet, over the past decade it seems that the pole touch has increasingly taken a back seat in lessons and clinics. As a result, it appears that skiers in general are having a harder time using their poles during

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turns, and are questioning the need for poles altogether. As instructors, it's our responsibility to teach students how to use their poles and blend the pole touch into the turn without creating negative movements or bad habits to go with it.

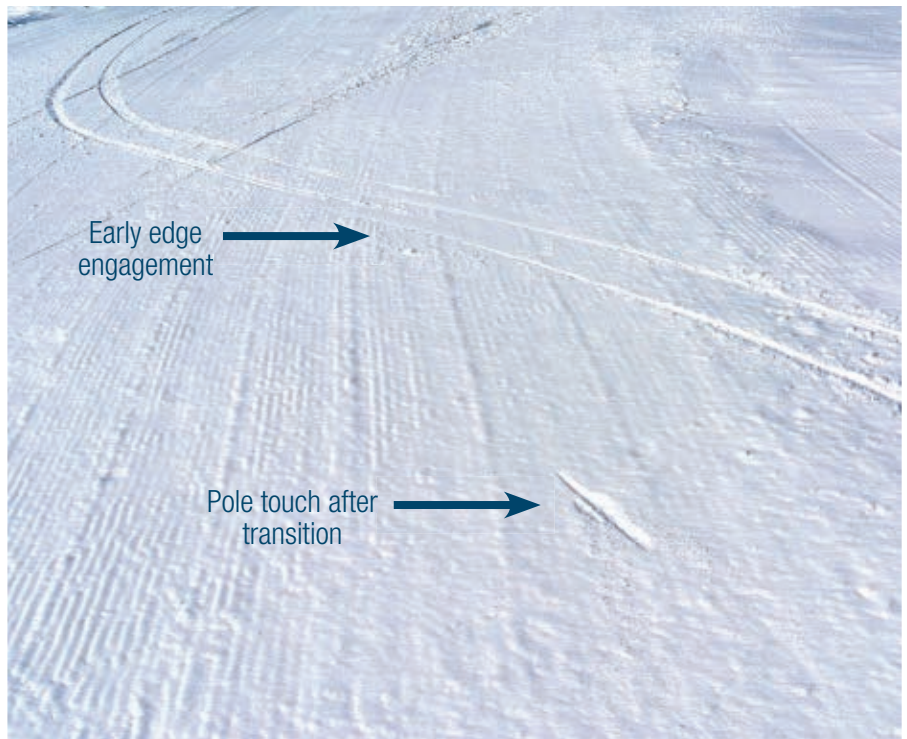
It makes sense that our skis should ultimately be what's starting the turn, since they are the closest things to the ground. Our movements should work up from there; the feet initiate the flattening of the ski, which moves the ankles, which moves the knees, which moves the hips, which directs the center of mass in the direction of travel. But what happened to the pole touch?! The pole touch started the turn, it was our timing mechanism, as if our feet were an instrument in an orchestra and our hands were the conductor – they didn't make a peep until the conductor said so. Not to mention that the pole touch and the upward movement have gone together like peanut butter and jelly for years.

Breaking Down the Touch

The pole touch should ideally happen when we commit our center of mass to the turn – at the end of the turn initiation rather than the beginning. This is when the center of mass moves into the turn, moving the skis and lower body from the ground up.

If the pole touch needs to be at a later part of the turn, and the edges of newly designed skis need to be engaged earlier, then the body and hands are at a lower position with respect to the ground than it was during the old method of “up, touch, and turn.” This may be forcing us to reach higher, or “pop” to create the pole touch as we carve through a theoretically smooth turn.

As seen in racers, who create the largest angles of us all, the touch has almost become somewhat of a tap as the poles stick out like stabilizers and only graze the snow as the racer touches down before passing the next gate. Other skiers move their hand around the pole, which can create a confusing path that doesn't



The ski tracks show where the pole touch should happen in relation to the turn transition.

coincide with the line our center of mass and skis are trying to take. These may be perfect indications that our poles could be too long for the type of turns we are trying to create and teach. It's this idea that made me think that the traditional way of sizing up poles length – you know turning them upside down and putting your hand under the basket to make sure your arm is at a 90 degree angle – may no longer apply.

The Experimental Phase

When experimenting with my new adjustable poles I decided to start with no poles at all. First, I chose the terrain,

wanted to pole touch rather than where the pole length dictated the contact occur.

Similar to working with our youngest students, sometimes taking the added device away can allow us to focus more on our feet, allowing us to start the turn down low and start the chain reaction of events to get the center of mass moving. I was making my imaginary pole touch movements as I left the initiation phase and committed to the shaping phase of the turn. This gave me a solid feeling, but I missed that third point of contact with the earth. I missed the tool that keeps my hands occupied and up where I can see

The pole touch should ideally happen when we commit our center of mass to the turn – at the end of the turn initiation rather than the beginning.

turn shape, and speed that best suited my average day-to-day ski instructor turns. I took this turn and started making theoretical pole touches as I moved down the hill. This allowed me to begin creating some muscle memory around where I

them, and I missed that strong grip that helped create a functional tension of my upper body.

I added my poles back into the equation, but shortened them to a length I knew wouldn't make contact with the snow.

With each run, I extended my poles an incremental amount until I started making contact with the snow.

Making the same turn shape as before, I started adding in a phantom pole touch. I've found just holding my poles helps make my rhythm a little smoother and promotes the functional tension of an athletic stance. Plus, the ski pole's mass alone makes a difference in the way it draws me into the turn. But without the pole touch – the physical contact with the ground – I just don't have the confidence that is relevant on steep stuff or crud. I missed that third point of contact, but that sacrifice was making a lot of other movements a lot smoother.

With each run, I extended my poles an incremental amount until I started making contact with the snow. I then played with this length with a variety of turn shapes size and speeds and made adjustments as I saw fit. I felt I was creating much

more confident movements with my pole touch, and I also felt that my hand was moving through the pole touch rather than defensively retracting the contact or moving around my pole. Not surprisingly, my new pole height is substantially shorter and I feel that the pole touch itself is fitting into my turn shape much better.

Roll with the Pole

As with most change, you'll need to consider some compromises if you explore a new approach to poles. Shorter poles make life more difficult on the flats while you're pushing yourself around, and may not be the best for steep or narrow terrain where a defensive pole plant is the answer. For those of us who enjoy tearing it up on the groomers, and are looking to get one

step closer to that perfect turn, there is some benefit to spending the extra couple of dollars on an adjustable pole.

Let's look at the original question; what came first, the pole touch or the turn? Contrary to the "up, touch, and turn" method, the turn does become before the touch, and if you can buy into that, then your trusty old poles may be looking at the same bleak future that mine did. Just as there isn't a perfect one-quiver ski, there may not be a perfect one-size-fits-all pole length either. Finding the right pole height may not be something our local pro shop can pick out for us anymore. For that reason, as instructors we should keep a closer eye on what our students are using to push themselves around. ☑

Joe Hofstetter is a Level III alpine instructor and staff development trainer for Boston Mills Brandywine Resorts in Cleveland, OH. When he's not on the slopes or in the office putting his mechanical engineering degree to use, you can probably find him on his road bike or rowing shell, trying to get in shape for next season.



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What in Tarnation Will Give You Great Grip and Glide?

BY J. SCOTT MCGEE

With ingredients that produce coveted performance benefits for specific applications – like fluorocarbons for wet snow or molybdenum for dirty snow – cross country grip wax formulas are usually tightly guarded trade secrets.

Wax recipes in the old days of wooden skis and bamboo poles were equally undisclosed, but one ingredient often stood out: smoky, smelly pine tar. Now tar is making a comeback, and you owe it to yourself and your students to learn about its mystical properties.

Tar. It's the same stuff that paves roads and makes shingles waterproof and flexible. It's the goo that was used to seal the hulls and coat the sails of wood ships for centuries. Its smoky, musky odor, which might remind some nordic legends

of their heyday, can still be smelled today in some cross country grip waxes on the market.

Tar is born of a process of destructive distillation in which large molecules made of hydrocarbon chains are broken down into numerous smaller molecules and some free carbon. It's made from organic materials like wood and it leaves byproducts of methanol and charcoal. You can even produce tar in your own home by heating corn stalks in a microwave – who knew?



DANN COFFEY



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Tar originating from wood has many uses, especially when mixed with water to make flavoring for candies and alcohol, spice for foods, scent for saunas, anti-dandruff treatment, and even an anti-microbial wound treatment. According to a common Finnish saying, “If sauna, vodka, and tar won’t help, the disease is fatal.”

So what’s so special about tar when it comes to bonding with, and gliding over snow? Reportedly, tar waxes are particularly good at resisting icing in tricky waxing situations. To get a better idea of just how this happens, let’s take a closer look at how grip waxes work.

Why Wax?

The vast majority of cross country skiers use recreational, waxless skis with a patterned base – much like the shingles on a roof or scales on a fish – to get grip when they push their ski down into the snow. These skiers usually don’t mess around with things like wax – they’d rather just plop their planks in the snow and go. Racers, and those who enjoy performance skiing with a little more ski-prep (this could be you and more advanced students), typically use grip wax, which, when chosen and applied correctly, has a magical ability to grip when you want it to and glide after you push off.

How does this magic work? The tips of snowflakes poke into the soft kick waxes

Cross country ski performance is all about grip-and-glide... and good, old pine tar often aids the cause.

that cross country skiers apply to the mid-zone of their skis. New snow and very cold snow crystals generally have sharp points or edges, and a harder wax is needed to allow the ski to glide after the pushoff. If the wax is too soft, the crystals won't release, resulting in snow sticking to the bases. If the wax is too hard, the crystals won't penetrate, leaving you with slippery skis and plenty of glide, but no kick. With older and rounder snow crystals (resulting from a melt-freeze cycle), the wax of choice is called klister and is like a cross between honey and toothpaste. The right klister can stick at 35° F, or even during a rainy cold snap.

Certain conditions make waxing very tricky, like cold or moist new-falling snow on top of old, hard snow. If you wax for the old snow with a soft wax or klister, every single snow crystal that your klister comes in contact with will stick, and stay stuck. Sorry, no glide. If you wax with the hard wax, you might get grip where the new snow has accumulated enough, but where it's skied off, or when passing under trees, you're sure to slip on the old, hard snow. No biggie for the recreationist, but for the racer, perfect grip and perfect glide – however unattainable – is the fastest way to the podium. Here, a technique called “covering” comes into play, by which a hard wax is applied over klister or another softer wax. It's kind of like trying to spread cold peanut butter over jelly on a sandwich. The smoother the finish, the better the grip *and* the glide will be.

This is where tar wax comes to the rescue. Tar seems to naturally form a harder outer skin, where the molecules in the tar become denser, and release the crystals for better glide. The softer under layer – or cushion – of wax provides enough of a grip. Instead of using two waxes, or trying to get the PB over the J, the tar wax provides a one-step solution to yield better grip and glide. Tar works well with a variety of snow conditions.

Wide World of Wax

Vauhti and Start, both from Finland, make a full line of waxes with tar, also referred to as “Terva” – one for six overlapping temperature ranges. Interestingly, SkiGo has tar only in the coldest wax, a green for 19° to -4° F. And Rode makes a two-wax system for their simple starter kit, one



EARL SALINE

In a one-step solution, using tar wax can negate the need to apply hard wax over klister or another softer wax.

with a little tar (blue, colder) and one with a lot more tar (red, warmer).

Adding tar kick waxes to your kit can not only provide a great wax choice for winter and/or challenging waxing conditions, but will also spruce up your waxing quiver with a nice log-cabin, barbeque-like smoky smell. In fact, in Norway, they'll use the tar wax scrapings as a potpourri on the back of toilets in many homes. Just kidding, but it makes for a good story, no? So why not hedge your bets and try out some tar waxes for some of the best kickin' n' glidin' you'll ever get. ☺

J. Scott McGee coaches the PSIA Nordic Team and is the director of Wyoming's Snow King Mountain Sports Schools. A former telemark competitor, he now dreams of perfect corn on spring backcountry skate ski tours.

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Selling Telemark: Lift the Heels AND the Snowsports Industry

BY JIM SHAW

People may have been telemarking for hundreds of years or more, and although the technique began simply as a means to travel over snow, it has evolved into a sport for enthusiasts who mostly want to ski downhill on lift-accessed runs.

Understanding why telemark skiers telemark – and where telemark skiers might be “hiding” – might prompt ideas on how to sell more telemark lessons and boost the overall health of the snowsports industry.

In my experience, most telemark skiers do not begin their “in bounds” skiing or riding career as telemark skiers. They may come to the ski area from the backcountry as a way to enjoy more of the downhill side of the sport. And it’s very likely they come to telemark skiing from alpine skiing or possibly snowboarding. If this is true, then every alpine skier at your resort (and maybe every snowboarder) could have a telemark skier lurking within. And these people already love sliding on snow!

It seems the first step in selling more tele lessons is having something to sell. But even before offering the service for sale, it might be wise to boost the sports image a bit because, frankly, I don’t think the idea of telemark skiing ever enters into the mind of most ski area guests. If I mention telemark skiing to students while I’m teaching an alpine lesson, more often than not I have to explain what telemark skiing is. For guests who *are* familiar with the sport, the question seems to be, “Do you give telemark lessons?” Having certified telemark instructors on the hill – who ski well and present an impressive image – might be the first step in developing telemark lesson business.

Good businesses plan, create, and train for what they want to be in the future. Beyond having certified telemark instructors who get the image out there and teach effective telemark lessons, there would need to be equipment conveniently available at a price comparable to that of alpine skiing or snowboarding gear. The same holds true for actual telemark lessons. It’s unreasonable to expect that many people (alpine and backcountry skiers or snowboarders) will take lessons and/or learn to telemark if everything about the sport is more expensive than their other already pricey options.

Uncovering the ‘Hidden’ Telemarker

With the barriers removed, telemark skiing could become an attractive option. Instructors would benefit from finding out where the potential students might be hiding, helping those who “already telemark” find how much better they could be and making sure the “soon-to-be telemark” skiers discover their inner free-heeler.

A good place to look for hidden telemark skiers is at the upper level of lessons already being taught. Telemark can offer the opportunity for this group of skiers and riders to experience entirely new sensations on snow. After mastering whatever aspect of skiing or riding they have enjoyed to this point, telemark offers another way to experience the mountain other than bumps, racing, the park, etc. For example, rather than trying to improve their skiing by ripping through 12 bumps in a row instead of just 10, they might try telemark because it’s more of a novelty than anything else they could do. In other words, students might find telemarking more attractive than becoming more proficient at what they already do quite well.



DANN COFFEY

Talented telemark skiers – like Intermountain Division’s Ann Scharling – are invaluable ambassadors for the sport.

SELLING FREE-HEEL FUN: HOW TO TAKE THE LEAD

I've noticed many children beginning their skiing careers being taught by parents who are on telemark gear. As their children become more able to manage the mountain, the parents might want to continue telemarking. What about offering a ski lesson in which the parents learn how to telemark while the children are taught to alpine ski? I like to think that kind of approach could offer a new twist on the family private.

Also, more and more of the people I ski with have taken on a personal trainer or have a training regimen. Although the physical demands of alpine skiing are not to be discounted, telemark skiing might appeal to those interested in the workout it can offer. Telemark equipment does not support a skier quite as well as alpine equipment, and with the heels free, a certain level of physical exertion is necessary to achieve even the lower levels of success. How about "Telemark; It's better than a 'Buns of Steel' workout!" as a physical fitness-driven catchphrase?

A Healthy Free-heel Market

This is not to say, however, that telemark skiing is only suitable for those who are physically oriented, strong, and in good condition. While this pure and elegant turn technique *can* be a workout, it also represents an ease of movement not often felt in alpine skiing. With more of one's joints in motion – and in a greater range of motion more of the time – telemark can be an alternative that's softer on the joints than alpine skiing or snowboarding.

With the options presented, it would be easy to ignore what most of us consider to be the standard telemarker, i.e., the person who never takes any lessons and always brown bags their PB & J. Don't be so sure! I'm amazed at how many of these so-called rebels are aerospace engineers, attorneys, and doctors. Although they may not spend their money on a lesson every time they come to the mountain, they could be in the market for one.

I have certainly heard the arguments against tele: "Telemark skiers don't spend money;" "Telemarking is dead;" "AT is taking over, and nobody wants to telemark." Personally, I'm not buying it. That's because I believe there are a lot of free-heel skiers out there, and some of them haven't even put on telemark skis yet.

Here are just a few tips to help sell telemark lessons at your ski area. Some of them may seem fairly obvious to free-heel instructors, but I am often surprised by how rarely areas are making any attempt to sell these kinds of lessons.

- Advertise that you offer telemark lessons – most areas don't.
- Offer tele deals early in the season when snow depth might not be ideal for alpine skiers and riders, but is plenty for the free-heel set. A telemark angle can make the mountain bigger.
- Have telemark equipment available for rent, along with your regular offering of alpine and snowboard equipment.
- Pair children's ski and snowboard lessons with a telemark lessons for their parents, so family members can all enjoy the success of learning new skills and sports.
- Offer telemark lessons to your most experienced alpine customers, letting them know telemark skiing can identify new skills – and a new perspective – that applies to their favorite on-snow sport
- Hold a special telemark event. Nothing brings out the free-healers in your region like a special date on the calendar with an opportunity to learn new skills and make new friends.

— Jim Shaw

We can ignore them if we like, or we could look for ways to bring them along and share more of the mountain experience. If we embrace telemarking, it's our guests who will be the ultimate winners. ☺

Jim Shaw is the telemark specialist on the PSIA Nordic Team. He teaches telemark and alpine ski lessons at Colorado's Winter Park Resort and is a telemark and alpine examiner for Rocky Mountain Division.

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Why Just Go Along for the Ride When You Can Be in the Driver's Seat?

BY TONY MACRI

The act of snowboarding has long been referred to as “riding,” but that doesn’t really do justice to the dynamics of the sport. If your students merely *ride* their board, they’ll have a tendency to be passive in their movements, reacting to the environment around them rather than taking charge of where they go and how they get there. Why not help them learn to *drive* their boards?

“Riding” keeps us over our boards and can be an efficient way to take on various terrain with minimal output of energy. This can work quite well at the beginner levels and is beneficial when learning in a terrain-based environment, where you can safely let your board move freely over terrain features like rollers and spines. Riding in this manner can help students learn to interact with different terrain by going with the flow; they might make their first slideslip or turn “by accident.”

This is a fun and innovative way for beginners to learn the sport. However,

once students have more experience, you may want to challenge them to jump into the driver’s seat.

“Driving” a board entails more actively and aggressively moving the body, in turn allowing us to manipulate the board to match the terrain. Driving allows riders to use the board’s performance to create more energy in an effort to go faster or higher.

To get a better sense of the differences between riding and driving, let’s take a look at the four board performance concepts of tilt, pivot, pressure, and twist – and, in



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particular, the common movements and results you may see in students and fellow snowboarders on the hill.

Tilt

Ride: We often see students lean back over their heels or forward over their toes in an effort to create tilt and to avoid catching an edge. The speed of travel determines the amount of lean your students can apply (photo 1). In this instance, your students are mainly relying on centripetal and centrifugal forces to hold them up.

Drive: In order to drive their boards, encourage your students to bend more through the ankles, knees, hips, and spine to create a more angulated position that will create tilt (photo 2). This allows them to make more subtle adjustments in the tilt of the board, changing the size and shape of their turns to have more control.



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2



PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN KING

AASI Snowboard Team member Tony Macri shows the differences between riding [photos 1 and 3] and driving [photos 2 and 4] his board during tilt and pivot movements.



PHOTO 5



PHOTO 6



PHOTO 7



PHOTO 8

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN KING

Macri demonstrates pressure and twist while both riding [photos 5 and 7] and driving his board [photos 6 and 8].

Pivot

Ride: Pivoting can happen passively as riders simply look through their turns, by turning their head and shoulders as they rotate their spine, hips, and femurs. As a result, their board will tend to skid uncontrollably. This is also known as wash out (photo 3).

Drive: To drive into the pivot, the rider progressively rotates their lower body. At more advanced levels this is done by rotating the front femur in the opposite direction of the rear femur. This creates a more centered pivot point (photo 4). This type of pivoting is great for riding trees or bumps since the turn radius of the board will be very tight.

Pressure

Ride: Here, you'll typically see more pressure applied to the tail of the snowboard as the rider gets lazy and is late in reacting to upcoming terrain. A "ride-style" of pressure also comes into play when students limit their commitment to pressure movements out of fear – perhaps of catching an edge, going too fast, or heading into uncomfortable terrain (photo 5).

Passive pressure management is useful at times, such as when you encounter unfamiliar and choppy conditions. An example is when you drop off a cliff into unknown snow conditions and, upon landing, realize it's quite bumpy. Allowing your legs to go loose and deal with the bumps until you can slow down is a great tactic.

Drive: You'll often see advanced snowboarders working either end of their boards to better use their most effective edge. This lets them create more friction through a skidded turn without over

pivoting their board. This is a useful tactic in the steeps, deep pow, or bumps.

Encourage your students to achieve this by having them flex one leg while extending the other to shift their center of mass fore or aft on the board. This drive-style pressure move can also be achieved by sliding the board fore and aft under the body and therefore sliding the hips fore and aft (photo 6).

Twist

Ride: Twisting is commonly done through interaction with terrain, such as off the back of a bump. It may even be created unintentionally, as when a bump deflects the board (photo 7). Sometimes this can catch a rider by surprise and result in a crash.

Drive: When a snowboarder is driving their board, twist is achieved by flexing and extending one leg in opposition to the other laterally across the board. This can also result from simply being more active with one leg than the other (photo 8).

By being more active, riders move their weight over that front foot and therefore manage other board performances earlier, such as pressure and tilt. Being able to manage these earlier in a turn can prevent a crash at the end of a turn.

So, Should I Drive or Ride?

Bear in mind that these examples are by no means the only situations in which these performances occur. It's also important to understand that one is not always better than the other. There are great advantages to both riding and driving. For instance, you can add more tweak to a freestyle trick by driving the board. However, you can

also make a trick look very steezy by riding simply and being lazy, like doing a slow-motion 180.

Let your students know that there are times when riding is just fine, like when they're a bit tired and want to conserve energy by comfortably cruising on a groomer, negotiating a catwalk or slow zone, or sliding down to the lift line.

That said, be on the lookout for students who ride their board too much and get too lazy or overly passive. This is a common fallback when the rider doesn't feel ready for the terrain they're on, or when they're getting bounced around or even falling. The tell-tale sign is a person with a quite tall, stiff stance on their board.

Alternatively, there are times when a rider can over-drive the board and lose control, or find that the board chatters or washes out in a turn. Over-driving is generally the result of too much movement and/or not matching the timing, intensity, and duration of the movement to the terrain.

In my opinion, the hallmark of good snowboarding is that it looks easy; whether it's done on a groomer, in the steeps, in the bumps, or in the park and pipe. And to me, that's achieved through an effective blend of riding and driving the snowboard at the appropriate time and place. **32**

AASI Snowboard Team member Tony Macri is the development coach for snowboard examiners in PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division. He owns and operates Snow Trainers Inc., a ski and snowboard instructor training camp at Copper Mountain (Colorado), Coronet Peak (New Zealand), and Niseko (Japan).

Rock This Terrain-based Learning Tactic

TEXT BY GREG FATIGATE; PHOTOS BY ROB PIROG

You've heard a lot about terrain-based learning this season and are eager to incorporate it into your lessons... but how? Since the basic goal is to help beginner students develop fundamental skills on non-intimidating terrain that helps guide their movements, how about starting with an easy task like the rock to fakie?

With roots in skateboarding, a rock to fakie can be used as a single trick or a maneuver that sets up another trick. Skaters commonly perform it at the coping of a quarterpipe or halfpipe by rolling up the ramp, placing the front wheels over the coping to stall, and then lifting the wheels back up and rolling back down the ramp fakie. On a snowboard, it's performed with a fore-aft movement by which the rider heads up a quarterpipe-like feature and shifts the nose of the board out ahead of them by shortening the rear leg while lengthening the front leg, stalling at the coping, and returning to a centered stance on the way back down.

This move can be used in intermediate and advanced zones in all-mountain jibbing, pumping in a halfpipe, or as a pressure control movement in a dynamic turn. In a beginner zone, however, it makes for a great terrain-based technique for learning pressure management.

Terrain Selection

Locate a gentle downward slope that flows into a gradual rise. Bonus points if you find a gradual rise you can rest a piece of bamboo across to represent the coping and act as a target spot. If your resort does not provide a terrain-based learning area, a waist-high pile of snow will do just fine.

Basic

Encourage your students to strap both feet in and adopt a stance in which their shoulders are in line with the board, knees are over their toes, and center of mass is between their feet. Challenge them to shift their board under their core, fore and aft. That in itself is the rock-to-fakie move, and it will be the most important part of the rock-to-fakie quarterpipe session they're about to have (photo 1).

They might be tempted to shift fore and aft rapidly, but encourage a long,

gradual shift. Ask them to try the same move looking over both their left shoulder and their right shoulder.

Simple

If you're using a feature that gradually rises in the runout, call it a quarterpipe. This will help create a more session-like atmosphere. Now have your students do a nose press or a tail press while straight gliding their approach to the quarterpipe. Try to keep their focus to one or two long exaggerated nose or tail presses.

By now they may be able to collapse or bend down the knee that is closest to the part of the board that is being pressed. As they travel up the quarterpipe, encourage them to cease the shifting and just turn their head over their back shoulder (photos 2, 3). This will allow students to relax into the fakie or switch glide back down the quarterpipe.

Complex

Here's where the piece of bamboo comes into play – the coping at the top of the quarterpipe. As your students get comfortable with their glide, ask them to aim for the coping or top of the quarterpipe. As they get closer to it, encourage them to tap it with their



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2



PHOTO 3

In photo 1, Greg Fatigate shifts his board under his core, fore and aft. In photos 2 and 3, he illustrates traveling up a quarterpipe, then relaxing into the fakie as he comes back down.

board just before they turn their head to anticipate the fakie, or switch, descent back down the quarterpipe.

Once students dial in their speed, you can challenge them to shift (or “bone-out”) their board so the tail of the board is the only thing in contact with the coping for a brief moment before returning back down the quarterpipe in a switch position (photo 4). At this point your students will be able to continue sessioning the quarterpipe, all while developing valuable fore-aft movements and even a bit of switch riding.

Freeride

As your students progress, they’ll be able to use this in so many fun ways. Almost all trails, whether a green circle or a black diamond, have a berm or transitional feature to play on. A rock to fakie is a great trick on a downed log with snow built up to it, on embankments alongside a trail, or on a wall ride in the park (photo 5).

The rock to fakie is a great little move that finds its way into many aspects of riding. A dynamic turn often



PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5

Fatigate demonstrates how the rock-to-fakie move can be executed on different kinds of terrain or park features.

benefits from loading up the tail similar to the movement in this trick. Pumping movements in a halfpipe typically call for a long, powerful aft movement to generate speed.

At all levels, the aft movement in the rock to fakie translates into the movements to perform an ollie. Just as important, the move can be introduced in an environment that creates a skate-style session that students of any age will enjoy. Not only will they walk away from

the lesson with a useful move, but they will also leave feeling like a snowboarder who just sessioned a quarterpipe with their crew. 32°

Greg Fatigate spends his winters riding the Green Mountains of northern Vermont and his summers coaching skateboarders. He is the training manager for the Snow Sport University at Smugglers’ Notch Resort and a snowboard examiner for PSIA-AASI’s Eastern Division.



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Awkward: Teaching Kids and Teens During Development

BY ERIC ROLLS

One of the most dramatic – and awkward – changes a person goes through is puberty. Chances are, you'll teach many students in your career who are going through this shift. The physical changes they're experiencing can be very evident during a short introduction at your group lineup meeting.

And what might be even more obvious in a group lesson is that some of your students are at very different stages of physical development, despite being the same age.

Medical professionals and sports scientists categorize maturing individuals as early maturers, average maturers, and late maturers. In a casual conversation, you'd likely just call them "early bloomers" or "late bloomers." These categorizations are based on when the individual experiences their Peak Height Velocity (PHV).



Maturing students experience enough awkward moments; help make their snowboard/ski lesson less traumatizing.

Yes, it's a real thing. According to Dr. Istvan Balyi, "PHV is a measure of the maximum rate of growth in stature during a growth spurt." Peak Height Velocity correlates closely with the early stages of puberty and lasts about six months, on average, during a growth spurt. A growth spurt can be as short as 18 months for fast developers and as long as five years for slow developers.

This kind of quick growth initially occurs in the legs and arms, followed by the trunk of the body. It disrupts flexibility, coordination, and the ability to execute technical movements with precision. As if all of that weren't awkward enough, girls achieve PHV on average 1.7 years earlier than boys; occurring at age 12 for females and age 14 for males. It's no wonder junior high school boys stand against the wall at dances; they're nervous about approaching the girls who tower over them.

Early Versus Late Blooming

We all can imagine some classic socially awkward situations posed by girls and boys maturing at different ages and at different rates. But, believe it or not, there are both advantages and disadvantages to being either an early maturer or a late maturer. Before your mind wanders back to your own "wonder years," let me explain.

Because late bloomers don't hit their growth spurt until an older age, they have a



DANN COFFEY

larger window of opportunity to continue improving their fine motor skills and gain agility, dynamic balance, and coordination. They spend more time developing these qualities and might therefore have more technical skill than early bloomers. Keep in mind, you can compare this within a gender or to the opposite gender. To clarify, boys or girls can be early or late bloomers within their respective gender – and you can also look at the massive growth and time gap of a late bloomer boy versus an early bloomer girl. In general, when comparing genders, females have a shorter time for skill development.

The advantage of the early bloomer is that they gain the ability to get stronger, sooner. Most times the early bloomers dominate over the late bloomers when strength and power are important. This early development also leads to an earlier opportunity to use that strength to increase speed. It's easy to see this in team sports like soccer, football, and hockey, but it's also evident in other age-organized sports.

The interesting thing is that studies show that both late bloomers and early bloomers have equal chances to develop into champions of their sport, only if the late maturer doesn't get cut or drop out due to preferences for the stronger and taller early bloomers.

Ease the Awkward

As you may remember (or if you were one of the lucky ones, you can just imagine), puberty and PHV is not only a very awkward time physically, but is also psychologically and socially difficult for

kids and teenagers. As instructors we may be tempted to make factual comments about a student's growth (or lack thereof) in relation to learning to ski or snowboard, but keep in mind they are probably aware of it and possibly very sensitive. Be careful how you address the adolescent's ever-changing composition.

By simply being aware of differing developmental stages you can be more careful not to create sensitive situations. This awareness will also help you customize your lesson to fit the individual needs of the group when you have students the same age but at different developmental stages. The accompanying chart is from a Long Term Development Plan model developed by Dr. Balyi and used by the United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA).

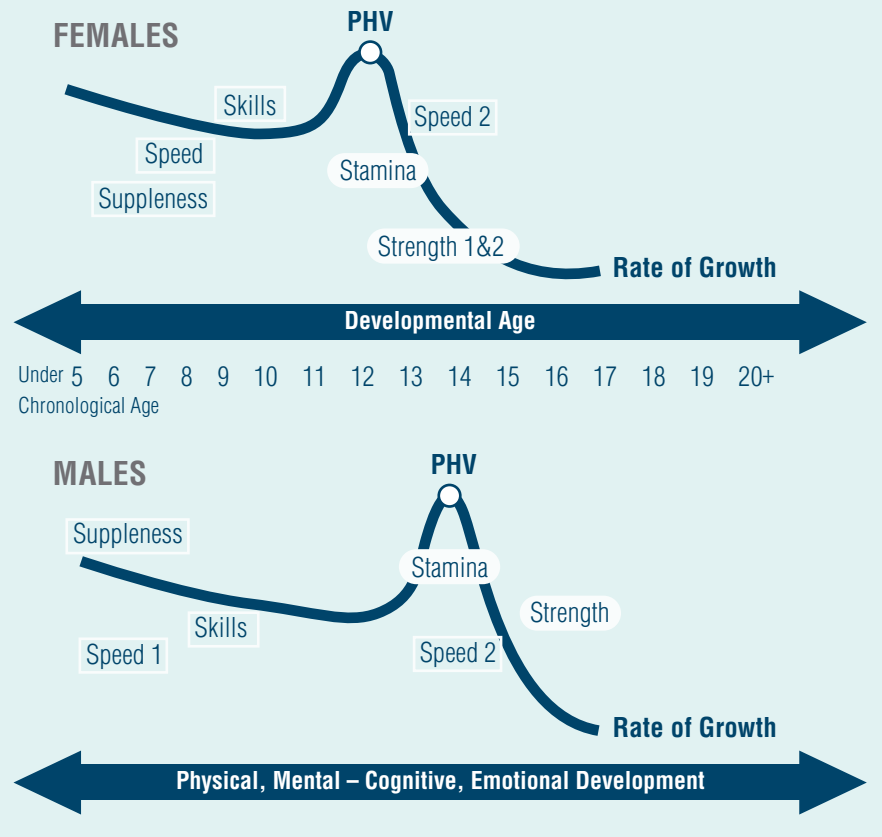
Although this chart looks at the long-term development of athletes, there are great things we can take away from it to help our students learn to ski and snowboard, and keep their development moving forward. For instance, if you have a student who is considerably taller than the others in his age group, watch his movements. Are they clumsy? Does he look "new" in his body? Whether students are at their PHV or are almost through it, there are a couple things you can do to help them develop as riders and skiers.

Teaching Techniques for Early and Late Bloomers

Challenges with coordination, balance, strength, and stamina are all things teens going through puberty might be dealing with. You can teach these students to maintain – or obtain – better balance in their new body by encouraging subtle, gross movements to align the body skeletally for balance and support. Using smaller technical movements may not be as easy for them. Moguls, tight trees, or freestyle features like big jumps and kinked handrails are not advisable, especially if they stumble while using handrails just *walking* down stairs. Use your judgment.

Stamina can be improved throughout their growth spurt and even during their PHV by encouraging them to make more turns, take longer runs, and even hike the halfpipe. All of these activities can help them increase their endurance. If they are coordinated in balance and seem comfortable in their early bloomer body,

Optimal Windows of Trainability (Balyi and Way, 2005)



This figure illustrates the windows of optimal trainability for males and females. Timing will vary, based upon the student's onset of Peak Height Velocity. The boxes represent sensitive periods subject to chronological age. The circles represent sensitive periods that are on a moving scale – related to the onset of PHV and growth.

then playing to their strength is a great approach, as strength is the next window of trainability after their rate of growth has slowed down. Explosive ollies and nollies are a fun addition to any lesson. Teaching students how to get the timing of their release of energy through their strength will be important. Show them how to turn power into an energetic rebound of the board.

Don't hold back from challenging late bloomers with more technical fine motor skills. Teach them finer ankle and foot movements to adjust pressure distribution along the edge of their board at different times in a turn. Show them how to combo multiple tricks on a box or rail, and go crazy with the ground tricks. Explore making quick agile pivots around pinecones and other obstacles; be playful and have fun with them.

You may discover through trial-and-error what students at different developmental levels are capable of. It doesn't hurt to have a subtle conversation with their parents before

the lesson to learn when the student's growth spurt happened. Was it recent? Was it a year and a half ago? Keep in mind that some kids may have multiple spurts of growth. The parents usually know because they're the ones buying new clothes for their kids every time they grow.

I hope you take some of this information and apply it to your kids lessons as needed. Celebrate awkwardness as your opportunity to help someone out during a very odd time in their life. We all went through it and some of us still might be awkward. Don't overthink it - it's having fun that counts. ☺☺

Eric Rolls is awkwardly having fun during his second term on the AASI Snowboard Team. Rolls is the ski and snowboard school training manager for Canyons Resort Park City, UT. He is a USSA-certified coach who has enjoyed many years helping awkwardly clumsy teenagers compete in snowboarding events with other awkwardly clumsy teenagers.

Do You Believe in Magic?

Put Bamboo in Your Bag of Tricks

BY STEVE KAUFMAN

Abracadabra, ala kazam! Watch carefully as I wave my magic wand over my student and unleash their supernatural powers. “You are now a skilled skier,” I proclaim with a flourish, and ta-da! My student is skiing better than ever before.

Sounds too good to be true, but it really can be that easy once you know the secret behind the trick. As instructors, we try all sorts of ways to get into our students’ heads. Sometimes, finding the best teaching approach is like trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat. That’s why we all carry our bag of tricks on the slopes, and if you don’t have one, a “magic wand” should be part of your kit.

About three years ago, I was teaching a lesson at Boyne Highlands in Michigan and noticed a fellow instructor using a

bamboo pole as a teaching prop. He skied alongside the student and held one end of the pole while his student held the other. As they skied, the instructor used the pole to guide his student down the hill.

At the end of the day I sat down with the instructor and we talked about the benefits of this magic bamboo wand. I realized this could be just the trick I had been looking for and I began using it in my lessons with great success.

I first used the bamboo-wand technique with a special needs child I was teaching.

With the magic wand I was able to control my student’s speed and turning. It also helped him develop muscle memory. Over time, he learned to control his skis when we used the magic wand. I slowly made the prop disappear and by then he skied just as well without it. The wand had worked like a charm.

The wand is also effective with students who can ski the bunny hill with no problem but lose confidence on bigger hills. Try using the bamboo wand with a student who is timid or afraid. Stand next to them and have them hold onto the wand with both hands out in front (photo 1). As you go down the hill you’ll be able to talk with your student and explain what you’re doing. Your student will be able to communicate issues they are having as they come up, instead of after the run. Talking with your student as they slide on snow helps reassure them, creates a relaxed environment, and builds their confidence.

The magic wand technique works well with all ages and all types of students. Here are a few examples of different kinds of learners and how using the bamboo wand can help them.

- **Visual learners** are able to watch exactly what you are doing and then implement it. They see where your hands are and the position of your body over your skis, as well as the way you turn your legs and point your skis. They will watch carefully how you use the magic wand and copy your actions.
- **Auditory learners** are able to learn well through listening. You are able to talk with these students and explain the turning of your feet, keeping your upper body quiet, where your weight is over your skis, and where to look. These students will respond to your



PHOTO 1

Steve Kaufman uses the magic wand technique while skiing alongside a student and giving directions.

COURTESY OF STEVE KAUFMAN



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direction as they are stabilized by the magic wand.

- **Kinesthetic learners** like to learn by carrying out a physical activity. When you are in control of your student going down the hill, the student will feel what it's like to go straight, make a turn, and how to control their speed. The magic wand is especially effective for guiding this kind of student to learn proper form and technique.

Now let's get you making your own magic on the slopes. First, explain the magic wand technique to your student and how it will help them. Take your magic wand and stand next to your student.

Extend the wand horizontally out to your side and have your student reach out and hold onto the other end. Explain that they should never pull back on the bamboo – only push it away – otherwise the “magic”

will disappear. If they pull back on the wand, their body will be too far back on their skis (photo 1). Have the student copy every move you make.

Now, with your student next to you, start to ski down the hill. As you ski, talk about every move you make with your student. When you begin a turn, explain how you turn your feet, and how both feet turn together. Point out that, by turning, you are controlling your speed. Repeat this process a number of times until the student is comfortable.

Each time you go down the hill with the student, you will find you are holding the magic wand less and less until the student is the only one holding it. Once you see the sense of accomplishment on your student's face, you will begin to believe in magic yourself. ☺

Steve Kaufman has been enjoying the sport of skiing since 1972. He is a Level II alpine instructor and has Children's Specialist 2 credentials. Kaufman currently teaches at Boyne Highlands and Alpine Valley in Michigan.



COURTESY OF STEVE KAUFMAN

**MAG·IC NOUN \ 'MA-JIK **

- 1 a:** the use of means (as charms or spells) believed to have supernatural power over natural forces
- b:** magic rites or incantations
- 2 a:** an extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural source
- b:** something that seems to cast a spell: ENCHANTMENT
- 3:** the art of producing illusions by sleight of hand

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ANN GALVIN

Most likely to photo bomb



ANDY DOCKEN

Most likely to carpool to National Academy



KEVIN ASHLEY

Most likely to have you sign his skis

Use Goal Setting to Teach Achievement Behavior in Young Athletes

By Dave Lyon



DANN COFFEY

With this season's amazing alpine ski racing performances so fresh in everyone's minds, a lot of young ski racers – and their parents – will be dreaming of podium finishes. Dreaming can be a powerful motivator, but with it must come the process of goal setting that is so fundamental to the development of any young athlete.

The theory behind effective goal setting is that it teaches athletes specific, measurable, achievable tangibles by which they can thrive. Goal setting helps athletes work toward their own objectives, which makes it a personal process and extremely individual. As a coach, you can teach achievement behavior to young racers – and it all starts with close examination of what they want to accomplish.

Honest Assessment

Athletes must be mature enough to be honest with themselves and others, and be able to look at themselves realistically, before formal goal setting will be effective. In my experience, children have the necessary developmental capacities by about age 13. Before then, in order to be successful when they have matured, the foundational skill of “focusing on what you can control” must be taught. Put simply, the only two things any athlete can control is their attitude and their effort. This concept must be understood by younger students in order for more mature goal setting to be useful.

It's important to teach kids to focus on what they can control – attitude and effort have naturally occurring positive by-products, as well as naturally-occurring consequences, i.e., poor performance. Athletes know when they let themselves down. As their coach, your job is to help them set a course for correction by

redirecting goals as needed and keeping the focus on the individual athletes' wants and desires.

Developmental Considerations

Formal goal setting should be taught in stages and incorporated with sensitivity to the developmental maturity of each athlete. Individualized goal meetings,

which should be conducted prior to each season, are often a time of stress and internal conflict for young athletes. Goal-setting sessions can be difficult because they're held just as a young adult begins to face the prospect of who they are and who they wish to be – and at a time when they are just beginning to develop an autonomous sense of self.

Prior to these meetings you'll want to work to provide a safe environment built on a foundation of trust and respect. The athlete will then be able to share personal thoughts and take chances when planning his or her goals.

Fluidity On And Off The Snow

The structure of the actual meeting and process must be fluid. Again, you are dealing with individuals who have



DAVE LYON

By focusing on the elements of performance they can control, junior racers – such as Spencer Barclay, pictured here – help set themselves up for success.

different goals, skills, levels of maturity, and priorities. In general, when working with young athletes in their first goal-setting meeting I do a lot of directing and very little presenting – except to ask questions that focus their attention on actions and steps they can control and that serve as measures of their success.

Most often the meetings seem to follow one of two paths. In one, the young athletes will be too general and dreamy; with a focus just on the outcome. These athletes envision themselves “levitating” to the top of the podium to receive their gold medal, but have no idea how to take the attainable steps to achieve that goal. For these athletes, you need to build the steps to the podium and show them how to climb the stairs based on tasks for which success is solely tied to their attitude and effort. Tasks such as eating well, maintaining their equipment, and following their off-season workout plan are fully within the athlete’s control.

Down the other path, some young athletes are too specific. Overly focused on the steps of the process, they often miss

the bigger picture. These athletes climb a perpetual staircase where all they can see is the next step, losing site of the destination that inspired the journey. They’ll benefit from an approach in which you help them demolish the steps that represent things that are outside of their control, such as the performance of the other competitors, the course set, or their finish result.

My intent in goal-setting meetings is to teach achievement behavior; for the athlete to learn the process of drawing connections between attitude/effort and outcomes. As they mature and become more comfortable with the process, they begin to work backward from dream to goal, from goal to actions to be taken, and from the specific actions they control to outcomes. This is the point where they begin to see that goals – and therefore dreams – are achievable. ☑

Dave Lyon is a four-term member of the PSIA Alpine Team. He is the owner and director of Lyon Ski School as well as head coach and program director at Stevens Pass Alpine Club in Washington State.



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PSIA Alpine Team member Dave Lyon talks shop with USSA’s Ron Kipp at PSIA-AASI’s Fall Workshop 2013.

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'Total Skiing' Is Your Total Resource

By Victor Gerdin

Total Skiing is an appropriate name for this book by Chris Fellows – it truly is a complete instructional resource for anyone wishing to be a better skier. Fellows has devoted his life to helping skiers improve their skills and get the most enjoyment out of their time on snow.

Fellows has been a PSIA-AASI certified instructor for more than 30 years, was on PSIA's Alpine Team for eight years, and founded the North American Ski Training Center (NASTC) through which he has taught and guided skiers all over the world.

The motivation for creating *Total Skiing* stems from Fellows' very personal realization that becoming a better skier is not always a matter of executing proper technique. Over the years he has personally witnessed many skiers trying to perfect the technical movements required of the sport, with hope that if they just fix some obvious "pilot error," they will advance to the next level of performance. This book clearly outlines a program to let the reader determine whether or not there are other significant performance issues that are limiting improvement.

The Fundamentals

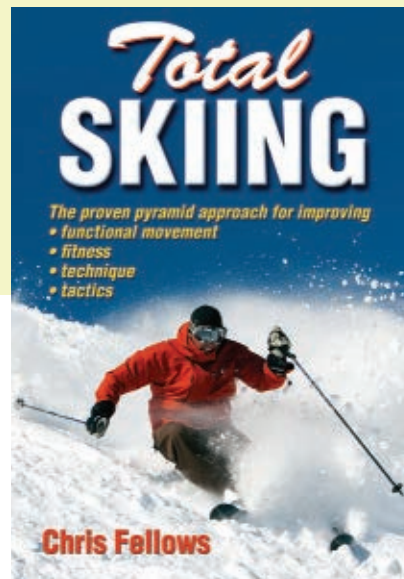
The core premise of the book is based on analyzing a person's skiing performance by assessing the ability to perform several basic "Fundamental Movements." Most skiers will admit to feeling stronger on one turn than the other, but won't always recognize this is caused by being physically asymmetrical – that maybe the left side of the body doesn't move the same way as the right side. The Fundamental Movement Assessment helps the reader establish a basis centered on the concepts of stability and mobility, and provides a score for their individual personal

performance. This ultimately helps the reader understand that moving forward, maintaining symmetry and essentially achieving the elusive concept of dynamic balance shouldn't be as difficult as it seems.

Once a Fundamental Movement Assessment is established, and some basic movement deficiencies are identified, the author offers insight into specific aspects of a person's skiing performance these deficiencies may affect. More importantly, Fellows provides very detailed exercise programs, addressing individual needs to improve physical performance aspects that are out of balance. This concept is very beneficial because it intends to address the root cause that keeps someone from becoming the best skier they can be, rather than superficially addressing a "symptom" with quick fix tips that may not be relevant in addressing the root cause of the deficiency.

Total Skiing clearly outlines a program to let the reader determine whether or not there are other significant performance issues that are limiting improvement.

Fellows analyzes balanced personal fitness, technical skill acquisition, appropriate equipment choices, and the thrill of tactical execution – all of which blend together for the total skiing exp-



erience. This concept is organized in an easy to understand graphic he calls the "Performance Pyramid," with correct functional movements as a base, accurate technique in the middle, and well-executed tactics at the top. Fellows structures the entire book around the Performance Pyramid concept to help readers explore the cause and effect of their performance characteristic in an effort to help them determine the root cause of their performance deficiencies.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is a realistic resource for instructors wishing to improve their overall understanding of the cause and effect aspects of their students' performance. But it also provides dozens of specific on-snow exercises and drills, with an excellent collection of photographs to illustrate each one, to develop the movement patterns

necessary for effective skiing. Fellows then continues by offering strategies to apply and modify these movement patterns for appropriate execution for a variety of tactical considerations.

Total Skiing would also be an effective self-help guide for the individual skier wishing to solve the cause and effect puzzle on their own. The chapters can be mixed and matched as a well-organized reference resource for everything from customizing an individual pre-season exercise routine, to finding the perfect set of on-snow skill development exercises, to blending all of it to negotiate and rip through the terrain and/or snow conditions that challenge skiers most.

Readers are sure to discover that *Total Skiing*, with its overreaching Performance Pyramid premise, does not have to be read from front to back. Instead it is

structured in a way that offers the reader a complete training resource that will be useful throughout the enjoyable journey of becoming a better skier. It has been said about skiing that, the better you get, the more fun it is; *Total Skiing* is the perfect resource to improve as a skier and ultimately maximize the thrill that skiing can offer. **32°**

Victor Gerdin is a former three-term member of the PSIA Alpine Team, and currently works as an instructor and trainer for the Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen. He is just as passionate about teaching now, as when he was first PSIA certified in 1968.



MORE ALPINE ANSWERS...

For additional insight from Chris Fellows on how to take your skiing to the next level, read his *Tactics for All-Mountain Skiing* – available through the online PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog* at TheSnowPros.org. And while you're there, check out these other must-haves for alpine instructors:

- *Core Concepts for Snowsports Instructors*
- *Adult Alpine Teaching Handbook*
- *Children's Alpine Teaching Handbook*
- *Children's Instruction Manual*



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Through the Lens

Katie Cassidy is cruising hard on the corduroy at her home resort, Ohio's Boston Mills/Brandywine. No wonder she's looking so carefree and confident, she got her Level II alpine certification just a couple days before. Cruise on, Katie!



REFLECTIONS ON A STELLAR SEASON

Oh, spring – you're so bittersweet. In many parts of the country the snow is still falling and the sun is out in full force, making for some unbeatable bluebird spring skiing and riding days. But those same warm days on the hill usually mean one thing – the season is coming to an end. Just because the lifts may stop, doesn't mean you have to stop spreading the stoke of your beloved sport. We'd love to see your photos and hear stories about what went down in your 2013-14 season, so send them our way. You might get *32 Degrees* famous! Send submissions to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org, and please include "Last Chair" in the subject line.

LESSONS LEARNED



Two years ago a mother brought her two sons to me for an all-day private lesson. She pointed to the 12-year-old and said he was the brave one and the 14-year-old was the timid one. I bit my tongue and didn't say what I thought of her "labeling" her boys, and we went off to ski.

It turned out that the "brave" one was merely a "feeler" type of learner and explanations bored him. The other was a cognitive learner to the extreme, and he was very hesitant to try anything until he fully understood it – he thought like an engineer.

Late in the day, the mother saw us come down the hill to the base area and was shocked to see that her "timid" son was by far the better skier. I explained to her how her son learned. She was momentarily confused, and I could see in her face that she was having to form a whole new and positive picture of him. That's when I realized that we're not just sports teachers, we're sometimes psychotherapists!

William "Wink" Davis

Alpine III, Telemark II; Beaver Creek Ski and Ride School, CO



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