MAKING CONNECTIONS
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THE JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTION | SPRING 2010

32 DEGREES

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Perfecting the Blend

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- PASCAL PALLATIN. PRODUCT DEVELOPER. SALOMON ALPINE SKIS.

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32 Degrees

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SNOWSPORTS *360*

Cover Shot:
PSIA Alpine Team member Mike Hafer schools the chop at Squaw Valley.
Photo by Scott Sady.

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DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

32 Degrees

The Journal of Professional Snowsports Instruction

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President's Message

Are You an *Active* Member?

By Ray Allard
PSIA-AASI President and Chairman of the Board

Do you consider yourself an active member of PSIA-AASI? Most of our members would probably think of themselves that way. Associations generally apply the "active" designation to those members who are current in their dues. It seems to me that one also needs to be actively engaged in what we do, which is getting people excited about skiing and snowboarding.

Additionally, all of our divisional organizations require that most members attend a certain number of educational clinic hours or days within a specified time frame. That increases the activity level in several ways, involving contact with the organization's office and field staff, and providing opportunities to meet and interact with other members while acquiring new information and/or skills. Networking, idea sharing, and social interaction result from this activity, which is beneficial to both the members and the association. I believe, however, that it takes more than just meeting the minimum requirements to be a truly active member.

Attending events in order to maintain a particular status (e.g., certification) helps support the organization's role of setting and maintaining certain industry-recognized standards which, in turn, makes our members a more valuable asset to their current or prospective employers. Attending more than just the minimum, as thousands of our active members do, moves one from a maintenance mode to one of growth. Those who are pursuing a higher level of certification or recognition tend to be even more active, as they usually put a substantial amount of time into preparation and study.

Active members make good use of the services and benefits that are available to them: dozens of educational materials and publications (both online and offline), web services and forums, pro discounts, affinity programs, marketing/PR, and a great deal more. Connected members know a bit about how their association is set up (i.e., its national and divisional structure with regard to boards, office staff, and committees), as well as the organization's history and purpose. More active members then get involved in volunteer positions with projects, committees, and boards—locally, divisionally, and nationally. Really active members might want to work for the organization, as an education staff member or on the administration side.

Active members care about their organization; they are advocates and proactive supporters who believe in its mission and want it to succeed. These members don't think of the Association as "They," but rather, "We." Really active members go beyond our small niche, and become involved in the broader industry, by joining sister organizations and/or attending their programs, or utilizing their educational materials and publications. These might include the United States Ski and Snowboard Association, the National Ski Areas Association, SnowSports Industries America, and others.

Active members provide feedback and ideas. They write articles for national, divisional, or local publications. They mentor colleagues. They don't confine themselves to just one discipline, or one type of customer, but delight in participation throughout the whole spectrum of our offerings. Many of our members are donors to their division's education foundations.

Active members usually find that they receive far more than they give, in terms of knowledge, relationships, status, and satisfaction. Don't you always *learn* from teaching?

It's understandable that many members simply don't have the time or opportunity to be more active than they already are, and everyone's priorities are different. But if everyone who shares the passion and has the inclination to become more active does so, our association can become a more vibrant, attractive, and relevant entity . . . a benefit to everyone with whom we interact, as well as ourselves.

***

On a more personal note, when I became PSIA-AASI president in June 2006, I announced that I would seek to serve only two terms (four years), although our bylaws allow one to hold this position for up to three terms. The national board of directors is comprised of many individuals who are qualified to serve at this level, and a periodic change of leadership helps keep us fresh and responsive to the ever-evolving needs of our membership. We have seen major changes in the past four years, and taken on some very large projects. I believe we will realize long-term benefits from what has been accomplished.

In June, after my term is up, I will continue to serve for one term as immediate past president, a position that exists to provide continuity and perspective as we move forward. I am honored to have served as president and chairman of the board, and thank everyone for the opportunity, as well as the support I've received throughout my tenure. It has been a major highlight in what has been a long and varied career within the snowsports industry. I assure you that I'm not planning on "retiring" (or becoming less active) from snowsports, and will still be found employed at my local area, working within my division, and involved with several projects both large and small. See you on the slopes! 32°

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STUDENTS MAY SEEM IN CONTROL OF THE CARVED SKI ON THE BEGINNER HILL, BUT WHEN THEY LEAVE THE LESSON AND END UP ON THE GREEN TRAILS WITH THEIR FRIENDS, THEY FIND THAT THEY DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS TO CONTROL THE CARVED SKI.

Letters

On the Ball (of the Foot)

Here are just a few comments to add to the article "Turn Initiation 101: Start with the Ball of the Foot" (spring 2009) by Patrick Hunter. Modern shaped skis certainly make it a lot easier to carve turns; however, I believe that with novice skiers (Levels 1–4), we still need to spend a fair amount of time concentrating on balancing and rotary movements.

Even though it's nice to explore some edging movements with our students, I don't believe we should put a primary focus on applying pressure to the ball of the foot to initiate the turn. Over the years since shaped skis arrived, I've seen far too many instructors work on instant results by having their students initiate the turn with a pressure and edge movement rather than teaching a well-balanced position from which to steer the skis with movements of the legs and feet. When the skier initiates the turn with a steering movement that promotes a controlled, skidded turn, the edges will blend with the turn shape and slope of the hill without forcing a pressure movement to the ski.

Students may seem in control of the carved ski on the beginner hill, but when they leave the lesson and end up on the green trails with their friends, they find that they don't have the skills to control the carved ski. The resulting acceleration and speed can be too much for them to handle.

I'd like to also point out that for our intermediate and advanced students, I believe the best movement pattern entails tipping both boots simultaneously while moving the center of mass to the forward and inside of the new turn. A skier who is pressing the ball of the foot of the new outside ski may very easily over-flex the outside ankle and knee, and over-rotate the hip at the beginning of the turn. It is much easier to control the pressure transfer at the beginning of each turn by taking weight off of the new inside ski, rather than applying weight to the new outside ski.

— Larry Dean
Vail, CO

Author Patrick Hunter responds: Thoughtful and well-reasoned observations, Larry. You think it's too much edge too soon, and that the forward weighted stance is a mistake. That was exactly the situation in American ski teaching some 20 years ago when I got started on this kick. At that time, most ski schools were producing poor skiers who stuck to groomed runs only, sat back, and skidded (albeit they were on straight skis that were far too long.) These skiers never reached the "dynamic parallel level," and never would.

I began to experiment with putting my clients on "very short" skis. I even started my never-ever privates on snow blades. In a way, it was a return to the Graduated Length Method (GLM). Other schools around the world, I came to find out, were still doing something like this. But the difference from GLM was the idea of adding some edge . . . SOME edge.

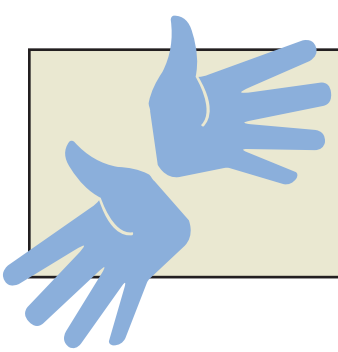
Then the shaped skis arrived. Eureka! The students' learning curves shot up. Soon, these people were not just making turns on the groomed but happily tackling bumps, powder, and steeps.

Importantly, to avoid some of the very real problems that you point out, the teacher must maintain a balance. When our school started putting beginners on the 120-centimeter shaped skis, they had problems with students "railing out." Students were getting too much edge for the sidecut on the little skis. More sideslipping was needed early on. Personally, I began to teach the hockey stop to many students on the first day, right after sideslipping.

But fundamental to all of this work was a more forward stance. I had learned from racing that the amount of forward leverage that could be used was orders of magnitude beyond what I was used to. (Bode Miller was jerking the heelpieces out of his skis!) The most common fault with students is backweighting and rear leverage, concepts that are, of course, instinctive. Honestly, I have yet to see a student who puts his or her weight too far forward.

What I try to keep in mind with the various exercises and drills, including the ones in my article, is they really only serve to nudge the students in a certain direction. That's where the real "steering" takes place.

What do you think? For a link to this featured letter on the Member Forum, log on to www.TheSnowPros.org and look for "Web Extras" in the *32 Degrees* section.



Reach Out in 'Your Space'!

32 Degrees welcomes your views! Feel free to write a letter to the editor, opine on a topic near and dear to your heart, or submit an essay on "What PSIA-AASI Has Done for Me." Submissions to the "Your Space" department may be sent by fax (in care of *32 Degrees*) to 303-987-9489, by e-mail to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org, or by conventional mail to *32 Degrees*, 133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200, Lakewood, Colorado, 80228-1700. Please include your full name, address, and daytime telephone number.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Don't Discount Us Seniors!

By Norm Lavery

Years of experience make senior instructors an invaluable resource for the snowsports industry. Sure, our agility, balance, eyesight, and stamina may not be what they once were, and we won't often be found in the steep and deep scenes that grace the magazine covers, but we still appreciate the joy of blending gravity, snow conditions, weather, equipment, physical condition, and emotions. And our desire to share this joy with others is paramount.

With our breadth of accumulated technical knowledge and life skills, senior instructors can be a valuable clinical resource for training newer instructors. Snowsports school directors who don't already seize upon this opportunity might want to give it a try. Let us teach the "greener" recruits how to use equipment efficiently and effectively. After all, we've seen lots of equipment innovations come down the pike, and we're very adept at adapting technique and tactics to make the most of current designs. All skiers want to have more fun with less work, and many of them will welcome tips that help make the most of today's gear.

In addition, we can help coach younger instructors on how to succeed when working with the more challenging students and when using different teaching styles. Need someone to show inexperienced peers how to shorten lengthy verbal instructions to 10 key words, how to use active listening skills and positive body language, and how to realize the opportunities and responsibilities of being in the service business? We can do that. Advice often takes on greater significance when it's supplemented by real-world anecdotal evidence; why not let us impart some of the lessons we learned "the hard way" to keep our colleagues from having to learn the lessons anew?

As longtime snowsports enthusiasts, senior instructors are well positioned to inspire others with our passion for the sport. And research shows that participants need to be bitten by the snowsports bug early if they're to return later. According to a May 2009 presentation by National Ski Areas Association President Michael Berry, close to 85 percent of those who take an introductory lesson never ski or ride again.

Lessons for "first timers," child or adult, are often given to inexperienced instructors so that the veterans can ski or ride with more advanced clients. As teachers, one of our responsibilities is to excite first-time skiers and riders. Ideally, they'll sign up for a lesson or series of lessons—or entice their friends and family members to strap on skis or a snowboard. Experienced and enthusiastic senior instructors have a vital role to play in turning beginning skiers and riders of all ages into core participants, i.e., those who ski or ride frequently each season.

In addition, senior instructors make outstanding resort emissaries. Most of us love to visit with guests, hand out trail maps, offer area information, share a technical tip or two, or perhaps just share the view. We're very good at developing friends for the area! And having senior instructors in their professional uniforms wear "HOST" armbands on the hill when the lesson load is low might be another effective way to let guests know how much we care about them.

Finally, many senior instructors with extended tenure at one resort know area management personnel well, and appreciate the complexities

Marion Lavery

Senior instructors (such as the author, pictured here with his granddaughters) play a vital role in turning beginners into core participants.

join the team

chamonix, france / photo: brian robb

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SENIOR INSTRUCTORS ARE WELL POISED TO INSPIRE OTHERS WITH OUR PASSION FOR THE SPORT.

and challenges of running the business. This understanding can be used to optimize the contribution of the education function and, by so doing, garner area management support; everyone benefits.

Senior instructors are not the only seniors in love with the mountain environment. Individuals in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s (many of whom are fortunate to have discretionary income and considerable leisure time) comprise an increasingly important demographic for the snowsports industry.

Senior instructors who are able to empathize with senior clients can be an invaluable asset—in guiding them toward understanding their capabilities and limitations, setting realistic goals, and enjoying snowsports from a new perspective. Encourage your area to develop a senior educational program, and use senior instructors within that program. For more information on senior-specific education, please see the "Get With the Program" article on page 30.

A number of years ago, as the director of Montana Snowbowl's Ski School, I designed a program called "Prime Time" for skiers over 50. At a relaxed pace, we skied varied terrain, explored secret places, learned how to use our equipment effectively by skiing slowly as well as fast, and finished our time together with good conversation and a beverage.

My video of one group of seniors skiing bumps for the first time is replete with laughter, words of astonishment, gleeful giggles . . . joy. Elation is a feeling that all instructors try to provide for their clients, but it's perhaps a special gift that is more easily shared between senior instructors and senior clients.

One of my favorite types of client is the intermediate adult skier who has never taken a lesson, who is certain that hips, shoulders, and ski poles cause the skis to turn, and who likes to ski fast because "if I don't, I seem to end up someplace else" (which is usually not good). Patiently spending quality time with these clients, imparting a few considerate messages, and skiing with them long enough to lock in their breakthrough tools/movements/feelings will often yield smiles, a thank you, perhaps another lesson, and a lifelong core skier.

As members of our area's business team, we share the responsibility for engendering in each of our clients the enjoyment of the mountain environment that has kept us engaged for so long. The rewards I now receive from teaching skiing come from the sparkle I see in people's eyes when I have helped them learn to slide down snowy slopes safely and in control, and have afforded them an opportunity to experience their own "aha" moments. As a senior instructor, I look forward to collecting many more of these rewards in the years to come.

For those of us who have been teaching for many years, our role in area operations may have changed as we've become seniors, but the value of our wisdom should not be discounted. After all, 40 years of teaching—and 60 years or more of living—adds up to a pretty hefty sum of knowledge. 32°

A PSIA member since 1967, Norm Lavery has served as president of Northern Rocky Mountain Division and chair of its Ski School Management Committee. Lavery managed Montana Snowbowl's snowsports education program for five seasons, and is the co-author of The A-B-Cs of Ski School Management. *He is currently a professional mediator and group process facilitator in Missoula, Montana.*

What PSIA-AASI Has Done for Me

Walt Lattrell

I got my certification in March 1973, before I graduated from law school. At the time, I thought that was my ski career highlight. Little did I know that it was only the beginning of things. Instead, in addition to teaching skiing at a great Eastern mountain (Smugglers' Notch) for the past 35 years, I got involved with the Eastern Division of PSIA as a committee member, board member, national board representative, and education staff member.

Skiing is all about experience, and I have found over the years that being involved with PSIA has made that skiing experience even more valuable than skiing itself. The places I've been, the challenges I've worked on, and particularly the people I've worked with have made for a great trip so far. There is still nothing better than taking some students out and watching them experience something they didn't think they would ever do, but right behind that is sharing a great day of skiing with other instructors who share your passion. And right behind that is working with fellow instructors to build a professional organization dedicated to the needs of its members.

Sherm White
Training Manager and
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Road Trip Worth Taking

Okay, so it's not really a road trip, but that doesn't mean you can't load up your gear and head for St. Anton, Austria, in 2011. Join the PSIA-AASI Teams at a members-only pre-event for four days of skiing and riding, after which you'll join the international community for the Interski Congress, the world's largest snowsports education symposium. You'll have an opportunity to network and share ideas with instructors from 36 snowsports nations, while enjoying the spectacular Tyrolean landscape and a culture that's inextricably linked to winter sports. More details available soon at www.TheSnowPros.org.

SO, WHAT IS INTERSKI, ANYWAY?

We're glad you asked! Basically, it's an international snowsports education conference organized by the International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA), which is sort of like PSIA-AASI, but for the whole world. Since 1951, up to 36 member countries have convened every four years to share ideas and experiences. In 1968, PSIA hosted the congress in Aspen, Colorado. Seven years later at the 1975 Interski, we introduced the Skills Concept to the rest of the world, and in 1979 we shared the American Teaching Method (ATM). Other countries have shared their teaching models as well, making this event the world's premier snowsports education exchange. This year, the symposium of international instructors plans to address the following themes:

- Snowsports and educational aspects and developments
- Snowsports for all ages
- Snowsports and emotion
- Snowsports social environments and integrations

Your PSIA-AASI Teams began preparations for their Interski 2011 presentations in 2009. They'll travel to St. Anton next year, along with member guests (you're invited—this event is open to all members!), to participate in this professional education conference and celebrate a global love for snowsports!

What We're Talking About Online

More like what *aren't* we talking about online? All the latest association and industry news is available to you 24/7 through our virtual communities; it's the easiest way to stay in the know. Check out Member Announcements and Insider News at www.TheSnowPros.org, or join fellow instructors in social networks like Facebook and Twitter. Exclusive online info is just a click away!

I LOVE MY. . .

. . . man cave (garage) where a barrage of projects (Virago 920, cat tree, old skis and snowboards, tuning bench, etc.) lie in wait, halfway done, and completed.
— Tom Elsass, Hoodoo Ski and Ride School Snowboard Coach/Instructor, Level II

. . . Harley-Davidson Softail Deluxe (for that other season—without snow).
— Kathy Lockwood, Cannon Mountain Snowboard Instructor, Level II

. . . Leki Trigger strap!
— David Hansen, Summit Learning Center, Alpental Alpine Instructor, Level III

. . . homemade peppermint truffles.
— Nancy Witte-Dycus, Sunburst Alpine Instructor, Level I

(Editor's note: Our address is 133 S. Van Gordon Street, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80228. And we love, love, love peppermint truffles, and all other sugar-infused edibles, for that matter.)

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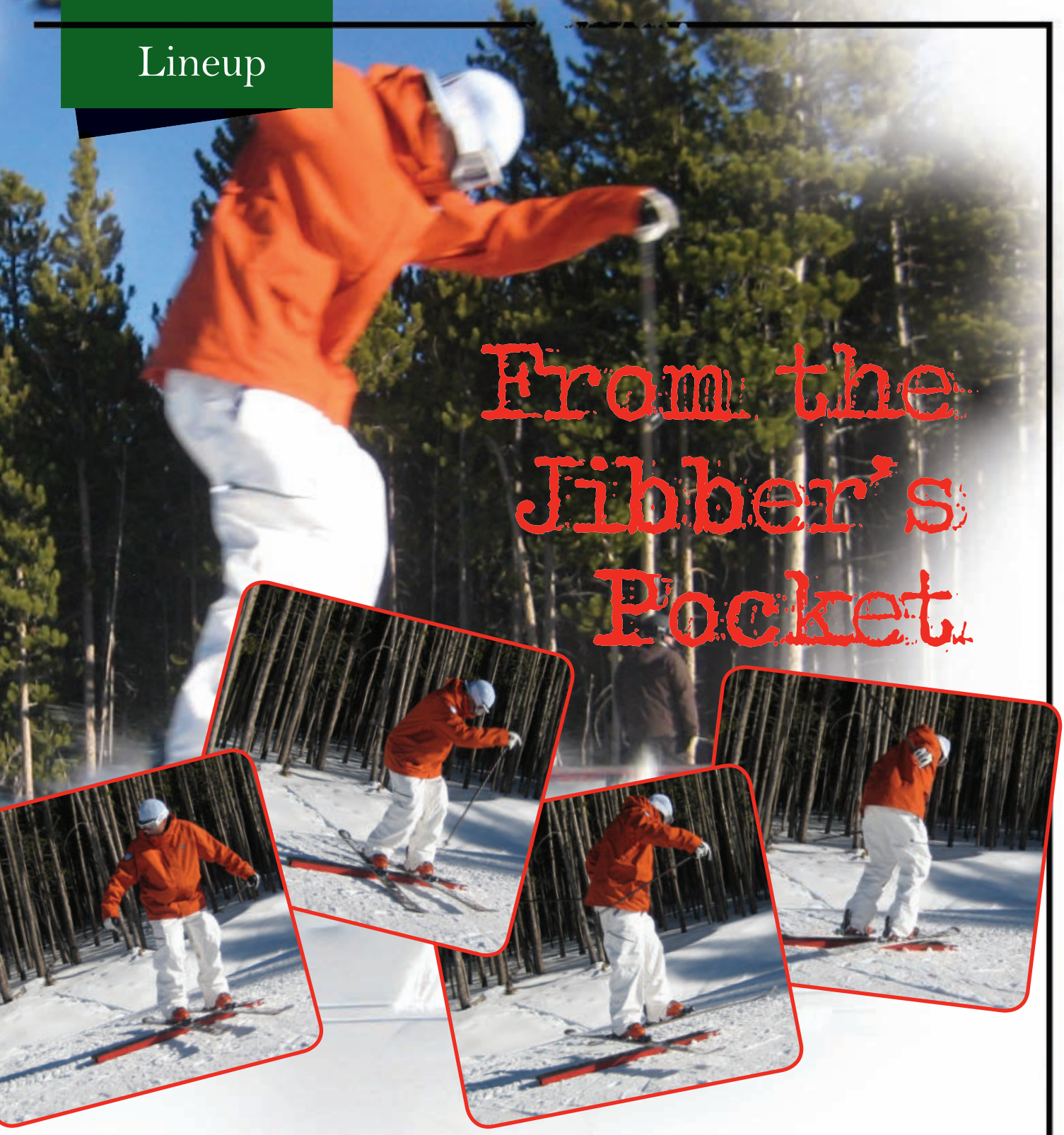
From the Jibber's Pocket



Welcome back to the inventively freestyle section of *32 Degrees*, where PSIA-AASI Team members answer common freestyle questions that aren't typically covered in divisional or national clinics.

This question is from Jeremy Mirfield in Aspen, Colorado: "Hey Jibbers, is there a better way to practice a 'change-up' on a rail, besides just trying it?"

Jeremy, there's always a better way to practice than just simply trying the trick. If you're playing with the idea of a change-up, then we can assume that you know how to slide a box in both directions (with your right foot forward and with your left foot forward). Because a change-up is just that, a directional change on a rail.

There are two kinds of change-ups, frontside and backside. For this question in particular, we'll ultimately end up at the backside change-up, but the steps to get there are the same for all change-ups.

This calls for a "stompy," which is a very low to the ground rail; you can also use bamboo or a fence post, anything that provides a point of reference. Standing in boots only, try a somewhat static change-up, remembering that

the maneuver is just a 180 on the rail. (Boots-only on the rail is the easiest way to start learning change-ups.) Play with this for a while, with poles or without. The ultimate goal is to progress to sliding a box and changing-up in motion under "real" conditions.

Next, make things interesting. Put your skis on and try it. Remember, at this stage you're not sliding the rail, simply standing on it and working the 180 change-up. Since you're stationary, you can pull the A (approach) out of the ATML and just think about the TML (takeoff, maneuver, and landing).

A change-up is essentially a 180 maneuver, so treat it as such with a strong core, equal weight on both feet, and spin initiation from the core. Simultaneously pop and spin, and then land softly, trying to absorb the forces through the legs and spine (see the photo sequence). Practice until it comes easy, then move on the next step.

At this point, you're still on the "stompy" and know how to do a stationary change-up. So next, put the approach into it. Since this is a short rail and very low to the ground, how much speed do you think you'll need? Not much; just a little speed will do nicely. Once you feel as if you can land the change-up every time without bobbles, it's time to take it to the box.

A wide, flat box will set you up for success. Take it in stages of speed. First, get just enough speed to make it onto the box. Then put all the "stompy" homework into play. Remember, speed means greater forces, so start slow and work your way toward the faster movement.

Hope this helps, Jeremy. Stay safe and keep jibbing!

—The Jibbers

PSIA Alpine Team Member

Pro File: Eric Lipton

Ian Lipton

Give us a brief rundown of your skiing career . . . from the beginning.

My dad, who got PSIA certified in 1969 (40-year pin this year; he's super proud!), taught me to ski at Hunter Mountain, New York, when I was two years old. Before that, he skied with me in his backpack. I grew up skiing mostly Blue Mountain, Pennsylvania, because it was close to home and my uncle coached junior racing there.

I didn't race as a kid; I just enjoyed skiing with friends. We built jumps (then ski patrol knocked them down), and just enjoyed skiing around the mountain. I used to score free lift tickets by bringing the lady at the ticket window a box of chocolates every Saturday. In high school, I taught at Blue Mountain. Then I went to Penn State, where I ski raced and taught at Tussey Mountain. After college, I moved to Beaver Creek, Colorado, to teach full time.

Now you're a member of the PSIA Alpine Team. What's that experience been like for you?

Best job I've ever had! I love the travel; I've skied in places and met people that I never thought I would. This country is full of fun-loving, dedicated ski pros who love what they do, and I'm trying to meet and ski with every one of them.

You split up your winters between Pennsylvania and Colorado, but where else does skiing take you?

I spend a lot of the winter traveling on the East Coast, working with ski schools and the Eastern Division. I spend some time in Chile during our summer, and some summers I'll coach for a few weeks at Mt. Hood. I recently took a trip to Saas Fee, Switzerland, to give a Level I exam to a group of British ski instructors who wanted their PSIA Cert.

Enough about skiing—most people probably don't know that when you're off-snow, you wear a suit and tie most of the time. Tell us about your alter ego.

My family's had a furniture business in eastern Pennsylvania for 85 years. I'm the fourth generation to run it. We're a relatively small operation, but we've got 26 employees, two stores, a warehouse/distribution center, a wood shop, and delivery trucks.

Did you always know you would go into the family business?

When I was a kid I must have mentioned I'd like to do it. Well, my parents never let me forget I said that.

What are the challenges of balancing your two careers?

Furniture stores definitely don't run themselves; I work every day. During the winter when I'm traveling, I find time to jump on my laptop and monitor what's going on back at the stores.

Are other family members involved, or does the family's business legacy rest entirely on your shoulders?

My father is still involved. He's 65 but has the energy of a 30-year-old. We work really well together, thankfully.

What types and styles of furniture do you sell?

We sell residential furniture for every room in the house to a customer base that's primarily middle income. We used to call ourselves "the Bloomingdale's of the hard-hat market" because we offer good design at an affordable price.

After a long day of skiing, do you prefer to stretch out on a couch or cozy up in a chair?

Bar stool.

Not to imply that you're lazing around on furniture all day: you also coordinate and compete in your family's race, the Sol Lipton Run Fest. Tell us more about that.

Every year, we host three foot races the Sunday after Labor Day: a half marathon, 5K, and 2.5K fun run. This annual event raises money for the Sol Lipton Scholarship Foundation, which we use to award college scholarships to high school students in our area.

Aside from running, how do you spend your time off the snow?

During the winter, there's not much free time; I'm either on the hill or in the store. I tune skis late at night after work. In the summer, I mountain bike as much as I can, but I can also get in a great workout by spending a few mornings a week in the warehouse or on the delivery trucks. Carrying dressers or reclining sofas through people's homes is good exercise.

Any furniture facts that would be relevant to instructors?

Lots of the materials we use to finish and repair furniture are just like what we use to fix skis, only harder. The polymers, paraffins, and plastics are very similar to P-Tex and wax. If the furniture business gets slow, we could open a ski repair shop and not miss a beat.

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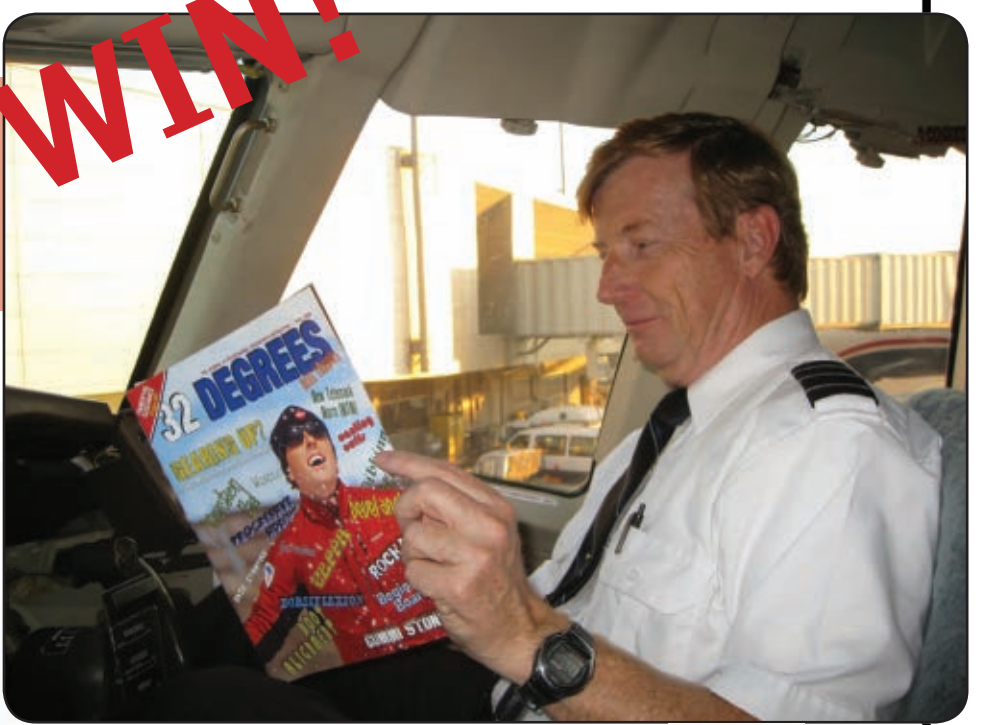
Where Do You Read *32 Degrees?*

Level III alpine instructor Don Oakes, who also happens to be a pilot for U.S. Airways, brought his magazine into the cockpit of his 767, just before his passengers boarded for Barcelona. If you read your mag somewhere equally cool, snap a picture and you just might win a $25 gift certificate for the *Accessories Catalog*. Submit your high-resolution photo, and a tale of the epic locale, to lineup@thesnowspros.org. (Oh, and if you recently flew U.S. Airways to Barcelona, don't worry. Don put down the magazine long enough to make that European journey!)

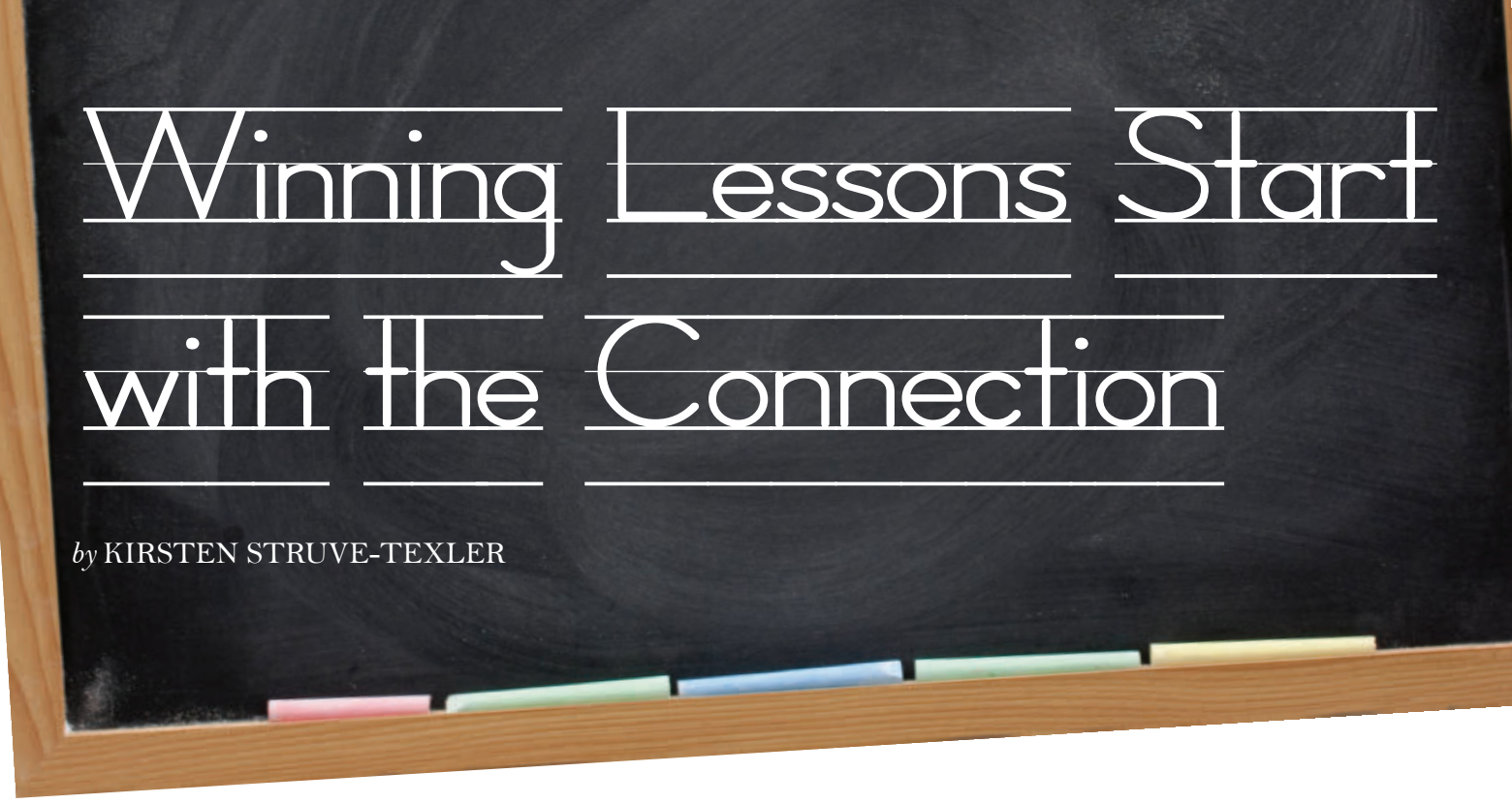


Reason to Get Excited: 50/50

Drum roll, please . . . this is the best Reason to Get Excited ever featured in *32 Degrees*. (And looking back at some of the reasons behind the excitement, it's hard to imagine what could qualify as the best.) This is huge . . . like jump up and down, and scream, maybe even weep with joy. That's because we're telling you officially, right here and now, that the biggest party in PSIA-AASI history—and the year's most outrageous snowsports event—is a celebration of you! Join us in Snowmass, Colorado, in April 2011 for the 50/50—seven days of parties and powder where you can eat, drink, sing, reminisce, ski, ride, learn, sleep, spa, and anything else it takes to celebrate five decades of ground-breaking snowsports instruction past and decades of remarkable instruction yet to come.

LOCKER ROOM TALK

	Member since/ Division	Alter Ego	If I found $100, I would . . .	Can't ski or ride without	Skiing/riding on
 **Marshall Titus** Beyondski Snowsports Academy, Snowboard Instructor, Level II	2005 Northwest	Dentist 	Go to happy hour with friends, on me 	My impact shorts!	Prior all-mountain freestyle snowboard, Ride Nitrane bindings
 **Erica Kelleher** Purgatory Ski & Ride School, Alpine Instructor, Level II	2003 Rocky Mountain	Program manager and chief coffee maker at Snow Monsters—we get kids psyched about snowsports!	Put it toward my Level III exam this winter.	A smile on my face! 	Lots of toys—depends on the day!
 **Scott Clair** Loveland Snowsports School, Snowboard Instructor, Level I	2008 Rocky Mountain	Owner of fine art printing company	Go out to dinner 	My AV7 Bandaril and my iPod	Never Summer Legacy-R and Unity Reverse
 **Mandie Constanzer** Bear Creek Mountain Resort Snowsports School, Alpine Instructor, Level I	2008 Eastern	Law school student and Giada De Laurentiis wannabe	Put it in the "New Skis Fund" piggy bank	A pocket full of chocolate!	Volkl Fuegos



Winning Lessons Start with the Connection

by KIRSTEN STRUVE-TEXLER

What makes a lesson successful? Our industry spends countless hours and plenty of money trying to answer that question. Studies, conferences, training, books, and articles strive to find the magic formula that creates lifelong snowsports enthusiasts—people who share our passion for skiing and riding.

In an attempt to understand what goes into the best lessons, I've reviewed the 2009 National Ski Areas Association winter conference study findings on student conversion (the number of students who progress from beginners to regular participants). And I've quizzed instructors from resorts in the U.S., Canada, and Australia about their recipes for success. Then I called some of my former ski school students to gain their insight on why they keep coming back; their responses gave me an honest appraisal of their view of an instructor's role in their snowsports vacation. All of the statistics and information are helpful, but a long summer of personal reflection has brought me to this simple conclusion: it's all about the connection.

Breaking the Secret Code

There's a saying in teaching that "they don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." It's true; students want to know you're invested in them. Of course, the professional abilities we've gained through training, study, and analysis are necessary foundations; experience, physical skill, and individual teaching talents also contribute to the creation of good instructors. Synthesizing survey results helps us build an understanding of students' needs and desires, but the element that's key to creating a good experience—and that which brings the student to the next level of success—lies in the relationship that's built between instructor and student.

Fifteen years ago, I passed my PSIA full certification exam. I already had high rates of return for students at all levels, and fortunately I was able to teach skiing without working a night job. My students evolved into private lesson clients and friends. This should have made me feel secure in the vocation that I loved, but I looked further for answers as to why my training and experience made me a "good instructor" by the numbers. I knew that I was happy teaching my students, but what was making them so happy that they kept coming back? I wanted to determine the impact I had on a skier's experience and what the correlation was between my technical teaching ability and the ultimate success of the lesson.

Interpersonal Experimentation

To test my technical abilities, I taught an afternoon group lesson by focusing entirely on mechanics and exercises. I taught politely: without making my usual attempts to get more involved, to learn more about each student, to dig to find out why they stood before me, what they wanted to learn, why they were venturing into the world of snowsports. I followed a solid "tried and true" beginner lesson progression, teaching the class how to clear snow from the bottom

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of their boots, how to do a "straight run" on one ski, then two skis, and how to hold ski poles. During the course of the day, I taught the students how to get up after a fall, how to flatten or edge a ski, how to slow down, and how to stop. I even took them on their first chairlift ride and downhill adventure.

But I didn't ask anyone what other sports they enjoyed, if they had ever been to our state before, or if they had kids. I didn't share with the students the fact that the view still took my breath away, that I had seen a fox on the ski run earlier that morning, or that I had been a timid beginner once, too.

All of the "little things" that I usually did—checking to see that the student's boot was (relatively) comfortable, removing my goggles or sunglasses while I talked to the group, and making sure that no one was facing into the sun or wind while I spoke with them—were notably absent from my lesson on the day I experimented.

The result? Most students showed visible progress, and most said "thank you" at the end. The way those results felt? I cried. I can't teach that way, and I haven't since. Was it a successful lesson? That depends upon your definition of "success" . . . does success mean that my students progressed in the ways that they (or I) wanted them to, or does it mean that they enjoyed the experience? On paper, the lesson appeared to have elicited an acceptable outcome, but I would hardly call the lesson a success without the added aspect of creating a relationship with my students.

During the first year I taught skiing, I remember reading an article that prompted instructors to "tell a joke" (I can never remember them), "pat the student on the shoulder often" (no way; might get sued), and to smile frequently (actually a good reminder!). The bottom line is that as long as you sincerely make an effort first to listen to the student, and then teach to the "safety, fun, and learning" motto, using the student's feedback as a guide, the lesson will mold itself appropriately.

Scripting a lesson doesn't always fit the real-time experience. Watching fellow instructors at the home resort, though, can offer some fantastic ideas for what to do and say when teaching different techniques, talking about local history, and delving into other topics that suit the time and place. Tips shared between instructors—such as those pertaining to kids' games or techniques for remembering every student's name—are helpful, but I've found that the actual success of a lesson depends upon how sincerely the instructor listens and communicates.

Lend an Ear

The ability to listen to what a student wants from the lesson, and from skiing and riding in general, is crucial in nurturing a skier who wants to continue to grow in the sport. And how fast a student progresses is directly proportional to his or her enjoyment of time on the slope. Remember, most students are on a vacation when we work with them; it's easy to lose sight of that fact when we're focused on moving that student to the next level.

As the focus shifts to a student-centered definition of success, our horizons as instructors broaden. When we teach as guides and facilitators who experience the sport with the student as opposed to

It's the little things: whenever possible, make sure your students are not facing into the sun while you're talking to them.

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For a successful lesson, put yourself "in your students' boots."

instructors who simply "test" to see an ability increase, we frequently find that the student naturally improves his or her skiing. Often what brings a student back is the instructor's efforts to truly hear what the student wants from the lesson, and keeping the lines of communication open between both parties further develops the student-teacher relationship.

When I take the time to see each student as an individual, and not just the bundled up mass moving down the hill, I can start to relate. Keep in mind that most adults don't spend the majority of their time in learning situations outside of their comfort zone. Try a new sport sometime, and you'll gain a greater understanding of the average snowsports school student's mindset. The more I put myself in their boots, the more we connect, and that involvement leads to a successful lesson by any definition.

For reassurance, I can review the notes and books and videos that have been the hallmarks of my training, and I'll continue to review the results of national studies to see how I can make my students' lessons even better. I'll keep my knowledge base up-to-date with ongoing training about new equipment, understanding changes to my resort, etc. But the one thing that will never change and will consistently lead to success is the human connection that we make when teaching others to enjoy our sport. Safety, fun, and learning are achieved via listening, caring, and connecting. 32°

Kirsten Struve-Texler is a certified Level III alpine instructor with 18 years of experience teaching people to ski in the U.S. and Australia, most recently with Vail and Beaver Creek resorts in Colorado. To her father's chagrin, Struve-Texler declined a profession that would involve a cubicle, consistent paycheck, and the use of her expensive college degree to share her passion for sports in the frozen world.

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Make a Career Out of Snowsports Instruction

Specialize to Separate Yourself from the Crowd

by KELLY COFFEY
photos by JULIE SHIPMAN

The glamour of snowsports instruction as a full-time job wears off quickly when slow seasons, small paychecks, and aching bodies enter the equation. Yet plenty of people have broken out of the paycheck-to-paycheck mentality to make a lasting career from their passion. Join author Kelly Coffey as he surveys instructors to decode the insider secrets of those who have been able to turn the job into a thriving career. In this article—the first in a series about how to build a career in snowsports instruction—we meet David Oliver, a man with a flair for freestyle.

Whether your snowsports school employs 90 or 900 instructors, it's easy to get lost in the crowd. Heck, you all wear the same uniform.

Yet a few instructors at each resort manage to stand out from the pack. They keep themselves busy all season, every season, no matter the state of the economy.

David Oliver of Colorado's Breckenridge Ski and Ride School is one of those instructors. The native of Taos, New Mexico, made his mark—and his money—by turning himself into a specialist. Oliver took his passion for the terrain park and built a reputation as a freestyle ski instructor . . . and that singular focus has carried him all the way to a spot on PSIA's Alpine Team.

By creating his own niche—instead of competing with everyone else—Oliver made up his own rules. "I might have been lost in the shuffle if I went through the traditional process," he says.

Common logic suggests instructors should be generalists. They should be able to teach any lesson that walks in the door. This is no lie. However, there are instructors who manage to get the best of everything: they deliver good lessons no matter the assignment, and they make themselves known for a specialty. These instructors stand to get more referrals from their peers, get more assignments from their supervisors, and open themselves to more opportunities for advancement. In addition to increasing their employability, these instructors make their careers more interesting.

Not only has Oliver kept himself busy with freestyle lessons, he's used his park and pipe skills to snag opportunities on and

off snow throughout his career: trainer, examiner, PSIA Alpine Team member, and curriculum developer.

Take Oliver as a case-in-point: he doesn't just teach freestyle lessons. His career success comes from consistently delivering great lessons by tapping into his energetic personality and desire to help his students—no matter the client's age, personality, ability level, or motivation. His supervisors and other instructors have noticed that track record of success; it's precisely what highlights Oliver as the go-to guy for anything and everything freestyle.

During Oliver's first years as an instructor, he kept his eyes open as to how he could thrive in this job. He kept looking for ways to merge his passion for pipe and park with his love for instructing. "I knew what I didn't want to do. I didn't want to be the typical instructor. There are already tons of people that do that," Oliver says. "And I knew I didn't want to be the typical jibber. I wanted to be more than that."

When Oliver first joined Breckenridge in 2000, it didn't take long for other instructors to notice he was always in the park. Oliver quickly became known as "the freestyle guy," and others began to seek out his advice. He helped create Breckenridge's alpine freestyle training program. Not long afterward, PSIA's Rocky Mountain Division tapped him to help create its alpine freestyle accreditation process.

Leave the Crowd Behind

If you're intrigued by the idea of promoting your snowsports forte, don't worry if freestyle isn't your thing. You may prefer racing, bumps, or big-mountain riding. Or your niche might not be a skiing or riding skill at all. You could make a name for yourself as an expert with children, seniors, women, beginners, or fearful students.

If you've never thought about your specialty, take some time to figure out what you truly want to pursue. What lessons do you have the most fun with? What subjects genuinely interest you? It needs to be a skill that clients request. But it also needs to be something you're passionate about.

Even if snowsports instruction is a part-time passion, you may be able to bring in the skills you've developed in your "real world" job. Or, if you do this full-time seasonally, you can tap into your off-season job. Set it up well, and

Take Oliver as a case-in-point: he doesn't just teach freestyle lessons. His career success comes from consistently delivering great lessons by tapping into his energetic personality and desire to help his students—no matter the client's age, personality, ability level, or motivation. His supervisors and other instructors have noticed that track record of success; it's precisely what highlights Oliver as the go-to guy for anything and everything freestyle.

How to Make an Action Plan

Creating your specialty is a multi-year process. But there's plenty you can do right away to get started. It's not an easy road to follow, but you're likely to see results faster than you think. Seeing those results will give you the energy you need to keep moving down the path of the specialist.

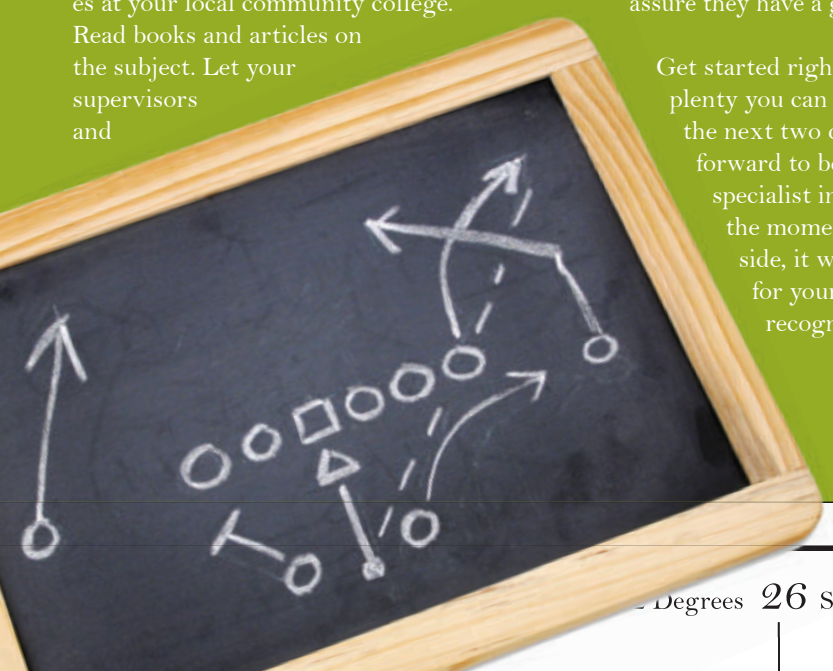
Step 1: Identify your specialty.
Sit down and list your strengths and what you most enjoy about your job. Write what being "the _____ instructor" means to you. Make sure it's a specialty that clients request, though. A specialty without the demand won't move your career very far. Once you identify your specialty, you should write up a plan (with deadlines) on how you're going to develop it. Put milestones in that plan for the next season as well as for the next five years.

Step 2: Improve your skills in that specialty.
Be sure to train in your subject. This may take the form of in-house training sessions/clinics, PSIA events, trainings from other organizations, or even classes at your local community college. Read books and articles on the subject. Let your supervisors and coworkers know about your interest. Seek out colleagues who share the same interest or who have made a mark in a similar niche. You'll be surprised at how many opportunities open up as you talk to more people. If you can link the skills of your specialty with the skills of your off-season occupation (or full-time job if snowsports instruction is a part-time passion), you will create a better synergy between your two careers.

Step 3: Share those skills with others.
Start chatting up your topic with coworkers. They may have insights you've never thought about. Write articles on your specialty and get them published on your ski school's website, in your PSIA-AASI division newsletter, in *32 Degrees*, or even your local newspaper. If becoming a trainer is your goal, why not create a training event on your specialty and pitch that to your training manager? Most important, anytime you get a lesson in your specialty, do everything you can to knock it out of the park: be well-prepared, be energetic, and do something a little bit extra for your clients to assure they have a great time.

Get started right away. There's plenty you can do even in the next two days to move forward to becoming a specialist instructor. With the momentum on your side, it won't take long for your coworkers to recognize your skills.

— *Kelly Coffey*



your specialty will help create a synergy between your two careers.

Own Your Niche

Once you become known as somebody who's good at your specialty, you get highlighted as a go-to instructor. Suddenly, you're different from all the others who wear your uniform. Business starts coming to you. Think about it: if you needed to refer your racer client to another instructor, would you pick just any instructor who could navigate the NASTAR course? Or would you pick the "racing specialist"?

Just as other instructors want to match up the best instructors for their clients, supervisors want to match up the best instructors for their assignments. For any customer who walks in the door requesting your specialty, your supervisor will more likely think of you first.

On the same note, training managers want the best trainers going out with their instructors. They'll start to look to you as a specialist to lead trainings on your topic. That means it's a foot in the door if you're an aspiring trainer, or more work during those slow times if you're an established trainer. Suddenly you're spending more and more days leading exactly the lessons you love most.

Of course, just being good at one thing doesn't assure you the career fast track. Oliver's success lies in his ability to deliver great lessons. This ability comes from his communication skills and his relationships with fellow instructors, supervisors, and others in the industry. It's no easy road to develop a specialty and to develop all the skills needed to be a great instructor. But many instructors, like Oliver, have devoted a lot of energy to go down that path. They're the ones everyone else looks to for expertise.

Tap into Your Passion

Does being a specialist confine you to a box too small? Only if you let it. Make it a point to have well-rounded skills, being a competent instructor of most types of lesson requests booked by your snowsports school. But when that


David Oliver

one specific lesson shows up, all eyes will be on you.

Take Breckenridge's Oliver as an example. Although everyone knows him for his freestyle, pretty much any lesson in his hands will come out a success: kids or adults, beginner or advanced, racer or groomed cruiser. Because fellow instructors and supervisors see the success of his lessons and training clinics, they're especially eager to send him work in his freestyle specialty.

By following his own passions, Oliver manages to live in both worlds of ski instruction and competitive freestyle. For the last decade, he has balanced his winters between a full ski school schedule with competitions like the U.S. Freeskiing Open and the Dew Tour. He gets enough exposure from that mixture to land a number of sponsorships to supplement his income: Dynastar skis, Lange boots, and Smith Optics to name just a few.

Oliver has advice for anyone looking to create his or her own niche: "The biggest thing is not losing yourself. If you're going to be true to yourself, if you have a passion for something, follow that passion no matter what everyone else is saying." 32°

"If you have a passion for something, follow that passion no matter what everyone else is saying."
—David Oliver

Kelly Coffey is a supervisor for the Vail Snowsports School and an alpine freestyle examiner for PSIA's Rocky Mountain Division. Off-snow, he is a copywriter for companies in the snowsports industry. He's been on a lifelong quest to figure out how to make a living out of his passions for skiing and writing.

Rx for Effective Lessons? Use 'SOAP'

by GREG LUCE

If people don't feel well, they see a doctor. If they don't ski or ride well, they consult a snowsports instructor. You might think the two professions have little in common, but it turns out that instructors can take a cue from the good doctor if they want to breathe new life into their lessons.

To help provide appropriate care, some physicians and other health care practitioners apply to their analysis of patient concerns a four-letter acronym—SOAP. The "S" refers to the subjective nature of the visit (what the patient tells them), the "O" to the objective examination of the patient (what they observe about the patient), the "A" to the assessment (that is, the cumulative analysis of the S and O components), and the "P" to the plan of action (how to treat the patient).

As a snowsports instructor, you can easily transfer the SOAP method to the recreational realm. Examine the SOAP format in detail and then apply this time-tested method to ensure that each lesson meets all of your students' needs.

The SOAP method requires that the instructor organize information about the "problem" that is presented. To accomplish this goal, gather subjective information (the "S") by interviewing your students to find out why they are taking a lesson. Find out what the students' chief concerns are and obtain more information about their skiing or riding history, e.g., at what age did they start, how many times do they usually ski or ride per season, how many times have they been on the snow this year, and where did they last ski or ride. Are your students interested in an aggressive or more laid-back style? What sort of physical condition are they in? What other athletic activities do they enjoy? The answers to these questions and more will give you the subjective information needed to "shape the care" of each student.

Next, perform your "examination" of each student to gather the objective data (the "O"). Much of this information can be gained by performing movement analysis as students take free runs and/or perform a set of tasks during the warm-up stage of the lesson. Through observation, you will hopefully be able to identify and understand ski and snowboard behavior, movement patterns, cause and effect, and possible equipment-related issues.

After completing the objective examination, start to think about the analysis/assessment (the "A"). Assess each student's skills. Do you see whole-body rotation and a lack of upper/lower body separation? Does the person lack appropriate flexion and extension in the ankles, knees, hips, and spine—overflexing and extending the lower back? Does the student tilt the shoulders into the hill as he or she progresses through the turn?

At this point, you should have enough information to formulate the plan of action (the "P"). Present a set of detailed goals designed to improve each student's movement patterns and make them more efficient skiers and riders. As you develop the plan, be sure to revisit the student's subjective concerns or goals. It's vital that the plan be closely related to the "why I'm taking a lesson" reason(s) each individual shared with you at the start of the class.

To explore how the SOAP format plays out on the snow, consider the following hypothetical two-hour private lesson segment.

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1. Subjective

Your student, Maggie, says she is taking today's lesson because she often feels out of control on steeper terrain. In medical jargon, this is her "chief complaint"; in snowsports terms, this is her motivation for taking the lesson, and gaining control on steeper terrain is her primary goal. She has skied twice this year, enjoying the resort's intermediate terrain at your resort. Maggie appears to be in her mid-30s and has skied for many years, usually about 10 times per season.

She's attending an insurance convention in Sun Valley, Idaho, next month and would like to be in top form while skiing with her colleagues. During the summer months, Maggie occasionally enjoys mountain biking but does not exercise regularly. After working long hours at a desk job, she usually spends her evenings in front of the TV. (Isn't it amazing how much you can learn about someone on the first chair ride?)

2. Objective

After warming up on Maggie's favorite run, you describe a medium-radius turn and ask her to watch as you ski for five or six turns, paying attention to the size and shape of the skis' path in the snow. You ask Maggie to make the same medium-radius turns after you stop and wave at her, and to continue skiing five or six turns farther down the slope. After she pulls off to the side of the run as you instructed, you ski down and join her.

While watching her ski, you notice that she can't maintain turn shape after two turns, her speed builds, and she tends to traverse after four or five turns. You inquire about her equipment and find that her skis are two years old and have not been tuned for quite some time. Upon inspecting her boots, you see that they are very loose around her lower leg, although she says they feel comfortably snug around her heel and foot.

3. Assessment

Maggie's stance is narrow and her balance is most often aft of center, with her hips aligning behind her feet. You also notice that she has little to no range of motion of her joints, other than some flexion in her knee joints. To turn, Maggie uses her hips and rotates her arms in her desired direction of travel.

4. Plan

Now that you've tallied the subjective and objective evidence and assessed your student's skiing, it's time to formulate a plan. Maggie's "prescribed treatment" might include the measures that follow.

A. Re-examine Maggie's boots for proper flexibility and make any helpful adjustments. To get more shin-to-cuff contact, reattach her power strap under the plastic of the boot cuff. Explain and demonstrate ankle flexion and extension, and point out how the angle of her lower leg changes when she flexes and extends her ankle. During the next chair ride, you recommend that Maggie drop her skis off at the local shop to have a basic tune and wax job, since fighting with a ski that's not gliding well is not helping her. You also suggest that perhaps she should consider a prescribed regular ski tune and wax to keep her equipment in shape.

B. Have Maggie ski on moderate terrain, asking her to make longer-radius "foot-shuffle" turns. After she learns ankle movements that allow her to flex and extend her joints, she'll be able to shuffle her feet fore and aft, alternating left and right as she is gliding and making longer-radius turns. This exercise will help her to maintain shin contact with the front of her boot cuffs. As she begins to feel the difference between ankle flexion and extension, progress into non-shuffling turns and focus on maintaining shin contact using ankle flexion throughout the turn. To be sure that Maggie is advancing toward her goal of being in control on steeper terrain, venture onto a slightly steeper run and give her some time to experience the control that she has gained by focusing on ankle flexion and cuff contact.

C. To check for understanding, you may ask Maggie what it is that she perceives or senses when she is successful at maintaining cuff contact with her shins. Keep in mind that it's usually best to put it in her words rather than the way you like to say it. Although Maggie has made great progress throughout the lesson, point out that there's more work to be done and suggest that she return the following week to continue her development. Remember that you now have to help her work on using her legs as a turning force while minimizing her upper body rotational forces. Giving her the "next step" recommendation is a critical part of caring for your student's needs while helping her achieve her goals. Note: It may be worth making a file on Maggie that documents your session and outlines your plan for her next visit.

In short, the SOAP idea is to ask and listen, examine and assess, and then prescribe treatment. Choose the most important ailment, and create a plan to treat it. Let's face it, we all need regular checkups, and using SOAP for snowsports may heal what ails skiing and riding students.

Experiment with the SOAP concept during one of your professional development clinics by pairing off and practicing with your colleagues. See if it helps you to address your "student's" concerns. Are you able to think and act in a logical manner, to provide appropriate lessons, while maintaining excellence and consistency in your teaching? That's what SOAP is all about! 32°

Greg Luce has taught at Mt. Hood Meadows and Timberline Lodge in Oregon, and Aspen/Snowmass in Colorado. He also worked for PSIA-NW as a division clinic leader for 10 seasons. In addition to running an optometry practice, Luce is the head coach for GSS Ski-Pros, based on Mt. Hood.

SnowSports 360

Editor's note: This is the sixth in a series of articles touting innovative snowsports programs throughout the country.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

Build an Innovative Senior Program

by NORM LAVERY

Everyone knows that skiers and riders beyond the age of 50 are past their prime. They move slowly, have limited energy, and pose a significant hazard by using the entire width of the trail as they make their way down the mountain. Sometimes they stop to visit with friends or to smell the scent of pines in frosty air—even on powder days! Plus, they have ingrained, quirky body movements; seldom venture off-piste; and have little desire to log vertical feet as a measure of who they are.

So why should we spend time thinking and writing about older skiers and riders? Well, truth be known, the above statements are clearly myths, and there are three very good reasons to dispel them and to learn the truth about senior snowsports participants. First, seniors present a business opportunity. Second, instructors can learn a great deal by rubbing shoulders with them. And third, if we're fortunate, we'll all get there someday, so we might as well get ready.

[The Business Opportunity]

Senior skiers and riders are an integral component of an area's business plan and, as such, it's important for resorts to cater to their needs—including any plans they may have to take lessons or see more of the mountain in the company of a local guide. As snowsports instructors, our role is especially important in light of the current economic climate in the United States. Attracting seniors to skiing and riding activities—and retaining them as long-time clients—can be one key toward fulfilling our responsibility to our areas and the snowsports industry we serve.

Let's look at some numbers. The National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) compiles statistics each year, and the snapshot that follows is from NSAA President Michael Berry's May 2009 presentation titled "Boom-er Bust: Why Conversion Is More Critical Than Ever."

- In 1997–98, the total number of domestic skiers and riders older than 54 years was 1,934,429. In 2007–08, the number was 1,070,470, a decrease of nearly 45 percent during the 10-year period.
- Between 1997–98 and 2007–08, the annual growth rate for those in the age group from 55 to 64 was -5.5 percent; for those 65 and older, -6.2 percent, both indicating significant decreases in participation.
- The dropout rate of all beginner skiers and riders is now 84 percent, the same as it was in 1999.
- The odds of turning beginner skiers and riders into core participants (those who ski or ride frequently each season) is now 16.7 percent, slightly higher than it was in 1999.
- The loss rate of core participants is now 28 percent, eight percent higher than it was in 1999. The NSAA report goes on to note that erosion of core participation is a huge concern.
- Approximately 27 percent of past skiers and riders return to the hill to become core participants again.

According to the NSAA report, "Perceptions of personal wealth and stability have never been shakier." From 2004 to 2009, net worth for those in the age group from 55 to 65 decreased an average of 29 percent. Today's seniors are watching their pennies, and competition for discretionary dollars can be fierce. But this reality can also be viewed as an opportunity for snowsports instructors and schools to work together to make sure a day on the hill is a leisure-time priority for seniors.

Senior skiers and riders are a valuable resource, and making their initial experience a positive one and retaining them as clients have important financial implications. The following suggestions offer valuable senior insights, whether you're a manager looking to develop or enhance programs for the over-50 set or an instructor seeking greater understanding of this important skier/rider demographic.

Working with seniors can be a great way to expand your client base and to differentiate yourself from other instructors.

[What's in It for Instructors?]

Being a senior myself, I can state authoritatively that once you get to know us, we're really enjoyable, fun people. Our "lifetime vertical" is a staggering number; our experience banks overflow with knowledge and wisdom; and our passion for engaging in meaningful activities is keen. Paramount is our desire to spend time with interesting individuals, and many of us have the time and resources to fully tune into and enjoy the mountain environment.

Working with seniors can be a great way to expand your client base and to differentiate yourself from other instructors. Seniors are discerning customers, and the wisdom you stand to gain from them can only improve the quality of your teaching product.

[Who We Are]

As seniors, we define ourselves less by our chronological age than by our history and where we are on our life journey. Many of us have achieved significant success in our business and family lives, and have little to prove to anyone but ourselves. We enjoy setting realistic goals, and we relish the small achievements we find along the path.

Some of us have endured medical events during our lives and may have a cardiac stent or a joint that's been repaired a few times. Our fingers and toes are more susceptible to cold, our muscles take a bit longer to warm up, our coordination isn't as good as it used to be, and our balance is tenuous at times. We just don't have the energy we had when we were younger. And yes, our memory sometimes plays games on us and frequent bathroom breaks are often required. On occasion, our senses also betray us: we don't hear as well as we once did, our depth perception isn't what it used to be, and our trifocals never seem to tell us early enough where the next bump is.

We've been told that our bones and ligaments are getting weaker and that our muscle mass is lessening, so we're wary of any injury that might slow our tennis game or keep us from joining our hiking group next spring. Yet, with all of the predictable components of the aging process, we're still very much alive and eager to enjoy the challenge of the mountain environment with its interplay of gravity, weather, snow conditions, equipment, and who we are at the moment.

Excellent references on the aging process are included in PSIA-NW's *Senior Specialist Accreditation Manual* (see page 34). To start your own research, also Google "Physiology of Aging.doc" and the "Resource Center on Aging at the University of California Berkeley."

[How We View the World]

PSIA-AASI has long espoused the view that when students feel safe and are having fun, they learn more readily. That is, "Safety + Fun = A Good Learning Environment." I'd like to add "comfort" to the recipe because for seniors especially, safety and fun satisfy *some* of the requirements for learning to occur, but comfort is important, too. The steepness of runs doesn't concern us, but the predictability of the snow surface, be it groomed, bumps, or powder, does. We don't like taking as many risks as we used to, and being caught off-guard is no longer a thrill. Most of us want to ski and ride with finesse rather than with force, and to impress others with how smoothly we make turns rather than with how much air we can get off bumps.

We value convenient transportation to and from the hill, not having to fight for parking spots, and not having to wait in long lines for lift tickets, food, or anything else. We like to ski or ride at our own pace, whether it's cruising or running gates, and we're always receptive of tips that will improve our enjoyment of the sport. We like to share our experiences with others in our own age group, we want a comfortable place for a beverage and good conversation with friends after the lifts close, and at the end of the day we want to feel that we have been well-treated by all staff members. We want to look forward to our next day on the mountain.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Good teaching is good teaching at any skill level and with any age group. Many of the concepts that follow make good sense with every type of student.

Lookout Pass's senior program—started during the 2008-09 season—already has a devoted following.

Courtesy of Lookout Pass

Courtesy of Copper Mountain

Copper Mountain's Over the Hill Gang has been skiing strong since its 1976 debut.

That said, seniors will especially benefit from instruction that takes their skills, requirements, and mindsets into consideration.

Non-technical aspects of our profession such as attire, stance, visage, enthusiasm, word choice, and tone of voice are as important as the technical skills that we bring to teaching seniors and all students. Specific tips to consider when interacting with seniors include the following: Get to know your clients by meeting with them individually before the first lift ride. If this isn't possible, ride the lift with a different client each time. Listen deeply to each individual's life story, concerns, and aspirations, and to his or her specific goals for the day. Be alert to clients' possible fears of speed, height, falling, embarrassment, peer pressure, and not being 100 percent in control of situations. Establish simple hand signals that your students can use if they can't hear your words, if the sun glare makes seeing demonstrations difficult, or if a rest break is needed.

Being alert to discomfort or to low performance caused by poorly fitting boots or badly tuned equipment is important. Take time to talk with your clients about boot fit, the characteristics of shaped skis, new apparel fabrics, sun protection, and hydration options.

Tailor your time with each class member as if he or she is the only person in the group. Meet each individual after your time on the hill to ask for feedback on his or her experience. This is your chance to help clients lock in the key components of the lesson, to show them you care about them as human beings, and to learn how you can improve your teaching product. I always ask students to state the three things they want to remember from our time together, and then offer an index card and a pencil for them to write them down.

We have two options each time we interact with other human beings: We can either take energy from them or give energy to them. As snowsports instructors, we should choose to give energy to our clients with our words and actions. Doing so can help clients become long-term friends and supporters of our areas, and of the snowsports world in general.

Many areas have groups of seniors who ski together on a regular basis and often identify themselves with wonderfully creative names. The same groups also frequently hike, mountain bike, or travel together during the spring, summer, and fall months. To learn more, Google "senior ski programs." Five areas with innovative senior programs are highlighted here, with a focus on what makes each of them special.

[Copper Mountain]

Copper Mountain is a destination resort 75 miles west of Denver, Colorado. Copper's Ski and Ride School introduced the Over the Hill Gang (OHG) as a unique year-round program back in 1976, and it's been going strong ever since. It offers participants the opportunity to share in lasting friendships and camaraderie while participating in skiing, riding, summer and winter sport activities, and social events. During the winter, OHG guides (who are instructors in the Ski and Ride School) show groups of five to 10 seniors of similar ability the hidden secrets of Copper Mountain. The groups enjoy liftline privileges, lunch together, and après-ski social time.

Special clinics are offered throughout the season on topics that range from improving each individual's current level of skiing or riding to racing to telemarking. Other member-led winter activities include snowshoeing, daylight and moonlight cross-country skiing, tubing, ice skating, and theater outings. During the summer months there are hiking, biking, and in-line skating activities; golf and tennis tournaments; and potluck dinners. A monthly newsletter keeps members up-to-date on scheduled events. In addition, the group shows its commitment to the local environment with an annual highway cleanup day in June.

[Waterville Valley]

Located in the White Mountains of northern New Hampshire, Waterville Valley is home to the Silver Streak Program. Recognized as the best senior program in the east in the September 1996 issue of *SKIING* magazine, the Silver Streak Program was started in 1985 by Tom Corcoran, developer of Waterville Valley Ski Area and 1960 Olympic veteran.

According to Corcoran, "It didn't take a brain surgeon or major study to figure out that there were a lot of skiers out there who reached an age where they weren't skiing anymore. Perhaps they were alone or just didn't know how to go about the social part of skiing."

The Silver Streaks meet four days a week, with partners of varying levels able to enjoy skiing with those of similar ability. In the mid-'90s the program expanded to include a nordic contingent, and now seniors who would rather glide through woodland trails than schuss alpine steeps meet on Wednesdays. Both alpine and nordic skiers get together every Wednesday afternoon for an après-ski party. Other events include a moonlit snowshoe tour, lunches at slopeside restaurants, banquets, a mountaintop barbecue, and end-of-the-season parties.

Silver Streak members include Larry, an astronaut now in his mid-70s; Nevin, now 92 and a winner of a world food prize for developing a special formula for children in impoverished countries; Dev, a U.S. Olympian in the 1930s and an early Tenth Mountain Division fighter; Ted, now 95 and also a tennis enthusiast; Archie, a World

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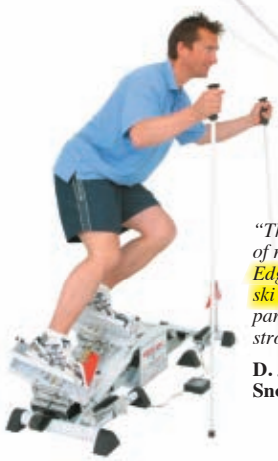

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Accredited Senior Specialist Jim McReynolds (in green jacket) enjoys slope time with the Mountain Masters.

War II aircraft carrier pilot; and Art, 65, a record-holding power lifter. Bob, who met Ruth in an Alzheimer's support group, began skiing at age 70. During his first year, Bob progressed to the point that he could keep up with Ruth on expert trails. What a beautiful outlet for two people who have endured the pain of putting partners in constant care facilities.

For many, the program has given them a second chance at an active, vibrant life after years of sitting behind a desk, for some, the chance to race in the mountain's local competition series or the masters program, and for others, the opportunity to enjoy camaraderie, both on and off the slopes.

The message: With a little effort, the fun never has to end.

[Montana Snowbowl]

Located in Missoula, Montana Snowbowl is a local area with 2,600 vertical feet and varied, often challenging skiing and teaching terrain. Its Prime Time program, for skiers and riders over 50, was designed to provide an educationally positive and socially rewarding experience one day each week for six consecutive weeks, with membership consisting of longtime friends and past skiers and riders wanting to re-enter the sport. The Prime Time program is designed to emphasize control, confidence, and comfort, with the understanding that if students gain control of their skis and boards, they will gain confidence, and will be skiing and riding in their comfort zone. Each day includes stretching and a warm-up run. Videoing is a welcome component.

Leaving the groomed runs to view a hidden lake, to touch the bark of a gnarled tree with eyes closed (with bare hands on a warm day), and to listen quietly to the sounds of the mountain are special parts of the program. Building on two Montana Snowbowl programs for youngsters, instructors hand out short write-ups and talk informally about the history of skiing and riding, the role of the ski patrol, the science and art of teaching skiing and riding, and how to read the topographic map of Montana Snowbowl.

The program price includes a glass of wine, beer, or other beverage at the end of the day, which is a wonderful time to relive adventures, share photos of grandkids, and talk about mutual interests beyond skiing. Friendships made on the hill continue to this day.

[Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area]

Sitting just off Interstate 90 where Idaho meets Montana, Lookout Pass began a Mountain Masters senior program during the 2008–09 season and has received enthusiastic feedback. The program's advertised purpose is "to foster good fellowship, provide companionship, enjoy and improve skiing and riding, and all in all have a good time." The program begins at 8:30 a.m. with a continental breakfast, at which time DVDs are shown and discussed, followed by on-hill coaching to improve individual skiing and riding skills. The program runs every Monday from opening through the middle of March with a two-week break during the holidays in December.

A noteworthy summer feature of Lookout Pass Ski and Recreation Area, for biking enthusiasts of all ages, is the 15-mile rails-to-trails route of the Olympian Hiawatha, which winds gently downhill through 10 tunnels, seven high trestles, and majestic mountain scenery.

[Hunter Mountain]

Hunter Mountain is located north of New York City in the Catskill Mountains. It was here that the "70+ ski club" was founded by Lloyd Lambert in 1977. At age 75 Lambert realized that his skiing friends were giving up the sport not because their legs gave out, but because they couldn't afford the pricey lift tickets. The "70+ ski club" now boasts members around the world who ski for free or get significant discounts at more than 200 areas. Several hundred club members are in their 90s, about 5,000 are in their 80s, and 10,000 are in their 70s. Club members receive two newsletters each year, and are able to participate in a broad selection of ski and summer trips.

The idea—sparked by Lambert and the club's 34 charter members (who paid one-time dues of $5 and had to show legal proof of age to be in for life)—is testimony to the passion of senior skiers throughout the world.

[Senior Program Educational Resources]

PSIA-AASI's Northwest Division has a thoughtfully designed instructor education program that is documented in the *Senior Specialist Accreditation Manual*. The manual states that "The purpose of the program is to provide training to instructors of all ages so they can better provide high quality instruction

CONTINUED ON PAGE 73»

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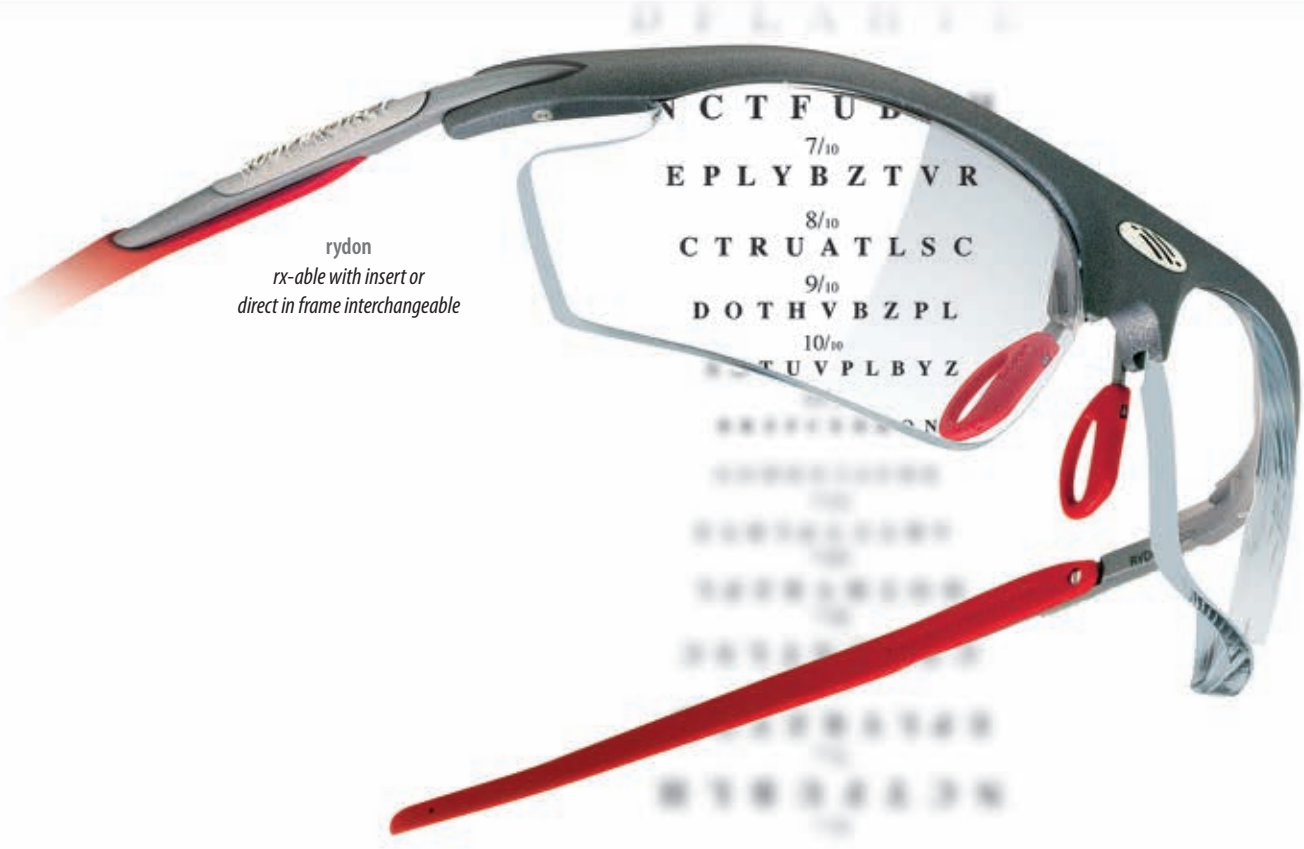

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GIVE BEGINNERS THE ABILITY
to Ski into the Future

by TOM LEGARE

Over the years, I have been experimenting with different ways to teach beginner ski lessons to adults. Before shaped skis had unequivocally staked their place on the hill, I used a wedge progression to teach beginning students who showed up for the lesson on long straight skis. Then, as shorter shaped skis became the norm, I adopted a direct-to-parallel stepping stones approach.

Taking advantage of wide and gentle terrain at the area where I teach (Waterville Valley, New Hampshire), I employ a beginner ski lesson progression that's fun and informative, providing students with a strong skill foundation so they feel comfortable and confident on the slopes. With some planning and a little luck, the successful first lesson will spark a long-term enthusiasm for the world of snowsports as well.

[BEGINNER LESSON FOCUS]

Before outlining specific learning activities for use in a beginner ski lesson, I would like to emphasize how important it is for instructors to listen to their students describe what they are looking for, how they learn best, and what experiences they've had in the past. By getting students to talk about these areas and actively listening to their responses, you allow each student to help determine the lesson direction.

New instructors often worry about what they're going to do in a beginner lesson and sometimes miss these important clues that could help them be successful. To learn more about ways in which to address this aspect of the lesson, look to PSIA-AASI's *Core Concepts for Snowsports Instructors*.

In my direct-to-parallel lessons for beginners, I choose activities that are most likely to help develop skiing movements that will be critical to the student's future progress. To support effective movement, I emphasize

- an open parallel stance in which the student maintains relaxed feet, knees, and legs in order to be "loose and adaptable";
- the usefulness of maintaining contact between the shins and boot tongues to aid dynamic balance;
- ankles that are soft and supple to allow refined and constant adjusting movements in the boot, and to promote balancing over the whole foot;
- releasing and engaging the edges in one smooth movement to take advantage of the skis' sidecut;
- twisting movements that originate in the feet and legs to directly affect the skis' performance;
- harmonious joint movement to involve the entire body in balancing; and
- vision that's directed ahead toward the new turn.

The direct-to-parallel approach requires a beginner area with a gentle slope and groomed terrain and works best for teenagers and adults on short shaped skis (e.g., 100 to 120 centimeters). The stepping stone progressions that follow may be used to lead students to parallel skiing and beyond.

DO YOUR LESSONS MEASURE UP?

Former PSIA Alpine Team Member Terry Barbour once suggested that the introductory level ski lesson is where the seeds of success are sown ("Right from the Start," *The Professional Skier*, fall 2002*). A well-taught beginner lesson provides a student with all the fundamentals to become a competent and potentially great skier. The next time you find yourself face-to-face with a lesson full of excited and sometimes anxious newbies, take a mental trip through the questions that follow to determine whether your beginner lesson is setting the stage to create a participant who's devoted to snowsports.

- Do you take advantage of recent advances in equipment technology to speed up and enhance students' progress?
- Do your lessons instill sound fundamentals?
- Do you empower students to continue learning on their own?
- At the conclusion of each lesson, are your students eager to come back for another one?

Web Extra

To read Terry Barbour's article, log on to www.TheSnowPros.org and head to the "Web Extras" page in the *32 Degrees* section.

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[WILL THEY COME BACK?]

The lesson activities outlined here address three criteria for a well-taught beginner ski lesson for teenagers or adults. The lesson takes advantage of recent advances in equipment technology to speed up and enhance students' progress, it instills sound skiing fundamentals, and it empowers students to continue learning on their own. However, the degree to which students are eager to come back for another lesson—the element with the greatest bearing on the future job security of snowsports instructors—is highly dependent on the relationship established between the instructor and student.

To ensure that your students enjoy the lesson enough to want to take another one, ask yourself the questions that follow. Did you

- show genuine interest in your students and why they decided to take a ski lesson?
- actively listen to student responses and let their input shape the skiing experience by giving them a sense of involvement and control?
- foster a feeling of accomplishment and desire for future challenge and learning?
- point out the progress that students made and help them understand the next steps toward achieving their skiing goals?

When instructors bring to their classes a positive attitude, empathy, and genuine sincerity for helping students learn, their students are more apt to

BEGINNER SKI LESSON STEPPING STONES

ACTIVITY	PROGRESSIONS	KEYS TO LEARNING
Establish rapport and introduce the lesson	• Establish rapport with your students and introduce the lesson. • Explain the ski parts and effects on performance. • Teach students how to carry their skis. • Address how to get into and out of ski bindings. • Explain how to use ski poles.	• Make a positive first impression by conveying your excitement about teaching the lesson. Smile and make eye contact with your students. • Ask questions about why they're there, what they hope to accomplish, and what prior experiences they've had that can help you assess your students' feelings and attitudes about learning.
Create an atmosphere of fun and play	• Ask students to gather in a circle, shoulder to shoulder, and put their arms around the person on either side of them. (If some students feel uncomfortable touching another student, have the group just stand in a circle.) • Tell students that the group is now a human snow grooming machine that makes synchronized movements with feet, ankles, and legs. • Ask students to turn just the toes, just the heels, and then the whole foot to make "bow ties" in the snow. • Next, have students march in place, then step to the right and the left on command. • Speed up the march and call out direction changes to the group. • Get the group to jump into the air at the same time, then rotate to the right and then left.	• Human snow grooming machine activities create teamwork and synergy. • Activities also help students develop foot, ankle, and leg mobility in ski boots.
Walk in ski boots	• On flat ground, have students place their skis on the snow; allow enough space for students to walk between each pair in their ski boots. • Ask students to do a series of figure eights around the skis. • Have them alternate between walking on their toes, sidestepping, hopping, and jumping.	• Help students get comfortable with the equipment, refine mobility, and develop balance. • Have them focus on their toes as they walk to promote forward body movement. • Emphasize feeling the big and small toes while sidestepping and walking around in figure eights.
Practice one-ski stepping and sliding	• While still on the flats, next ask the students to put one ski on and move around the skis in figure eights using poles. • Move the class to the start of the slope and sidestep up and down the hill. • Have students traverse on the uphill ski to promote a strong inside half; point out that the downhill ski boot is slightly behind the uphill boot and can be lightly dragged on the snow. • Next, ask students to progressively point their skis (fan progression) farther downhill to eventually execute a straight run to experience balance in motion. • From a straight run on one ski on gentle terrain, twist the boot in the ski (the outside/downhill ski) to promote first sensations of turning, and lightly drag the boot (on the inside/uphill leg, the one without the ski) on the ground slightly ahead of the boot in the ski to promote correct body position as the ski turns.	• Students often begin walking with their skis way out in front of them, but challenge them to keep the "ski foot" under their hips. • Encourage students to keep the skis on the snow, and guide the front of the ski rather than push the back of the ski when doing figure eights. • When sliding on one ski, emphasize proper body position but indicate that it's all right to touch the boot to the snow lightly to aid in regaining balance.

take away an enjoyable experience that inspires them to learn even more.

As the *Core Concepts for Snowsports Instructors* manual points out, "… Teaching can be magical. Good teachers create magic every day; it's almost as if there is no teacher and no learner, just the sport. All barriers to learning are conquered, all the power resides in the student, and learning becomes play. When this happens, electricity fills the air: the result is a learning experience packed with emotion, meaning, and value. This is what it's all about—building relationships that lead to learning and fun for students and teachers alike" (PSIA-AASI, 2008).

Of course, the magic and electricity can be just as evident in a lesson that embraces a wedge progression over the direct-to-parallel methodology. Regardless of which tack you take, the important thing is to captivate students with a glimpse into what future adventures on the slopes have in store for them.

[IN SUMMARY]

Shaped skis give us the opportunity to shorten the beginning skier's learning curve via the direct-to-parallel stepping stone ski progression. Follow these steps to give students a solid foundation and introduce them to the essentials of good skiing in their very first lesson. When you teach your students these fundamentals, you equip them to handle the greatest number of conditions while minimizing the physiological stress associated with learning to ski.

The result? Your beginners will be well on their way to tackling future skiing adventures with greater confidence. Everything they need to know about skiing they will have learned in their Level 1 lesson! 32°

Tom Legare is a part-time Level III alpine instructor at Waterville Valley Resort in New Hampshire. In the summer months, he enjoys golfing, swimming, boating, water skiing, and riding his bike. He has two adult children, who he taught to ski, and his wife Ginny (PSIA Level I alpine) also teaches at Waterville Valley.

BEGINNER SKI LESSON STEPPING STONES

ACTIVITY	PROGRESSIONS	KEYS TO LEARNING
Practice two-ski stepping and sliding	• Have your students put on two skis and then use their poles to push themselves on flat terrain. • Next, have students step up and down the hill. • Have them now traverse across the hill into the fall line at a slight angle, then step uphill to stop. • Progressively increase the fall line angle (point the skis downhill) as students traverse across the hill, which causes them to take more steps up the hill to stop. • Then have students make a series of steps into and across the fall line to make their first turns. • Finally, link two turns by using stepping movements to change directions.	• While your students are pushing themselves forward on flat ground, emphasize that the pole tip is placed behind the heel of the boot to promote proper body position. • Many students resist the initial feeling of sliding downhill because they think they're going to crash. Explain that this sensation is like stepping onto a moving walkway or escalator: they need to anticipate the initial acceleration and go with it. • Stepping and sliding activities develop students' balance in motion, and by taking steps uphill to stop, you introduce parallel turning movements.
Ride the lift	• Explain lift loading, riding, and unloading procedures that are applicable for your ski area, and then check for understanding by quizzing students on the process. • Have students watch other skiers load the lift, and explain the steps to them. • Go through lift loading and unloading simulation. • Instruct students where and how to regroup after unloading. • Let the lift operator know that this is the class's first time loading. • If necessary, ask the lift operators for assistance.	• As an instructor, you can reduce the potential for problems by providing a clear description of the lift loading and unloading process. • Remember that students need to be able to handle the terrain serviced by the lift.
Link parallel turns	• On gentle terrain, have students link turns by using stepping movements to change directions. • As students become proficient with stepping movements on gentle terrain, next ask them to link turns by shuffling their feet. • With sufficient practice, students are now ready to begin making turns by just turning their feet and legs; with a slight increase in speed this movement tends to happen naturally. • Encourage students to make short- and medium-radius turns instead of long turns, which will help them control speed and allow them to explore narrower beginner trails.	• Emphasize that turn shape controls speed; "stepping around a corner" will slow and stop their forward momentum. • It's also useful to point out how the "big toe/little toe" guiding and steering moves they did on the flats with figure eights can translate into speed control by engaging the edges of the ski to help shape the turn. • Finally, underscore the message that the body follows the eyes; students need to look where they're going.
Summarize what was learned in the lesson	• Review the goals and objectives of the lesson. • Point out what your students have accomplished. • Preview the next learning segment and encourage further development. • Establish future practice guidelines for each student.	• Bringing closure to the lesson helps anchor learning, even if closure consists of a brief wrap-up. • The lesson end is a great time to create lasting memories and suggest learning areas for the next ski lesson.

SnowSports 360

SKI A MILE IN THEIR BOOTS:

Interpretation Is the Sincerest Form of Teaching

by RON SHEPARD

As the saying goes, seeing is believing. However, mimicry can be the key to understanding.

When an instructor copies and re-creates a student's movements to figure out what's going on, there's a lot more happening than simple imitation. Such replication can expand beyond the observable realm to include sounds, rhythm, and even proximal and distal multi-limb proprioceptive awareness.

In other words, instead of simply knowing that your student could benefit from skiing with a longer leg, a reduced tip lead, or a different hand position, you can confirm your visual diagnosis by sensing the way movement affects the skier's moves. Carefully "envisioning" your students' moves can give you the chance to feel what they feel, isolate the elements that detract from performance, and establish a basis for change during the lesson. The remarkable thing about imitation-as-analysis is that it can help instructors who are not visual learners because it provides insight into the rhythm, limb placement, and position sensations that extend far deeper than what meets the eyes.

The kind of interpretation I'm talking about is similar to what you'd experience in an unfamiliar building when the lights go out. As you move through an unfamiliar pitch-black room, you use the sense of touch to find out what's around you as you simultaneously create a picture of the room in your mind's eye. A kind of attuned sensation or interpretation arises, and it's akin to the picture you're trying to paint as you watch what your student is doing. You're feeling around inside the dark interior of your ski boots as well as moving inside the presently unlighted interior of your student's movements.

Bear in mind one major note of caution when attempting this "re-visioning" of another skier's style, however. Keep any and all diagnostic re-creations to yourself. Working with this tool must be a quiet and solo endeavor, and must never—repeat, never—be practiced in a way that allows the student to see you physically interpreting his or her skiing. Snowsports schools own video cameras for the purpose of showing students what they look like, and these machines provide a clear and unbiased picture. Your task instead is to use "respectful replication" for your own purposes.

Although it might seem counterintuitive at first, you can learn a tremendous amount and be more accurate in assessing skills simply by following and replicating a student's motions. Using conventional and established identifiers, do your best to note anything that immediately stands out. For instance, is the student in or near balance? Is the skier confident or apprehensive? How does he or she apply or vary the skill blend to each situation? Is any disconnect that you see related to the skill blend—i.e., the direction, intensity, rate, and timing (DIRT)? Imitation is often accomplished by replicating the DIRT, and what is mechanically happening on the snow rather than simply the movement itself.

Imagine a park lesson focusing on take-off: two skiers can demonstrate the same range of movement when "popping," and yet one barely leaves the ground while the other has a clean trajectory. While many of the elements of a good take-off can be in place, one or more elements of DIRT could still keep that skier grounded. How you identify the difference in the DIRT from what the skier feels to what you feel is where you reach the limit of visual analysis.

Because my own learning style is heavily weighted toward the kinesthetic rather than the visual, it's more helpful to me to feel the skier's movements than to see them. In fact, it's almost always useful—and even necessary—for me to replicate a student's turns to determine the principal difference between his or her skill blend and my own.

Once I've determined where those differences exist, I can usually sort out the steps needed to take the skier from where he or she is to where I think they can be. Using this process, along with verbal cues from the student, I can identify what the skier finds effective in his or her movements. The result is a "survey" of the lay of the land, so to speak, from which I can provide alternative movements, effects, sensations, and results.

[LEAD THE FOLLOWER]

One frequent clinic warm-up used at my resort actually involves sharing interpretation via kinesthetic copycat moves made possible by pairing instructors for synchronized runs. First, the instructor designated as "the leader" makes a series of turns. The leaders are encouraged to make synchronizeable turns, using consistent speed and rhythm to help the follower replicate the leader's movements.

The skier following is encouraged to describe—in a nonjudgmental way—what he or she saw and felt while replicating the leader's turns. A follower's introduction might sound something like this: "When I was skiing your turns, I found that I had to use more steering at initiation. We were increasing our edge angles as we neared the bottom of each turn."

Scott Sady

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Identifying movement differences without passing judgment is more likely to reach a mind that's open for discussion of how a particular skill blend can be advantageous.

Such a scenario is not set up as a typical teacher-student relationship; the leader is simply demonstrating his or her own turns, and the follower's only role is to sense evident differences. For purposes of this exercise, the leader is not a better or worse skier than the follower, and keeping this in mind should help prevent any confusion of roles as the follower takes the lead (and the leader now follows).

Switching position (but not roles), the skier who initially followed does his or her best to describe what the other will sense when taking on the role of replicator: "When you ski my turns, you may get that 'upside-down' sensation at the top of the turn, and maybe what feels like a 'premature edge release' as you near the bottom of the turn." The speaker can elaborate, offering sensations and sounds, identifying where snow sprays from the skis—anything, just so long as he or she avoids using qualitative descriptors such as "better," "not enough," or "too much." They should refrain from offering suggestions, tips, refinements, or instruction of any kind. *De*scribe, not *pre*scribe, is the rule.

Because the exercise can get really confusing for onlookers in terms of who the leader is and who the follower is, the thing to remember is that only one person can describe what felt different to him or her. Once roles are understood for the next run, the new follower is free to speculate on what will feel different to the other. After leading and then following, the skier who now follows has had to confirm or reject the original description of sensations.

Instructors who participate in this kind of drill say the exercise helps them attune to movement patterns, enhancing their sensitivity to the less-visible, perceptual, and often affected elements of their students' skiing. The instructor learns to sense beyond what he or she is seeing, tuning the descriptions and explanations into words of connection rather than correction. Such descriptions and explanations invite consideration and dialogue rather than defensiveness, and ultimately employing something like the DIRT model can provide informational integrity in the technical sense as well.

When considering how this re-creation of movement differs from demonstrating what a student's progression "looks like," teachers need to think again about avoiding outright imitation. Make it clear to everyone involved that the leaders in this exercise are not simply mimicking the followers. Synchronized tracking followed by leading is designed to be a respectful tool for initiating change that emphasizes differences via positive demonstration. Students should not be skiing behind their fellow students, lampooning with wild gyrations; it's unlikely that they'd want someone doing the same thing to them.

Sensing and then conveying such experience can involve a simple, single observation. For instance, one skier might offer input along the lines of "I felt more pressure on my heels." Individual responses will vary, though, and participants can choose to pinpoint and describe sensations that include descriptions of the internal, emotional, and physical (e.g., talking about the feeling of contact points such as where the skier interfaces with equipment or portraying a quality such as muscular tension). Inviting students to share such information and helping them practice sympathetic re-creation can help them succeed on the hill.

[REPEAT AFTER YOU]

Identifying movement differences without passing judgment is more likely to reach a mind that's open for discussion of how a particular skill blend can be advantageous. Your physical interpretation of a skier's progress can help you recognize the drawbacks in the movement patterns. Say, for example, that a student's skiing in the moguls displays his or her excessive fear or hesitation (just as you have likely skied with others who demonstrate a converse tendency toward abandon that seems imprudent given their skill sets). Your "read" on the skier gives you the chance to talk about what's happening in a clear manner that should be easily understood.

Practice modifying your shadowing movements over a series of runs to help isolate and identify variation within the skills of the skier you are observing. In so doing, you should be better able to point out the value of the movement pattern in use, even as you prepare to help the skier change it. Strong application of, say, rotary movements can either cost the skier dearly or be used in lieu of another more applicable skill. Edging would be a good example of such a movement. In one situation, a racer might need to be persuaded to acknowledge the value of slipping skills in the moguls, just as the mogul skier needs to use higher edge angles on the course.

It's your job to use what you've learned from your interpretation to provide such information without listeners feeling that their go-to technique is being completely disregarded. After you've acknowledged situations where your student's "strength" is most applicable, he or she is likely to accept that there are situations when a particular skill bias can interfere with the desired outcome.

Sizing up students' skills with the help of quiet, thoughtful re-creation of movement offers instructors a chance for increased accuracy, both in the comprehension of their students' skiing experience and the ability to describe the images, sensations, and concepts that, when shared, can lead to improvement. 32°

Ron Shepard is the snowsports director at Michigan's Crystal Mountain Resort. He is a PSIA-certified Level III instructor and examiner, and a frequent contributor to 32 Degrees.

Scott D.W. Smith

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SnowSports 360

PSIA-AASI Fiscal Picture in Focus

by CRAIG ALBRIGHT
Vice President, Operations

I wrote last season about the many challenges PSIA-AASI faced going into the 2008–09 fiscal year. To recap, the year was punctuated by several challenges:

- Completing separation of shared staff and infrastructure with NSP, along with related staffing changes—a process that increased operating costs and capital investments to maintain member services.
- Making our way through the banking crisis and recession, which decreased revenue from catalog sales and interest.
- Redesigning—and, more to the point, rethinking—our two primary communication vehicles: the association magazine and website.
- Implementing the single largest operational project in the association's history: designing and implementing association management software and a network to effectively link 10 companies and streamline 10 different business practices.

In the face of such major events, I'm pleased to inform PSIA and AASI members that both associations remained on solid financial footing during fiscal year 2008–09. Responsible leadership and management on the part of the national board of directors and our professional staff made this possible. PSIA-AASI continues to focus its efforts on member benefits and services in assisting you in your role as a teaching pro.

This article summarizes information drawn from an independent auditor's consolidated report of the associations and the PSIA-AASI Education Foundation (the Foundation) for the 2008–09 fiscal year that began July 1, 2008, and ended June 30, 2009. All figures show combined gross income and expenses for PSIA-AASI and the Foundation. To understand how revenue is generated and distributed, please consult the accompanying financial charts.

[REVENUE]

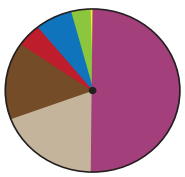
Revenue for the 2008–09 fiscal year was about even with that of the previous year: $2,865,460 in 2008–09, compared to $2,635,630 in 2007–08. These figures reflect gross revenue to the association.

Membership dues last year accounted for 50 percent of PSIA-AASI's total income, meaning that the membership contributed 50 cents for every dollar of the associations' income. The remaining 50 cents was generated through sales of catalog items (19 cents), sponsorship revenue (15 cents), advertising (5 cents), and education seminars (7 cents). Interest, miscellaneous revenue, and grant funds released from restriction represented the remaining 4 cents.

The board of directors feels it is important that non-dues income remains tied to the activities of the membership. Some examples of the sources of that income include specially priced merchandise available through partnership programs and the *Accessories Catalog*, educational materials, and activities such as the PSIA National Academy, the AASI Rider Rally, and the promotion of the value of membership to area management, suppliers, and the public. Catalog sales, interest income, and education seminar income were lower because of economic conditions. However, one-time opportunities, sponsorship, and increased membership contributed to revenue increases.

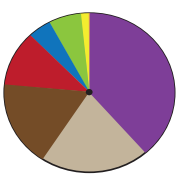
[EXPENSES]

Expenses in 2008–09 included general operating costs as well as the costs of publications, marketing, the cost of catalog goods sold, insurance, education committees and programs, training



Income

50.2%	Dues
19.1%	Cat. Sales
15.4%	Sponsorships
4.6%	Advertising
6.9%	Courses and Seminars
3.7%	Interest/Misc.
0.06%	Grant Funds



Expenses

42.6%	Personnel
16.3%	Cost of Sales
13.8%	Education Seminars/Projects
14.3%	General and Administrative
4.2%	Marketing and Meetings
6%	Publications
2.8%	Miscellaneous

programs, teams, research and development, legal and accounting activities, and member services. Those expenses totaled $2,840,501 in 2008–09, compared to $2,785,322 last year.

All of PSIA-AASI's expenditures support the associations' overall educational and promotional goals—and our fundamental commitment to serve members—by carefully directing those expenditures to address membership needs at the divisional, national, and snowsports area levels. A major aim is to enhance educational products and support education programs as well as the work of our committees and teams. This commitment was illustrated by the fact that during the 2008–09 fiscal year, 20 percent of total expenditures, i.e., 20 cents of every dollar, was directly related to the associations' education programs as represented by training and events, teams, committees and programs, and publications.

The remaining 80 cents of each dollar spent roughly broke down into: personnel (43 cents), cost of catalog goods (16 cents), marketing and meetings (4 cents), general and administrative expenses (14 cents), and depreciation/miscellaneous (less than 3 cents).

Overall, the associations finished the year with a gain of $24,959. Total assets—otherwise known as member equity—increased from $2,645,724 in 2007–08 to $3,234,795 in 2008–09, primarily due to investments in technology and infrastructure to better serve you.

If you have questions about the PSIA-AASI financial statements or would like a copy of the 2008–09 audit, please write to:

Craig Albright
Operations Vice President
PSIA-AASI
133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200
Lakewood, CO 80228

Income		
Dues	$1,438,665	50.2%
Catalog sales	547,198	19.1%
Sponsorships	442,238	15.4%
Advertising	132,231	4.6%
Courses/Seminars	197,872	6.9%
Interest/Donations/ Misc.	105,503	3.7%
Grant funds released from restriction	1,753	.06%
	$2,865,460	**100%***
*Does not add up to 100% due to rounding		

Expenses		
Education Programs/ Teams	$390,941	13.8%
Publications	170,090	6.0%
Personnel	1,209,315	42.6%
Cost of goods sold	464,004	16.3%
Marketing/Meetings	119,679	4.2%
General/Administrative	405,365	14.3%
Depreciation/Misc.	81,107	2.8%
	$2,840,501	**100%**

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Angulating with a Purpose: Coaching an Autistic *Wunderkind*

Text and photos by FRANK O'CONNOR

Each member of PSIA-AASI likely has a student who comes to represent what it truly means to be a snowsports instructor. For some, it may be the kid who—having never seen snow before the lesson—finishes the day with a total knack for skiing powder. For others, it may be the dad who learns to snowboard so he can reconnect with his teenage daughter. For me, this student is Scott, a 17-year-old Canadian teenager with autism, who's taught me to think on my feet and appreciate the sheer joy of skiing, even when that activity bears little resemblance to the ideal forms we've seen in winter sports films and on the busy slopes.

An instructor at Western New York's HoliMont Ski Area, I was pulled from the race program a few years ago to work on a special assignment within the resort's Phoenix Adaptive Ski Program. That "assignment" turned out to be helping Scott develop and grow as a skier, after his original instructor and mentor unexpectedly passed away over the summer. I had taught deaf and legally blind skiers before, but this was my first experience being around someone with autism—on skis or otherwise.

As spelled out in "The Intricacies of Autism" on page 52, autism is a disorder that affects the brain's ability to process information. For some, such as those living with Asperger's Syndrome, for example, the symptoms may be subtle and might consist primarily of inappropriate responses to otherwise ordinary social circumstances. For others, such as Scott, the symptoms run much deeper. He can't feed, dress, or bathe himself. Although he can occasionally put several words together, he usually doesn't communicate verbally, and grasps the meaning of words only when they are repeated several times by others. When speaking to Scott, it's difficult to know whether any of the words are even registering.

As my first season with Scott progressed, it became apparent that my primary responsibilities would be to tap into his uncanny—if unconventional—abilities, and his unbeatable enthusiasm.

WHO'S TEACHING WHO?

I had seen Scott ski a few times, as he was hard to miss with his wide stance and continually bouncing torso, persistently bobbing up and down and side-to-side in sync with the rhythm of his sporadically braking skis. Unable to slide in a parallel mode, Scott's dominant technique has always been an overly wide, sometimes ironclad wedge (photo 1).

As you might expect of someone with autism, Scott seemed to be in a world of his own most of the time—and his world apparently has its own soundtrack. On the chance that you happened to ski in his vicinity, you might hear an occasional song ("Oh Susanna, don't you cry for me . . .") or an excited internal dialog ("I know what to do! I know what to do!"). As I was soon to discover, on a conversational level this is as good as communication gets with Scott. Knowing that he couldn't tell me about himself or what he wanted to get out of his lessons, my obvious concerns were *what* to teach him and *how* to teach him.

Editor's note: The teaching methods set forth in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect tactics promoted by PSIA or the American Teaching System. In devising lesson strategies for any student—but particularly students in an adaptive snowsports setting—the key, as presented here, is to promote safety, fun, and learning (in that order); heed policies of snowsports school management; consult parents or caregivers, if possible; and think creatively to address student wants and needs.

Photo 1. Scott's typical technique is characterized by a wide wedge.

In order to discover "what to teach," I skied and skied some more with him, exploring different trails and encountering varying levels of difficulty on the hill—with me constantly observing his technique (and on-snow personality) in an attempt to distinguish between his necessary and non-necessary movements. Such careful observation led to the discovery that Scott certainly had the ability to ski without a wedge. The trick was to convince his body and mind that there was another, easier way to ski, one that would not necessarily eliminate his already highly ingrained skills.

Figuring out "how to teach" him was more problematic, as I was given no preliminary suggestions as to how I might get through to his cognitive functions. Given our conversational limitations, I had to find a new form of communication. Although he wasn't able to respond to normal verbal commands, I discovered that Scott could—and would—respond to certain visual cues. To cite a specific teaching trick, I would often block his downhill path by simply stopping in front of him in the middle of a traverse. Such a "herding" move forced him to consider his options in terms of moving forward, and, hopefully, encouraged him to turn downhill. Scott normally was unfazed by such a temporary inconvenience. He'd usually make the necessary downhill turn and then go right back to the business of cruising across the fall line in the opposite direction. (Because Scott could already handle every trail at HoliMont by the time I met him, on-snow control wasn't that much of an issue. That is, there was never any real danger that he'd actually run into me.)

More often than not, his facial expression remained unchanged, although on occasion there was definite eye contact that made me think he had a pretty good understanding of the situation at hand. Projecting on his thoughts, I could almost hear him say, "Come off it, Frank; you're in my way again!" Just as often, though, he would use the speed from his traverse to simply ski by me on my uphill side. After watching him blow by me a few times, I learned to make on-the-fly adjustments as necessary to ensure that this happened as infrequently as possible. Two could play this game.

Beside the obvious element of control, I had a far more practical reason for using this blocking strategy with Scott. I wanted him to turn sooner, rather than later, in order to eliminate as much traversing as possible. The long-term goal was to trigger an automatic response in Scott that would help him form a non-wedged, somewhat parallel turn. In addition, if I could interrupt most of these traverses quickly, he'd be forced into making movements that more closely corresponded to those of linked turns.

As we moved to more difficult terrain, it became apparent that Scott wasn't as locked into that wedge as I had thought.

Another critical reason to force Scott to turn was to help me maintain a sense of real, rather than symbolic, control over the lesson.

WEDGE ISSUES

As we moved to more difficult terrain, it became apparent that Scott wasn't as locked into that wedge as I had thought. Additionally, as the pitch increased, it wasn't uncommon for his skis to match past the fall line as he came out of each turn. On the steepest slopes, the matching coincided with a very noticeable and skillful angulation.

Although no one else seemed to have noticed it before, Scott's kinesthetic/proprioceptive senses obviously worked in concert to create an optimal balanced position simply by skiing. It was clear that he'd never been told how to do any of this. (I've since learned that Scott's variable body positions and movement patterns may relate, in part, to his diagnosis of autism. Many people with autism seek specific sensory stimulation, which can come through muscles engaged in a big pressure wedge, fast speed that creates wind on their face, or skiing on corduroy snow that sends a bumpy sensation through the soles of the feet.)

Today, Scott bores easily on those trails. In an instant he can go from traverse to mid-turn and then become a hurtling object. Regarding the latter, this is obviously not acceptable, and I do have to chase after and slow him down.

In addition to his uncanny balancing abilities, Scott started to exhibit some serious multitasking capabilities. He had acute awareness of his location on a slope, evidenced in part by where he chose to turn. This also became obvious in his ability to escape or simply sidestep potentially challenging situations.

The aforementioned matching was a clear indication that Scott's upper ski was not fixed to the slope and that its position was relatively incidental—after the fall line—at the end of the turn. At the beginning of any turn, he uses the same upper ski to wedge, go parallel, or something between as that ski is crucial both in initiating the subsequent turn

sequence and in determining the radius of that turn.

Similarly, he uses the downhill ski as an antenna, feeling out the snow both in terms of texture and friction, with his brain taking in the information needed to retain control, maintain flow, accelerate, decelerate, or move into the next turn. (Blind skiers often use the same ski placement tactics to elicit sensation that helps them recognize slope conditions.) Clearly, his brain and body were in constant communication, and possibly at a higher level than is the case with most skiers.

Because Scott doesn't learn things the way most skiers do, conventional teaching strategies have a limited effect on him. Information you could normally pass along to an average skier in a few words can only be experienced by Scott over a much longer period of time. This was the crux of the "problem" for previous teachers. He already knew how to ski in a wedge, but he actually needed to unlearn the wedge as a basic operating principle. It became necessary to replace old muscle memories with newer ones that were based on a more "natural" stance.

Most people don't usually walk with a wide, wedgelike carriage, and, since Scott doesn't either, it made sense that skiing with a relatively normal stance also seemed like a reasonable task to accomplish. I set out to reprogram how Scott skis by retraining his leg muscles and challenging his thought processes.

SCOTT (NOT) FREE

After clearing my plan with area management and his parents, I set about to broaden Scott's horizons. My fundamental plan was to deny Scott the wedge, not so that he could ski parallel, but so that he would have the opportunity to stand more naturally on his skis. As with everything else, telling Scott to keep his feet together was pointless. But forcing his feet to stay together was a different story; if he literally couldn't separate his feet, he wouldn't be able to form a wedge. At that point his legs, and brain, would have to come to terms with all kinds of new sensations. If he were able to turn his feet more or less simultaneously, that would be an added bonus.

I knew that the plan alone could hardly guarantee parallel turns. Then again, my ultimate goal wasn't just to get him to ski parallel. I wanted Scott to use his legs, body, and brain in a whole new way. After considering several approaches, weighing benefits against drawbacks, I finally settled on one method that would severely limit the width of Scott's stance yet still maintain enough independent leg action to provide a reasonable amount of flexibility and safety. The mechanism I chose to use to restrict his leg movement involved an ordinary bungee cord, fastened low around his boots. I used a cord that allowed him to keep his feet about eight inches apart, but would also allow him, under the stress of skiing, to expand the distance between his boots by several more inches.

Because Scott doesn't learn things the way most skiers do, conventional teaching strategies have a limited effect on him.

The bungee cord gave Scott a modest amount of freedom, but it never allowed him to get even close to his ingrained, excessively wide stance. At the outset of the bungee experiment, there was the possibility that Scott might step onto his own skis and fall flat on his face. At slower, snail-like speeds, this was not a concern. But as speeds progressed, his chances of tripping up would likely increase. So from the very beginning, I fastened a separate restraining tether securely around his waist. *[Editor's note: Another safety tactic regarding the use of a bungee cord is to knot the ends of the cord and thread it under the treadle of the heel binding so that the skis can come off and the legs are not held together in the event of a fall. When employing a bungee cord, many instructors also opt to equip the skis with a ski bra or bungee bra.]*

On the hill I followed Scott in close proximity, holding the tether as an emergency backup system to be used only in the case of imminent challenges or excessive speed. Without such challenges or speed issues, though, I put no restriction on Scott's actions. He was free to turn however he wished, whenever he wished. Simple as all that might sound, the area's 20-turn beginner slope proved to be quite a challenge for Scott!

While I attempted to move Scott along toward the world of parallel, I also gave him all the time and room he needed. I could wait as long as it took for him to figure things out. He, on the other hand, had a lower patience threshold than I would have liked. When his skis turned uphill to a stop (as they often did) he became discouraged—because he hadn't intended to stop at all. Nevertheless, I'd give him a significant window of opportunity before gently nudging him forward with a bit of acceleration that mimicked the pace of a brisk walk. Gradually, the two of us found ourselves on the same page. He knew that I expected a more-or-less continuous effort on his part, and I still prepared for occasional instances of frustration and annoyance.

Whenever I'd remove the bungee in the middle of one of those early lessons, I could sense his immediate relief. He would also resume his standard wedge technique as if nothing at all had happened. At some point in every lesson I would have him wear the bungee cord around his ankles in an attempt to move beyond whatever he'd done the previous session.

When it seemed that his frustration might have a negative impact, however, I'd simply remove the bungee. During the early stage I wanted the bungee strategy to function more as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, skiing the whole mountain. If there is no bungee, Scott to this day will still revert to the wedge as his basic turning principle. On many occasions, however, we'll simply do laps on the steepest trail at HoliMont, making about eight nonstop runs per hour with little regard for stance issues. The bungee is always in my pocket, but oftentimes all-out fun is simply the order of the day.

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There's an easier way.

If you think teaching kids requires outrageous gimmicks, over-the-top fanfare, and sweaty synthetic fur, think again. Trade in your costume collection for a copy of the revised ***Children's Instruction Manual*** and get some guidance on delivering creative and inspirational, yet totally pro lessons for the kiddos. It's packed with core information as well as helpful hints, tricks, and tips to guide you in educating and entertaining young skiers and riders. Get yours at **www.TheSnowPros.org**, or from the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*.

The Intricacies of Autism

by BETH FOX

As teachers in public school districts prepared their classrooms and activities for the 2009–10 school year this past fall, they likely encountered an emphasis on prescribed teaching methods for children with autism. According to the Autism Society (www.Autism-Society.org), one in every 150 people in the United States is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Autism, in all of its forms, is the fastest growing serious developmental disability in the nation.

Considering those numbers, ski and ride schools across the country are destined to serve children with autism in this season's lessons. (While this article primarily addresses ASD with regard to children, keep in mind that many adults may also be living with one form of autism or another.) For those of you who will be working with these clients, the information that follows can help you provide outstanding guest service.

What Is Autism?

The term "autism spectrum disorders" applies to a broad range of neurodevelopmental conditions that can lead to the following challenges:

- Difficulties with regard to reciprocal social interaction, i.e., the ability to relate to others and their actions
- Difficulties related to inappropriate verbal and nonverbal communication, including making appropriate verbal and nonverbal exchanges of information as well as trouble interpreting facial expressions and body language
- A markedly restricted range of interests, including self-imposed restrictions, routines, and activities

People diagnosed with ASD each seem to be affected in their own way and to varying degrees, from mild to severe.

Common ASD Diagnoses

Autism: Children diagnosed with autism generally have mild-to-severe cognitive involvement and limited ability in relating to and communicating with others; they also typically exhibit a tendency to stick to rigid routines and repetitive behaviors.

Asperger's Syndrome: Compared to autism, children with Asperger's do not exhibit a significant delay in cognition and may not find the practical use of language so severely challenging.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS): Children with this disorder often experience disconnects in peer communication and relationships, unusual sensitivities and overstimulation, behavioral rigidity (as the result of self-imposed routines), and a preference for solitary activities.

Childhood Disintegrative Disorder: After approximately four years of typical development, these children experience a loss of language, problems with self-care abilities, and a lack of interest in their social environment.

Accommodating People with Autism

If operating at a resort located on federal lands, snowsports schools are required—by Section 504 of the area's United States Forest Service permit—to provide reasonable accommodation for access, services, and equipment to people with disabilities. Even if your resort doesn't operate on public lands, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the same type of accommodations from all businesses that offer services to the public. (Some snowsports schools are caught off guard by requests for special services, but leeway exists via protection provided by the "reasonable accommodation" language in the law. In short, the law recommends a 72-hour-prior-notice period for special services—i.e., a reasonable amount of time for a resort to procure the appropriate equipment or qualified instructor to provide services to the guest with special needs.)

People diagnosed with ASD each seem to be affected in their own way and to varying degrees, from mild to severe.

Get Parents Involved

Everyone in your school should demonstrate care and sensitivity when gathering information from parents about the needs of their child:

- Reassure the parent(s) that your snowsports school will do its best to offer a positive experience for their child.
- Consider using HIPPA (Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act) standards as a guideline for reaching a balance of privacy and necessary disclosure with regard to parent questions. Also make sure that instructors and those at the front desk have an awareness of the sensitivity required when keeping records and discussing children and their related special needs.
- Ask parents if they are comfortable speaking about their child's diagnosis, behavior, and accommodations (if any) made for the child at school. If such a discussion ensues, be sure to talk about the particulars of communication and communication devices that can be used with the student. Also do your best to cover the student's cognitive abilities, social interaction skills, preferred activities, typical behavior (as well as any negative behavior and recovery techniques), and external stimulation that tend to disrupt learning. Ask about special instructional methods, classroom or class-member arrangements, equipment needs, processes to follow, or schedules that are particularly helpful to the child.

Tips for Working with Students with ASD

- Take time with each student's parents, guardians, or authorized representatives to learn about his or her typical daily routine, including snack and rest periods, and stick with it as much as possible during the lesson. Coordinate the plan for the day with

your contact person, and create a detailed schedule that will allow you, throughout the day, to know what comes next for the child at any point in time. When appropriate, you can use picture schedules, with activities and timing indicated by icons that can be crossed off when the activity is finished.

- Introduce activities and keep moving, without lengthy verbal explanation or sedentary periods (both of which can agitate students or make it difficult to get them back into the lesson's flow). To ease transitions from one activity to another, use scheduling cues and/or gentle countdown reminders before activity changes.
- Communicate with the child in his or her preferred mode: e.g., using a PDA, text messaging, sign language or gestures, spoken or written words, or drawings.
- Do what you can to place class activities within an environment that's conducive to the child's needs. Avoid areas where you might have an abundance of potential distractions such as excessive wind, manmade or natural noise, crowds, and lifts.
- Avoid meltdowns by providing brief-yet-frequent rest and relaxation breaks during the lesson. Also, be sure to allow the child a predetermined amount of time to engage in a favorite but suitable activity during those breaks.
- Understand that children with ASD gravitate toward internal and external stimuli, and may engage in behavior such as skiing fast, seeking out bumpy terrain, or riding close to trees. These kinds of actions are usually engaged in by a child seeking sensory stimulation, and may be appropriate if you as the instructor have control and the activities are performed in a safe environment and manner.
- Create skill development activities that produce positive sensory stimulation when practicing a maneuver. A small quarterpipe snake can be used to teach turning and offer sensations that prompt the child to repeat the maneuver.

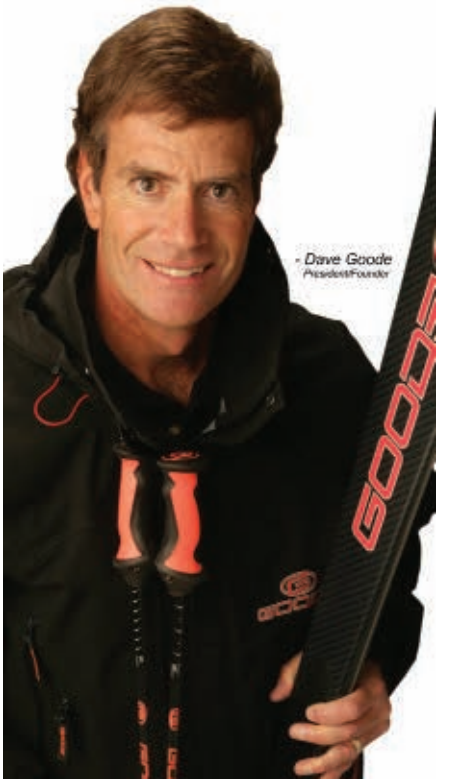
Equipment and Safety

- Children who lack motor control may need to use such tools as an Edgie-Wedgie, ski bra, or other tip-retention device.
- You may want to attach reins to the tips of the skis so that you can help the skier initiate turns and, ultimately, promote direction change and slowing. Gentle side pulls can help guide the skis through the shaping phase of the turn. Be sure to follow your adaptive snowsports school's protocols for creating and using reins.
- Children who are tactilely defensive are often annoyed by goggles, mittens, helmets, and other cold-weather or protective gear and may discard their cold-weather gear. Therefore, take care to protect the child from the elements while creating a tolerable situation for him or her. If possible, introduce the child to winter wear ahead of time by inviting the student to choose items, coloring pictures of the gear, or wearing it for a few moments at a time to build up a tolerance for it. Sometimes taping a helmet buckle closed or using mittens that are attached to coat sleeves can help prevent loss.
- Remember that all behavior is a form of communication. Do your best to understand what is being conveyed by your student's behavior, and adjust schedule, activities, and/or stimulus to create a balanced situation that will help prevent a meltdown.
- When using adapted equipment, special processes, or other methodologies, always consider the individual child's needs and whether the actions you've taken are beneficial for safety, learning, or experience.
- Meet with parents after the lesson to let them know how things progressed, and discuss any needs or concerns you want to share with regard to upcoming lessons.

Want More Information and Training?

Consider attending a future PSIA-AASI National Adaptive Academy, hosted in conjunction with Disabled Sports USA, at The Hartford Ski Spectacular. The event typically occurs during the second week of December at Breckenridge, Colorado. You can also visit an adaptive program in your region and attend training sessions. To learn more about the academy or regional adaptive programs, go to www.DSUSA.org. 32°

Beth Fox is the operations manager for the National Sports Center for the Disabled in Winter Park, Colorado. An adaptive examiner for PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division, she travels internationally to help resorts and sports organizations create services and sports programs for people with special needs.



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INTO THE SUNSET

The most dramatic steps in Scott's development toward parallel thus far have occurred on Sunset, a long and wide trail that normally would have put him to sleep. The beginning of the trail is very low-key, and that aspect made it a perfect location for implementing more intense, follow-up bungee-based training (photo 2).

As the number of Scott's self-initiated turns gradually increased, such turns were no longer that remarkable. He had progressed from skiing barely a fifth of the trail to about half of it in a relatively short period of time. With the added momentum that accompanies a steeper pitch, his turns became much more dynamic. The energy from his skis shot him so far across and back up the hill that he often came to a screeching halt, and the angulation generated by the forces of the turn was nothing short of incredible. It wasn't too long before Scott was able to ski nonstop from top to bottom, essentially unaided—although at this point the tether was still retained as an emergency brake.

During these runs I quickly learned that the trick to keeping up with Scott was to stay within about a ski-length of him at all times, watching his feet and hips for telltale signs of an upcoming turn so that I could duplicate his turn rhythm. Despite some awkwardness and lack of finesse in these newly found "parallel turns," he rarely seems out of sorts. That is, he never doubts his ability, and his demeanor never changes. Even as the tips of his skis seem on the brink of crossing, he finds a way to make things right—or at least good enough. On the edge of control, maybe, but rarely out of control. His ability to instantaneously respond to situations and conditions reminds me a bit of an envelope-pushing Bode Miller. Although slightly back on his skis at the beginning of most turns, he actively and continuously projects his center of mass into the center of the new arc, allowing the skis to catch up with his body.

SCOTT (SORT OF) FREE

Much to his credit, Scott (may have) figured out how to occasionally escape from the bungee. After maximizing the lateral tension at the beginning of a turn, he would allow his stance to narrow quickly, releasing the stored energy of the cord and undoing its connection around his feet. I say "may have" because with Scott it's often extremely difficult to distinguish between chance occurrence and mischievous intent.

While bungeed, Scott simply cannot ski straight: he is always in a turn and therefore, in a sense, self-arresting. That is, every single turn finishes uphill, either to a stop or to a late crossover into a new turn. As he gets more and more comfortable after each successive run, the turns and linkages become more natural and refined. Scott finds himself in the speed of his descent, loving every minute of it.

Attention is now focused primarily on redirecting his skis back down the hill sooner rather than later in the attempt to "program" his mind and body into naturally linking turns. Depending on the length of his skis, he can arc turns comfortably at speeds approaching 30 mph. On occasion, as necessary, I or another instructor might take hold of Scott's uphill elbow to guide his center of mass across the skis and toward the fall line. In these situations, Scott is usually running out of speed as the skis turn uphill and he is simply too delayed in moving into the next turn. He is treated as a skier like any other, with no particular retraints. His entourage serves primarily to keep him on the trail, turning, and to prevent him from pointing his skis directly down the fall line. Collisions are also obviously discouraged. Although not tethered, he does still need some guidance at certain critical moments. One of these days he might realize that going straight down the hill, even bungeed, is an option.

His ability to instantaneously respond to situations and conditions reminds me a bit of an envelope-pushing Bode Miller.

Photo 2. Scott demonstrates near-perfect form with bungee in place, largely unaided by the tether.

So far Scott and I are still using Sunset for most of our bungee-bound adventures. It's a place where he feels at ease, even when he's trying something challenging. We do occasionally ski steeper runs, but I can sense Scott's apprehension when the pitch increases and the run narrows. Because the immediate objective is to foster and develop a familiar comfort zone, we increase the challenge only gradually in terms of both terrain and narrow, bungeed stance.

Because Scott's current near-parallel technique is largely a function of strong hip angulation and countering movements, his turns tend to lack some of the sophistication and control of more advanced skiers. Where angulation formerly was the result of a cleanly described arc, that angulation now serves a dual purpose in that it often, but not always, combines with counter-rotation to provide the most advanta-

Photo 3. Full of surprises, Scott demonstrates emergency counter-rotation.

geous body positioning for Scott to start the turn (photo 3).

The agenda for improving his skills in the near future includes a concerted effort to introduce shaping in the form of better turn initiation and more controlled rotary movements in the feet and legs. To this end, I'd like to bungee him to snowblades back on the beginner slope, thus forcing him to stand more centered on his skis and to make more gradual movements.

I also plan to tether him again, as such a new activity could prove to be a challenge for Scott. As his skill set acclimates to the new sensations, I'm hoping he'll maintain his stubbornness to meet the challenge head-on.

And then there's the idea of getting Scott on a snowboard. Who knows how he might handle that prospect?

CONCLUSION

Although my initial assignment was to discover who Scott was as a skier, the task, in the end, wasn't that different from analyzing any other skier's abilities. I've been part of a very special situation, though, in the sense that every decision in the course of his lessons has been made with regard to a thorough consideration both for his safety and the uniqueness of his physical and mental abilities.

The emergency cord directly addressed the issue of uncontrolled speed, but at the same time allowed Scott time to communicate with me visually as to what he wanted to do on the hill. I simply had to pay attention to his body language, then physically respond yes or no. With the bungee, Scott essentially found a way to be comfortable with himself in a new situation.

Even as Scott's angulation has become something of a sight to behold, that's only one by-product of a larger mission. By finding a way for Scott to let go of the wedge as an instinctive

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Team Tip

Resurrecting the Lost Art of Rotation

by MIKE HAFER
Photos by AARON ROSEN

What a difference a decade makes: We've elected two extremely different presidents, watched gasoline prices triple (and then halve), and seen drastic changes in ski equipment. Ten years ago, I was skiing on one of my very first pairs of shaped skis, measuring in at 183 cm. Back then, the idea of hitting the snow on length-challenged 183s was completely unnerving!

With the technological advances come changes in movement patterns and blends of movements. The first theory for shaped skis that I recollect was being told to carve both skis throughout the turn. My goal back then was to leave parallel arcs in the snow, but the way I interpreted this feedback was that I needed to put more weight on the inside foot to make that inside ski bend more. To get this to happen, I tipped my entire body to the inside of the turn. The result was that my shoulders tilted in toward the center of the turn, disrupting my balance over the outside ski (a condition some refer to as "banking"). As is often the case when learning something new, I took this idea too far.

The next shaped ski-specific theory was to ski with a wider stance. If I remember correctly, I was told that my feet should be shoulder width apart. Surprise; I took this idea too far. My stance was so wide; you could have driven a Mack truck through my legs. The wide stance locked up my hip joint, which in turn made my skiing extremely static. I wasn't able to separate upper and lower body movements, create angles, or flow from turn to turn. Skiing with my new wide stance made an easy mogul run next to impossible to ski. Every time I would try to ski over the top of a bump, my skis would diverge and I would end up unwillingly exiting my anticipated line.

Some of the race coaches I've skied with theorize that we should ski "square" to the skis throughout the turn. As an instructor, my understanding of skiing "square" translates into the upper body following the skis through the arc; as a result, the shoulders end up parallel to the side of the trail. Another way to look at skiing square is that the upper body turns as much as the legs do. Regardless of which definition you endorse, leg rotation is still the primary turning power in this scenario. Skiing square confused me because it ran contrary to my understanding of what "good skiing" was.

Not long ago I had the opportunity to revisit the idea of skiing square with some other coaches. After these conversations, it became clear to me that there was yet another idea of what square meant. This most recent opinion entailed aligning the upper body with the lead change of the skis. If you were to draw a line from one shoulder joint to the next and a line from one ski tip to the other, they should be parallel until the skier is ready to move into the next turn. This definition is more in line with my understanding of good skiing. But now I wonder, could this be another idea that has been taken too far?

While recently administering exams, I began to notice a common theme among instructors who were free skiing on their days off, quite a few of whom were skiing square to their skis (with the upper body following the skis through the arc). Some of the common challenges these instructors would encounter were the lack of anticipation from one turn to the next, the difficulty in managing pressure, and the loss of turning force that occurs as the skis realign with the body. Without anticipation or the torso directed toward the apex of the new turn, it seemed that the skiers had a more difficult time moving freely from one turn to the next. The turns appeared to be segmented rather than free flowing down the hill.

Photo 1. Robin Barnes demonstrates skiing "square," i.e., with the upper body matching the skis.

As for pressure management, when a skier's upper body follows the skis, there's a tendency to lower the hips, which, in turn, bends the tail of the ski, thereby accelerating the skis and potentially upsetting the balanced stance. However small the force of the body realigning may be, good skiing is about maximizing efficiency and using as much momentum as we can. In my opinion, skiing square is an inefficient movement pattern, and the best skiers on the hill are skiing into and out of counter by turning the skis beneath a stable upper body.

When skiing bumps and steeps, it's critical to ski into and out of counter, defined as the ability to turn the legs more than the upper body or separate the movements

"I like to use the best stuff...

Not just stuff somebody pays me to wear. That's why I hooked up with Hestra and developed my Pro Model glove. Every year we develop the glove further. My ideas don't only come from skiing, but from other sports, fashion and anything that inspires me."

Seth Morrison has worked with the Hestra R&D team since 2005.

Pro Model by Seth Morrison

of the upper and lower body. Counter is developed by twisting the legs at the ball and socket joints of the hip. When performed correctly, the skier is able to adapt to a variety of terrain and conditions.

A skidded short turn is commonly used in mogul fields and on steep terrain. Throughout a skidded short turn, the skis remain relatively flat on the snow, and the skier applies greater twist from the femur. In a carved short turn, on the other hand, the skis tip higher, and therefore, the femur rotates less than during the skidded turn. With this being the case, it's easier to identify counter in a skidded short turn.

To improve a short turn and develop the separation that is necessary to efficiently link one turn to the next, a skier must improve on the twisting action of the legs. Pivot sideslips (photos 2–4) are a good drill for working on these skills. The idea behind this drill is to keep the skis as flat as possible while rotating the legs to pivot the skis. Two telltale signs of a good pivot slip are that the skier will be able to keep the boots tracking straight down the hill with minimal side-to-side movements, and his or her navel will point directly down the hill throughout the duration of the drill.

To accomplish this, the skier must remain balanced over the center of the skis. If the skier moves too far forward, the tip of the skis will hook up and create a turn instead of a pivot. If the skier is too far aft, the skis move forward and become difficult to pivot down the hill. Both skis have to release their edges at the same time and remain flat on the snow during the pivot. The center of mass should move down the hill to aid in the simultaneous release and flattening of the edges. Finally, both legs should twist at the same rate to create a parallel initiation.

The best time and place to practice pivot slips is first thing in the morning on a groomed intermediate run. Start on a particular grooming line, and try to keep your boots directly on top of that line. Next, try to link the pivot slips together. Begin with a 10-foot sideslip down the hill, pivot the skis by isolating twisting movements of the legs, and sideslip another 10 feet. Practice this drill until you gain a kinesthetic awareness of how the leg twists at the hip joint. Then transfer the twisting action to short turns. When you're ready to transfer these movements to skidded short turns, perform four pivot slips. Immediately after completion, ski into four short turns and repeat until you sense the same movement patterns during the short turns. In a carved short turn, the twisting sensation may not be as obvious, so it may require additional practice. When done correctly, you'll find that you now have the ability to make a variety of short turns.

Next, apply these short turns in more challenging terrain. Start with a steeper groomed run and then move into bumps and ungroomed steeps. As you can see in the photos, the separation occurs at the hip joint and allows the skier to anticipate the turns that lie ahead. Compare photos 4 and 5, and you'll notice that the skier displays similar alignment during the pivot drill and in the moguls.

Photo 2. The author is centered over his skis, anticipating the pivot.

Photo 3. The skis are flat on the snow and both legs are twisting simultaneously.

Photo 4. The author completes the pivot, centered over his skis.

Photo 5. The author demonstrates skiing into counter.

In a decade that has seen monumental political and economic changes, maybe skiing hasn't changed as much as we often think it has; instead, the skill blend itself has evolved a bit. Even with the winds of change blowing furiously, good skiing is still good skiing, a sport that incorporates edging, pressure, and rotation. 32°

Mike Hafer is a member of the PSIA Alpine Team and the assistant manager and technical director for the Northstar-at-Tahoe Ski and Snowboard School. In addition, he is a trainer at the North American Ski Training Center in Lake Tahoe, California.

Team Tip

Go for Simultaneous Snap in V-2A Skating

by J. SCOTT McGEE
Photos by HALSEY HEWSON

Sometimes when you're skating on a gentle descent or hard, fast snow, you can get into a rhythm that feels really good. Able to spring off of each ski, you gain an added boost by coordinating arm swings and pole pushes with every other skate push-off. You're able to savor balance, long glides, and the opportunity to accelerate from skate to skate.

Chances are it's the V-2 alternate (V-2A), or "open field skate," that you're doing. (This is the technique where you double pole with every other skate glide.) Chances are also good that with a bit of refinement—namely what I call a "simultaneous snap" that times a powerful skate push-off with the pole push—you could be balancing better, gliding longer, and getting more power out of your arms and legs.

GIVING IT THE GAS

If you think of the different skate maneuvers as gears in a transmission, the V-2A is the fourth gear. In order, those gears would be the diagonal V skate (which would equate to the rarely used "Low 1" you'd find in old pickup trucks), V-1, V-2, and V-2A. Representing fifth gear—or overdrive—is the no-pole "V-0" skating tactic. Anyway, when the terrain or snow conditions permit, shifting into the V-2A gear creates a freeing feeling of easy acceleration, like stomping on the gas at the top of a long downhill straightaway.

The V-2A provides longer glide with each skate, which requires alignment over a flat ski. Herein lies its efficiency. Balance can be tenuous at higher speeds, however, and reacting to changes in snow or terrain requires a practiced reflex to avoid catastrophe. On perfectly groomed nordic trails, it's possible to get right out over the gliding ski—in pursuit of the flat-ski-is-a-fast-ski advantage.

Occasionally skiers may over-tip to the outside, and have to hop back onto an inside edge. This momentary loss of balance is actually worth congratulating, as it's a good indicator that the skier is fully committed (maybe a bit too fully committed) to the gliding ski. It's proof that he or she can at least get the ski flat. Most beginners and intermediates stay "stuck between their inside edges" with a poor weight transfer. The rhythm and flow of the V-2A come to the rescue, providing a feeling of natural body movement onto and over the new gliding ski.

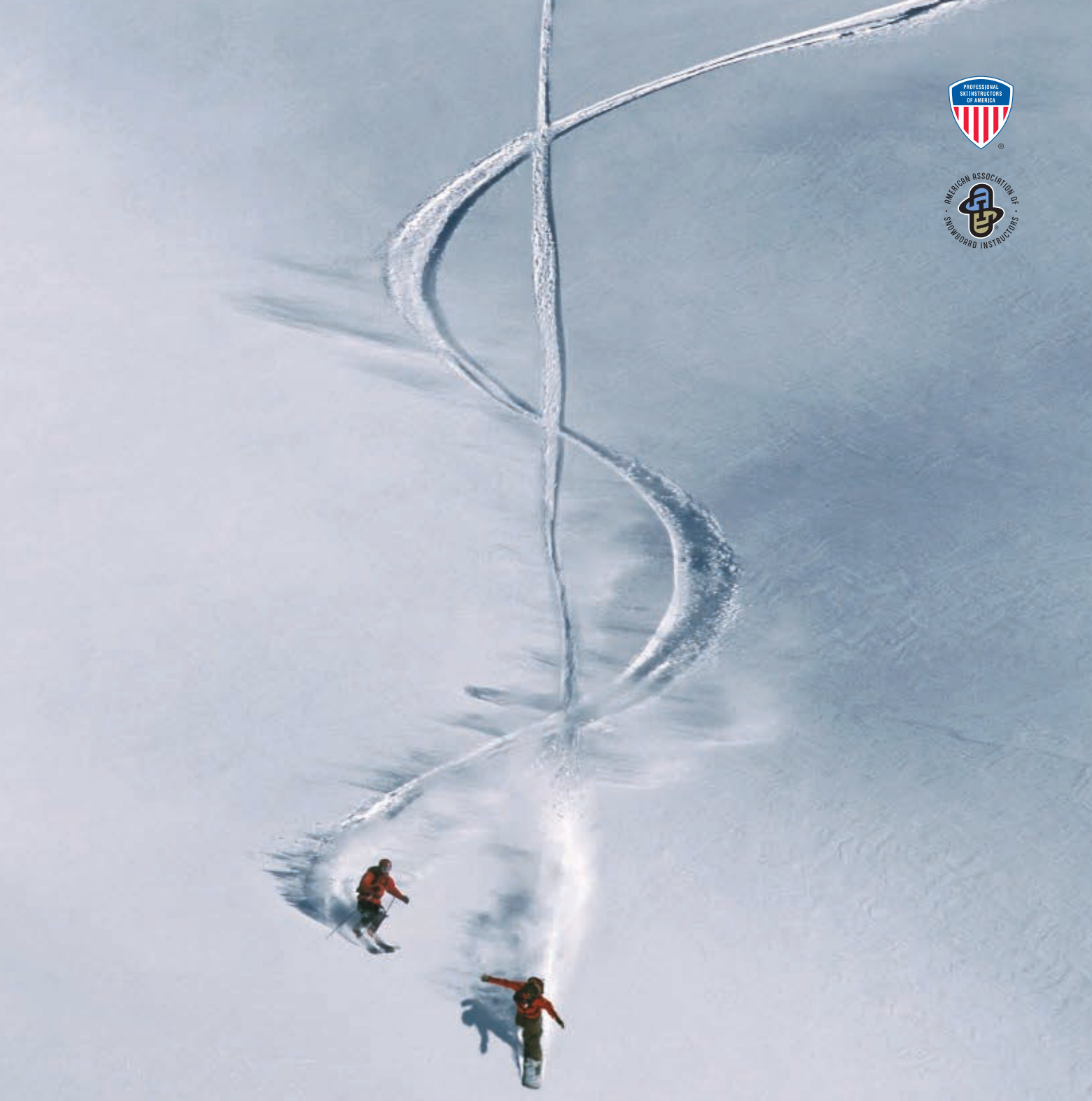
SNAP JUDGMENTS

So how do you do the V-2A? What is the timing? It's really defined by a very specific upper and lower body coordination that can be thought of as "simultaneous snap"—a powerful skate push-off timed with the pole push, or, alternately, the forward arm swing. Timing these two momentum-generating movements of the arms and legs increases the length of glide by increasing the power behind each push.

The three components of simultaneous snap are 1) the skate push-off with leg extension, 2) the wrist snap at the end of the pole push, i.e., the snap "back" as the arms extend and the poles leave the snow, and 3) the forward arm swing following the pole push. Timing the leg movements (edging and push-off) with the pole push finish or, alternately, the arm swing optimizes the efficiency in this skate timing. Thinking of this as a "snap" provides an audio and kinesthetic cue that adds power to the V-2A by timing the extension components of the upper and lower body together for optimal performance.

So the first major component of simultaneous snap would be a push-off, or extension, that happens as the whole leg extends away from the body as in any of the skating maneuvers. Easy skating

In the main part of this V2-alternate pole push, all the weight is still clearly on the left ski. As the arms follow through and "snap," the left ski's push-off will snap simultaneously.



CHA-CHING

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doesn't typically incorporate a snappy extension—a pronounced spring in your skating stride—but even at low intensity, a quick push-off movement (of the hips, knees, and ankles) adds extra power or "zing" to your push-off.

Find a hill you can confidently accelerate down, and determine the degree of added zing you'd like to apply. The reason this snappier V-2A timing is so crucial is that, at higher downhill speeds, accelerating requires a precise and potent push-off. Timed well, this extra power spells free distance and overall efficiency while pushing the speed envelope.

The second component, the pole push, provides additional power through a whip-like snapping motion toward the end of the pole push. The snap itself involves an extension of arms, like the finish of a full double-pole stroke. The powerful follow-through should happen in the shoulders, elbows, and wrists. This is unique to the V-2A (the V-1 and V-2 pole follow-through has all but disappeared as technique has evolved over the last few years). Most skiers rush the follow-through, shortening the pole push, because the body position feels vulnerable. When whizzing down the track, balanced on one ski and with both hands behind you, there's a natural tendency to want to get the hands back out in front.

The third component, a powerful forward arm swing, occurs in the poling recovery phase. From the fully extended arm position (with hands back), try to "throw" both arms down the track, swinging them into a "ready" position in front for the next pole push. When timed with the skate push-off, this quick and deliberate forward arm swing gets more of the body (more mass) moving down the track, which generates momentum in the direction of travel.

By itself, the extra push-off from this snappiness in the arms or legs adds a great deal of power to your skating. However, if the weight transfer and push-off is timed simultaneously with added "pop" from timely arm movements, the combined power sends you whizzing down the track.

Watch a rowing team and you'll see that the best team not only exhibits power in its strokes, but times them together almost perfectly. Team members rely on this synchronicity, because extending the glide phase allows them to cover distance efficiently (glide = free distance).

TEACHING TACTICS

Simultaneous snap comes naturally to experienced skiers and racers, but there's no reason intermediates and beginners can't also learn to synchronize their timing to realize immediate benefits. Here's a quick progression you can master yourself, then share with students:

1. Practice feeling a powerful pole finish. Most poling technique emphasizes "crashing" down on the poles at the beginning of a higher-tempo, shorter-poling cycle. The V-2A allows more time to complete a pole push and recovery. Focus on snapping with the arm extension, and carrying the momentum generated on a flat ski.
2. Then skate while trying to impart an additional blast of power at the end of the skate push-off by pushing off of the whole foot. Advanced skiers get that extra pop from pushing off the ball of their foot for added power; intermediate skiers will do better to think of stepping off of the whole foot.
3. Next, practice throwing both arms forward into a ready poling position (i.e., with hips forward, hands at shoulder height, and elbows bent). A great drill to feel the power of a forward arm swing is the speed-skater drill: Skate without poles, with one arm behind your back, and one arm swinging in time with the skate push-offs.
4. Finally, once these motions are felt independently, practice timing them together. The extra glide you get will put spring in your skate.

So whether you're new to V-2A timing or a seasoned veteran, find the timing that lets you synchronize the power moves of your upper and lower body. Be patient with yourself (and students), as many miles are required to master the timing, the flat-ski glide, and the balance at speed. But the rewards are great—a virtually effortless means to cruise downhill and a very cagey way to carry speed into hills as you begin to "downshift" to V-2 or V-1. 32°

J. Scott McGee is the coach of the PSIA Nordic Team and the senior manager for nordic training and guides for Jackson Hole Mountain Sports School in Wyoming. He spends his summers guiding climbs in the Grand Tetons for Exum Mountain Guides.

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Get on Track and Trail with Adaptive Nordic Skiing

by BEN ROBERTS, *PSIA-AASI Education Manager*

Nordic skiing has long appealed to two general populations: those who like to commune with nature and those who like to compete in hugely anaerobic races where they go as hard as they can and quite likely puke after crossing the finish line.

These days, both populations might very well include people with disabilities. PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team member Geoff Krill has been incorporating adaptive nordic into his own personal skiing as well as in his work at New England Disabled Sports, and says, "Adaptive nordic has been a great way for our program to mix things up and give things a different focus."

Whether you're a nordic instructor interested in serving the adaptive community or an adaptive instructor keen to explore a new recreational activity with your students, nordic adaptive skiing just might be your new niche. Instructors who are familiar with adaptive students can apply their experience and knowledge to the nordic discipline. Those who have nordic experience can apply their knowledge of nordic teaching and techniques to lessons with adaptive students and learn as they go.

Adaptive nordic skiing offers the same range of opportunities as "able-bodied" nordic skiing—and teaching the fundamentals is fairly simple. Just ask Jon Kreamelmeyer, a nordic instructor and coach who became involved in the adaptive side of the sport in the early 1990s as a guide skier for a visually impaired athlete. Kreamelmeyer, who went on to serve as head coach of the United States Disabled Cross Country Ski Team, says that, especially with regard to skiers who are able to stand, "The instruction and coaching is parallel to the instruction of an able-bodied skier. All of the same elements are there; everything applies."

The distinctions that do exist come into play when working with a person who takes to nordic trails by means of a sit-ski. Even though many common themes cross over between the standing and sitting varieties of adaptive nordic skiing, this article separates the two to cover the basics of instruction for each.

ADAPTIVE NORDIC – STANDING

Standing adaptive nordic skiing makes use of the full range of skate and classic techniques, although these techniques

Jon Kreamelmeyer

Greg Mallory, of the U.S. Adaptive Cross Country Ski Team, shows the form and determination that makes him one of the top athletes in the sport.

must be adapted to accommodate the skier's situation and his or her specific impairments. Those familiar with nordic skiing will find more similarities in technique than differences. What they won't find are hard-and-fast rules. The trick, as always, is to adapt to the individual skier.

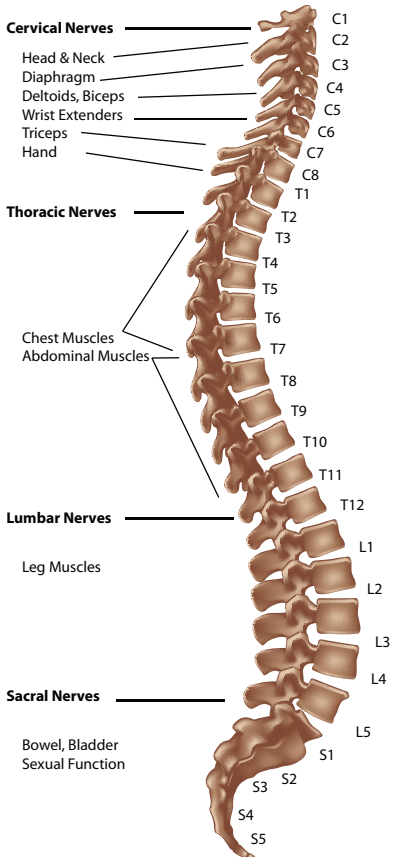
Fitting the equipment to the skier is a priority, particularly for skiers who have a prosthetic leg. Working with the skier to ensure proper fit—between the socket of the prosthesis and the person's stump as well as between the prosthetic foot and the boot—will minimize the risk of rubbing on the person's stump.

To ski as a standing skier, the student must have some function in both legs; a general rule is that skiers with above-the-knee amputations or a high degree of impairment in their lower extremities are typically more successful as sitting rather than standing skiers. Common injury profiles for standing skiers are the visually impaired, below-the-knee amputees or those with some leg impairment, arm amputees, and skiers with neuromuscular impairments that do not hinder standing and walking.

In delineating who, among students with impairments in their legs, might be more successful standing rather than sitting, Kreamelmeyer says the key is to listen to the student. "I think it's really important to allow the student to have input," he says. "Let them try skiing the way they choose [i.e., standing versus sitting] and gauge their frustration level."

As a rule, skiers with an above-the-knee amputation will struggle with balance and flexibility on their prosthetic leg. That said, some skiers with this disability do succeed, and it's worth a try if the skier is willing or motivated to ski as a standing skier. "I know it's possible," says Kreamelmeyer, "but it takes someone with a tremendous amount of patience. I'd probably start with a standard double-pole technique and work in a kick-and-double-pole technique, keeping the 'bad leg' stationary and using the 'good leg' for the kick."

Arm amputees and skiers with upper body impairments can learn adapted versions of the different techniques and will generally need coaching to help them remain in a balanced body position. Skiing with one pole or entirely without poles is an option, depending on the type of injury and comfort level of the skier. Standing skiers with neuromuscular impairments, brain injuries, or combined injuries can usually be accommodated on nordic skis. Coach these skiers to best use the body parts in which they possess the most strength and control, paying particular attention to body position and balance.



Visually impaired skiers are also well suited to adaptive nordic skiing. One key point to remember is that it is very difficult to guide and teach a visually impaired skier at the same time. Whenever possible, it's best to separate these roles. In essence, you can enlist the aid of a fellow instructor to serve as the teacher while you guide, or vice versa.

Pay close attention to the role that terrain plays in the visually impaired skier's navigation of the trails. On downhills and areas where the trail has a sidehill it is appropriate, when necessary, for the guide to "hold" the skier by skiing side-by-side and grasping the skier's pole just below the grip to guide, steer, and direct the person through these sections.

ADAPTIVE NORDIC – SITTING

Sitting adaptive nordic skiing is a fast-growing segment of the sport. While standing adaptive skiers have the full range of skate and classic techniques to learn and work with, sitting skiers use a sitting version of the classic double-pole technique. In many ways, this makes learning to sit-ski simpler. However, it places a premium on body position, equipment, fitness, and the nuances of making the best use of a single technique for the individual skier.

The most common injury profiles for sit-skiers are spinal cord injuries, although there are many skiers who are single- or double-leg amputees. While every injury profile is different, there are three main categorizations to keep in mind when working with sitting nordic skiers: high injuries, mid-level injuries, and lower injuries.

Students with higher spinal cord injuries—i.e., at the tenth thoracic vertebrae (T10) or higher—will have very limited use of their abdominal muscles. Those with mid-level injuries—i.e., at the eleventh thoracic vertebrae (T11)—will have more function in their abdominal muscles, but no function in their hips. Students with lower injuries will either be skiers with no spinal cord injury or those with injuries in their lumbar spine, who have use of their abdominal muscles as well as some function in their hips and pelvis (fig. 1).

In all of these injury profiles, body alignment is crucial. Kreamelmeyer points out that, while every skier and injury is different, he often teaches the double-pole application favored by able-bodied skiers, in which the skier "gets on top of the poles" and applies downward pressure in order to move forward. When applying the double-pole technique, he says the most important thing, regardless of the level of the skier's injury, is to "get everything lined up as best you can to make the movement efficient and take full advantage of the skier's functioning muscles."

As you might expect, there are a few nuances to consider based on the skier's level of injury. Skiers with a higher-level spinal cord injury are going to generate the majority of their propulsion from their arms. Or, as Kreamelmeyer says, "Most of your power will come from your arms; there is very little compression or engagement from the shoulders through the abs."

Sit-skiers with a mid-level injury will use a version of the double-pole technique that engages the shoulders and core muscles more fully. Kreamelmeyer calls this "the scoot," explaining that "as you apply pressure down on the poles you pull your hips forward, just like an able-bodied skier's double-pole technique in which the force is immediately transferred down through the hips to propel the feet forward."

Skiers with a lower injury will mimic an able-bodied double-pole technique almost exactly. These skiers will also use the scoot, engaging the muscles around their pelvis to draw their hips forward as they double pole.

The Diagonal Dimension

While the double-pole technique is great for moving forward, it isn't always ideal for making turns or navigating in and out of the tracks. Even though the basic double-pole technique works strictly in the forward plane, there's a diagonal dimension that is important for sit-skiers to learn.

This diagonal motion can range from the subtle to dramatic, depending on the skier's need to steer and navigate. At the most basic level, the skier will push a little harder on one pole than the other and a little to the side to allow the skis to slide and turn. To turn to the left, for example, the skier would push harder on the right pole with some force directed away from the body.

Those at a more advanced level can use this diagonal movement to twist and change direction by lifting their body and rig off the snow. Kreamelmeyer likens these movements to those used in paddle sports, and points out that paddle sports offer a great cross-training option for sit-skiers.

Ken Watson

Nordic sit-skiers rely to a great extent on double-poling and proper body position to negotiate nordic tracks and trails.

Position of Strength

Because much depends on proper body mechanics, it's important to help the skier find an effective sitting position in the sit-ski. Several considerations apply. The most important component is to listen to the skier and follow his or her direction. Generally, the most effective position will be the one that makes the skier feel stable and comfortable in the ski. Aim for a posture and range of motion that allows the skier to have good control and balance, permitting efficient use of functioning musculature and range of motion.

The norm is for skiers to sit with their legs in front of them and their knees bent. You may encounter skiers who sit with their legs straight out in front of them, but the majority sit with their knees bent. There are a variety of postures and positions, each with different advantages and challenges. Skiers with higher-level injuries often prefer a more compact sitting position, with their knees drawn toward their chest. This has the added advantage of stabilizing the skier's upper body. In essence, if the skier collapses forward, the thighs will help keep the person upright and centered in the sit-ski. The overall rule of thumb is that the higher the skier's injury, the more compact of a sitting position he or she will prefer.

Many skiers and coaches have experimented with a more forward body position that can be likened to kneeling. This makes it easier for skiers with lower injuries to engage their hips and pelvis for more propulsion when double poling, but the approach does have a few disadvantages. To bring the skier's pelvis forward the sit-ski's seat must be raised higher off the snow to provide clearance for the feet and legs below. The increased height can create instability, make transfers from the wheelchair to the sit-ski more difficult, and make it harder for the skier to reach the snow with the hands—which can be important for steering and braking, especially for newer skiers. The key is to experiment and watch and listen to the skier as changes are made.

Ken Watson

Adaptive nordic skiers who are able to stand make use of a full range of skate and classic technique, modified for their specific impairment. The skier in front has limited mobility; the skier in back is a below-the-knee amputee.

Custom Rides

While most nordic sit-skis are custom built, efforts are under way to build more adjustable "program skis." Instructors who work with sitting skiers and wheelchair athletes will find that all of the familiar rules for fit and safety apply.

In a nutshell, the fit of the plastic seat (or "bucket") and cushion is crucial. Because adaptive nordic skiing involves repetitive motion, skin health is very important, and care must be taken to prevent pressure sores. Ensure that the skier has a well-padded bucket and that excess motion in the bucket is controlled by the use of straps and extra foam wedges. The current trend for sit-skiers who are making a stronger commitment to the sport is to work with a seating specialist to build a custom bucket and seating system. This promotes maximum comfort, skin safety, and athletic efficiency.

The height of the bucket is another central consideration. The shell should generally reach up to the skier's level of impairment to support the torso without restricting movement. Pole length is also critical. As a starting point, the top of the pole should be at eye level. In general, err on the shorter side for skiers who are just starting out. Skiers shouldn't need to spread their arms out very far to their sides; this is generally a cue that their poles are too long.

Skate Skis, Please

To maximize their ability to glide, sitting nordic skiers should use skate skis rather than classic or waxless skis. Length will vary based on the skier's weight; it is good to start beginners on shorter skis for easier maneuverability.

Because the skier is balanced on both skis at once, it's wise to pick a pair of skis that are flex rated for a lighter weight than the skier and rig combined. Skis that are rated for the sitting skier's weight may prove to be too stiff for effective glide.

A number of different mounting systems exist for sit-skiers. The primary consideration here is that the forward mount point be similar to the point that would be used by an able-bodied skier. Each sit-ski manufacturer provides guidelines for affixing its rig to the skis.

Conclusion

Nordic skiing offers a great way for people with disabilities to enjoy winter recreation—whether they're in it to spend a fun day on the trails or want to push their limits in a competitive setting. Having devoted the better part of the past two decades to adaptive nordic skiing, Jon Kreamelmeyer clearly sees it as an enthralling sport.

He'd get no argument from the PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team's Geoff Krill. "The road less traveled has a certain appeal for many of our students," says Krill. "And on a personal level, what I love is the peacefulness of getting out in the woods and accessing trails that I can't get to in the summer. It is truly skiing at its purest form." 32°

Team Tip

News Flash! Handplants Are Actually Easy

by GREGG DAVIS

A handplant—in which a snowboarder turns upside down and does a one-armed handstand on the lip of a halfpipe or quarterpipe—is a pretty impressive trick. It carries with it the appeal of an inverted spin or a flip over a jump, the rider's position momentarily defying reason.

But the trick isn't really as difficult or as dangerous as it looks. It's actually pretty easy, and the worst fall possible is akin to only a small air gone wrong. You might slide down the wall on your stomach, or maybe catch an edge while moving slowly and close to the snow, ultimately sliding to a mellow stop at the bottom of the wall.

When I set out last winter to learn how to do a handplant, I had already tried some in the halfpipe—down at the bottom of the left wall—but I hadn't really done them fully extended, or at the top of the wall like I see other people doing them. To be honest, I was afraid of being upside down, and falling on my head on the lip or sliding down the wall on my face. But when I took some logical steps in my learning, I found that I didn't need to be afraid, and that I could learn handplants without having a bad crash at any point in the process.

Here are a few easy steps that lead to a showy trick that you can do on almost any vertical surface, impressing your friends and students. Use these tips yourself or try them with some more advanced park and pipe students. To learn a handplant, a rider only needs to have a small backside air in his or her bag of tricks.

1. To start, use the end of the halfpipe (where the wall is short), or—even better—a quarterpipe built across the fall line. Do a few airs, rotating toward the toeside. Practice these backside airs until you can routinely ride up the wall and land coming down the wall on almost the same line. The handplant is easiest to perform when you ride straight up the wall and straight back down, instead of carving and traveling across the quarterpipe or down the halfpipe wall.
2. Next, head to a flat spot where you can practice handplants while standing still on the ground, minus the board (photo 1). Then strap both feet into the board and try a few small handplants—rotating backside and placing your back hand on the snow just behind the tail of the board (photo 2). If you jump a little bit off the tail (as if you're performing an ollie), but lean your body back and put your back hand down, you should be able to get your hand to contact the snow in the place where the tail of your board was a moment ago, before sliding forward and going into the air (photo 3). A slight turn of the shoulders toward the toeside will get you rotating backside (photo 4), setting you up to land back on the ground with a flat board and a little pressure exerted on the toeside. If you "pop" enough using your legs and the spring in the tail of your board, you can come around the full 180 degrees after a few tries.
3. Take it to the pipe! A quarterpipe across the fall line is easiest, but a halfpipe works too, as long as you carve across the flat on heelside enough to approach the wall straight on. Start by moving slowly and popping low on the wall, and then do the exact same move you did in the static exercise on flat

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

Gregg Davis

Ronnie Barr plants himself in the pipe.

ground. Keep your board flat on the snow during the approach, and time your takeoff so that you pop off the tail. Just as your board is slowing toward its apex. Later, add a grab on the heel edge or the nose of your board with your front hand, and, with a little more speed, you'll be easily pulling some kick-ass handplants at the lip!

There are two keys to the handplant. First, really commit to getting your weight on your hand for a moment. Most people trying to learn handplants will, at first, wimp out and just do a backside air. You have to really lean back and get your hand down before your board is in the air. Second, flex your knees and get small as you prepare to pop into your handplant. As you get better at it, you can extend your legs during the maneuver and tweak some style into your "invert." But while learning this awesome trick, it helps to be small and compact so that the handplant will come around fast. The landing comes naturally; the higher you go, the easier these handplants are to land.

Photos by Erica Marcinec

Photo 5

Practice the handplants until you have them committed to motor memory and they're safely stored in the "bag of tricks that's built to impress." The next time you're in the park and searching for a trick that looks harder than it is, plant your hand and kick your feet over your head. (Then when someone comments on what a cool trick that was, just smile. No one—except maybe the park rat who'll now sign up to take a lesson from you—needs to know these things are easy.) 32°

Gregg Davis is a member of the AASI Snowboard Team and a trainer and instructor with Breckenridge Ski & Ride School in Colorado.

Kids 101: Key Questions for the Ages

by K.C. GANDEE

Nothing elicits the kind of honesty, candor, and pure emotion as when a lesson is over and instructors are discussing students and lessons at the end of the day. After hours of ripping up powder, teaching a new trick, or helping students dial in those trenched-out carves, the locker room bench is the place to celebrate and brag . . . and sometimes to question just what the heck happened.

After years of eavesdropping on post-class conversations, I've noticed that many children's instructors seem to share similar experiences. There's no question that kids present teaching challenges as they pass through different ages and stages of development and undergo the additional psychological and physical changes that are a basic part of biological growth. For instructors who don't have kids of their own or who haven't had much contact with kids, such stages and changes can be daunting. The following questions and answers will hopefully provide some insight into the ever-fascinating and sometimes-challenging phenomenon of working with young people.

AGES 3-6

Q: How can I get kids to listen?

A: Children do listen, but sometimes how well they listen depends on their readiness to hear what you have to say. One thing to consider is that this age group works best via one-on-one instruction. Your best bet is to address each child; never assume that the group will operate as a unit.

Another thing to consider is that many children are visual learners, and these kids sometimes have trouble with spoken explanations of concepts such as "turning." Visual learners can, however, relate to shapes.

"Little kids are still figuring out left from right, and they don't have any idea what a turn is," says Chris Saylor, director of the children's program at Vermont's Okemo Mountain Resort. "Use visual cues for them, such as calling out C-turns or S-turns. Most kids begin learning the alphabet pretty early, so they should be able to understand this. For the same reason, describing ski configuration as 'pizza' or 'french fries' works well for these skiers."

Using minimal verbal explanation, demonstrate what you want your students to do, and be sure to ground explanations in concrete—not conceptual—foundations. As with any age group of students, it's also helpful to set up situations that will stack the odds toward success, so keep that in mind when choosing exercises for the little ones.

Q: What can I do to have better control over my group?

A: Pretend you're a schoolteacher. More likely than not, students ages three to six will be accustomed to the basic sort of daily routine you'd find in a school. Even before your group leaves the comfort and warmth of your snowsports school, get students involved in setting up rules for the day. Ask them what kind of rules they have at their school, and invite them to help spell out the guidelines you expect them to follow. If you want to set up a rule regarding one type of activity—snowball throwing, for instance—make it clear that this is an activity that's against the rules.

Explain rules and consequences in black-and-white terms; don't leave any wiggle room when it comes to "dos and don'ts." (Here's an example of a rule that falls in the unfortunate gray area: "Well, maybe you could throw a snowball once in a while if you're throwing it away from other people." Not helpful. Here's a black-and-white statement: "No throwing snowballs. Period.") And when rules are broken, it's important to follow through with consequences. You will be tested—by your students, that is. Remain kind, but enforce the rules that you lay down at the outset of class. You'll thank yourself later.

Q: Why aren't my students moving their feet? Can't they move anything besides their heads?

A: If it seems that your very young stu-

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dents can move their heads but are unable to move their feet, it could be that their fine motor movements haven't yet developed. Instead of continuing down a dead end in this regard, ask younger children to focus on the movements of the larger muscle groups: e.g., encourage them to move their "legs" instead of their "feet."

A simple rule for keeping things within reach is: "Don't fight it, use it." Kids in the early stages of physical development can be trained to use smaller muscle groups, but they need to begin with very simple movements. Try using boot drills, without skis or poles, in an effort to familiarize students with the kind of movements you'd like them to use.

Q: My students don't "get" the analogies I'm using. What's up with that?
A: Just as very young students have difficulty picking up certain skills due to physical development, some kids lack the cognitive capacities to identify and discern analogies and metaphors. They're simply not able to bridge the ideas you're expressing. Younger children often need both demonstration and experience.

To connect cognitively, try setting up imaginary situations that involve simple things these kids know. For instance, you can ask each child to pretend to be an explorer (such as the popular cartoon character Dora or her cousin Diego) who needs to make sure that the slope is clear of animals. Have students move back and forth across the slope in an attempt to spot imaginary wildlife.

Before you know it, the youngsters will be skiing from side to side, picking up the concept of turning without you having to resort to analogies or a long discussion of how turns take place. The trick is to get kids to turn without making them think too much about the concept.

Q: How can I get my snowboarders to try toeside turns?
A: Toeside turns require using a lot of muscle and fine motor control, especially in the calves. Therefore, such turns can be difficult for many preschool- and kindergarten-age students. You can train kids to make toeside turns, but don't expect them to get it right on their first—or even the twentieth—try. Mom and Dad will likely ask this same question, so be sure to explain to parents that young muscles capable of toeside turns typically don't develop until ages 6 or 7.

"I always make it a point to grab Mom and Dad at the end of their child's lesson and let them know what they should and shouldn't be expecting from their young snowboarders," adds Eastern Division advanced children's educator Burleigh Sunflower.

Most important, let kids and parents know that it's okay for young boarders to ride heelside! Riders can still learn quite a bit about snowboarding without ever touching their toeside edge to the snow. When they are ready (and they will be one day), they'll let you know they want to learn toeside turns!

Q: The eternal question: When should I start my child on skis or a board?
A: While some snowsports schools have age requirements for young skiers or riders, physical ability is always the best way to determine when a child is ready to learn a sport. As a general rule, I recommend starting a child on skis or snowboards as soon as possible. If they can walk, they can begin to have fun in the snow.

It's imperative, though, that early outings focus on positive experiences on snow and leave out any direction regarding the manipulation of the snow tools. The younger the child, the shorter time you should expect them to be outside and on snow. At first, kids can try just walking in the gear, or playing pitch and catch (while wearing their equipment) with an adult on extremely mellow terrain. The goal should be to get the child smiling, not introducing them to skiing or riding. If parents want to see their kids making turns or controlling their speed, that's a different story.

As mentioned, a toeside turn on a snowboard can require quite a bit of calf strength and fine control of smaller muscle groups, so a child might be anywhere between 6 and 9 before he or she is able to accomplish such an important move in a new sport. The child, though, can train his or her muscles to prepare for the turn by balancing on a straight and flat board while working the heelside edge. As a general rule, though, skiing is easier for "younger" kids because they can balance a little more easily over two boards. Very young skiers (and by extension their parents) seem to improve faster than they might on a snowboard.

AGES 7–12

Q: Why don't these kids play along with me?
A: If you're getting some pushback when you ask kids to ski or snowboard, pretend that they're going to use their equipment to hunt for Bigfoot or the Abominable Snowman. The best thing is

to get them to aim their boards across the hill rather than down it.

The problem may be that they're simply too old to want to play along. As children begin to develop both cognitively and physically, they often want to put space between themselves and what they consider to be "baby things." During this older, pre-teen age range, kids begin to lose interest in the fantasy and imaginary scenarios that once kept them enthralled. They won't want to be treated like "little kids" anymore, and will want setups that challenge their thinking and make them feel "older."

The upside is that many children have developed more advanced athletic movements by this stage, and probably are starting to get into organized sports. You can use this to your advantage by setting up games that have more concrete outcomes. For instance, you could ask students to count the number of turns they make in a given distance. Just be sure to define the distance with things they can see (e.g., "from here to that snow gun").

Q: The game I tried with the kids today backfired. The children who didn't do well were upset, and some of them even called the other ones "cheaters"!
A: Ah, yes: "cheaters." This is often the battle cry as frustration arises during this stage of development, i.e., when challenges don't pan out the way kids think they should.

When determining activities for skiers and riders in this age range, focus on individual goals rather than comparing group members. Pick an outcome that challenges the individual, but make sure it's also realistic. If Julie made 20 turns last time, challenge her to finish 21 this time. If Rob made 11 turns last time, challenge him to finish 12 this go-round.

Q: All of the kids today seemed to be so different! How do I get them all to perform the same task?
A: Good eye! In this age range, kids are developing cognitively and physically at very different rates. In fact, this may be the most challenging age range with which to work. As tough as it is, it might be best to treat each group like a series of private lessons. Use an initial activity to create a baseline, then set individual goals for each kid.

Try to use the same area and same general theme, but vary the tasks according to each student's level of development. Don't worry about all of the children doing the same thing with their bodies; embrace the challenge!

Q: No matter what I try, they don't want to learn! How do I get preteens to listen to me?
A: If you feel that young students aren't listening, you need to *sneak* learning into your lessons. During these pre-teen years, kids begin to seek out independence, and the need for this only gets stronger with each passing year. Encourage young skiers and riders to find independence (within reason) by moving beyond the approaches you would use with younger children. You can best do this by issuing challenges to the whole group. Begin with something simple and fun such as having them hop or ollie over an obstacle. When a student has trouble with the challenge, do your best to pull him or her aside inconspicuously and offer a brief tip or clue to help the student progress.

After everyone has had success with the challenge, have the group move on to the next skill. Once you get everyone's attention with a test that's easy and fun, you'll be able to introduce challenges throughout the day.

Q: One of my kids had a total meltdown today. How can I avoid this in the future?
A: Although your older students say that they don't want to be treated like "children," per se, these kids are still kids. Don't let them fool you into thinking they're too cool to care if they're successful or not, or that they aren't interested in being part of the group. If you see a mini-clique forming during your class, quickly assign everyone to new groupings such as partners or small gatherings that will bring all of the kids into the activity.

Lift rides can also be useful when you choose to ride up with the kids and bond with them by asking questions about common interests and experiences. Another option for the lift is to pair up the kids up who might not normally ride together. This ensures that they'll at least share the experience of being together on the chair and might hopefully connect via the simple act of watching others.

Q: What's with the attitude? The teens I taught today acted like they didn't even want to be here.
A: These kids don't want to be treated like kids anymore. Although many preteens have physical and cognitive development similar to adults, many are still developing affectively. Older kids—sometimes called "tweens" because they're not young children anymore but they're also not yet teens—may appear confident, but most are very concerned with their outward appearance and how they are perceived by the rest of the group.

"They want to look cool," says Chris Saylor. "Some drills may not work as well as others. If there's a chance that [these kids] may fail in front of the group, stay away from that task."

Instead, try to create situations that encourage exploration, and try to involve students in the decision-making process.

"Little things like letting them choose the lift or trail, or even the practice area for beginners, will help them feel like part of the group," says Burleigh Sunflower.

CONCLUSION

It's easy to second-guess yourself when you're teaching kids, but if you listen to those around you at the end of the day you'll probably see most of your fellow instructors doing the same. By breaking out your students by ages and stages of development, you'll have a much better shot at helping them have fun, and maybe you'll even manage to sneak up on them with some learning! 32

K.C. Gandee is an AASI-certified Level III snowboard instructor, an Eastern Division examiner, and a former member of the AASI Snowboard Team. Accredited in children's instruction, Gandee works at Okemo Mountain Resort in Vermont and is a frequent contributor to 32 Degrees.

Wendy Scipione

'Build an Innovative Senior Program'
« CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

to the senior skiing public. The broader objective is to attract more seniors to the snowsports schools who can effectively provide dedicated organized programs and sufficiently trained staff to accommodate the unique needs of this demographic population."

The Senior Accreditation program—an educational training opportunity, not an exam—consists of three levels of training and two accreditation levels. The Senior Foundations level of training provides overview materials that will help participants understand the unique attributes, character, and needs of senior clientele and show how a framework of low-impact, continuous movement drills can help satisfy these needs. The Senior Level 1 training applies the Foundations concepts to achieve an understanding of how to develop a supportive learning environment and progressions for senior students. The Senior Level 2 training builds on the Level 1 ideas to achieve an understanding of how to use supportive tactics, appropriate drills, and terrain when teaching seniors. Participants are encouraged to keep a record/portfolio of senior classes they have taught, and, at every opportunity, to discuss what they've discovered with their associates.

PSIA-AASI's Western Division has two levels of senior accreditation. The first involves attending a two-day event for Level I–III certified instructors who would like to improve their skills working with beginning and intermediate seniors. The second accreditation requires participating in a three-day event for Level II and III certified instructors of any age who would like to improve their skills working with all levels of senior students.

A Western Division *Handbook for Teaching Senior Skiers*, written by Rusty Crook and Laura Jordan, is designed to help instructors understand issues surrounding senior skiers and riders and use that understanding to provide quality instruction to the growing number of prospective senior clients. The first part focuses on theory, the second part on application. Seniors are categorized into Senior Rippers (often willing to ski or ride a little faster and experience a wider variety of terrain), Senior Explorers (a little older but still good skiers/riders), Senior Cruisers (tend to be the most advanced in age and usually enjoy blue and groomed black runs but don't have to ski 20 runs to have a good day), and Senior Rookies (beginning skiers/riders).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The keys to designing a successful senior program are as follows: First, understand the physical and psychological needs of seniors. Second, utilize the resources available from successful programs, as well as PSIA-AASI's overarching education materials. Third, train a core group of instructors and let them know they are appreciated. And fourth, garner management support by showing that your senior program is an integral and valuable component of the area's business plan.

Build membership by marketing your program to core skiers and riders at your area. Consider offering discounts to individuals who bring groups of skiers and riders to the school. Advertise your program to season pass holders and to off-mountain organizations with active senior programs, e.g., tennis clubs, and biking and hiking clubs.

Many of the concepts that help make senior skiers and riders stick with snowsports are ideas that are universally appreciated by snowsports enthusiasts of all ages. For example, treat your clients as family members of your area. Know them by name and learn what makes them feel special. Give energy to your clients whenever possible.

Today's resorts face many challenges. Senior educational programs can be a valuable asset in increasing the total number of skiers and riders older than 50, decreasing the beginner drop-out rate, increasing the conversion rate from beginner to core skiers and riders, and retaining skiers and riders in the sport we all love. 32°

Hans Reifer

The Lookout Pass Mountain Masters enjoy a little social time.

A PSIA member since 1967, Norm Lavery has served as president of Northern Rocky Mountain Division and chair of its Ski School Management Committee. Lavery managed Montana Snowbowl's snowsports education program for five seasons, and is the co-author of The A-B-Cs of Ski School Management. *He is currently a professional mediator and group process facilitator in Missoula, Montana.*

'Angulating with a Purpose'
« CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

technical formula, it has been possible to give him the option of standing on his skis in a relatively ordinary posture and stance.

Some students create more lasting impressions than others. In the case of my adventures with Scott, special means special. If we're lucky, we're as likely to learn as much from our students as they do from us. 32°

Frank O'Connor is a PSIA Level III telemark instructor at HoliMont in Ellicottville, New York, working almost exclusively within the area's Phoenix Adaptive Program. Off snow, he serves as a civil engineer and expert in computer visualization with the New York State Department of Transportation in Buffalo, New York.

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Feeling like your life won't be complete if you don't see your name in black and white on the hallowed pages of *32 Degrees*? Obtain slightly less fame than Tiger Woods right here—and our exposure isn't likely to scare off your lucrative endorsement deals. Submit something for one of the following categories:

Lesson Learned — Regale us with your "lightbulb moments" or snowsports life lessons learned the hard way.

Laugh Tracks — Share the hysterical anecdote that made them all bust a gut at après.

Through the Lens — Send in a great photo that really captures the essence of snowsports or snowsports instruction. (Digital pics have to be 300 dpi or more.)

Inquiring Minds — Chime in with your take on a pressing issue of the day. Our question for you this go-around is:

If you've attained Level I, II, or III certification, what was your single most helpful strategy in preparing for the exam?

Send your submissions to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org, with the subject line "Last Chair." PSIA-AASI members whose contributions make it onto this page will win a $25 gift certificate to the *Accessories Catalog*.

Courtesy of Sue Leslie

Sue Leslie, the snowsports school director at New Mexico's Sipapu Ski & Summer Resort, went to Florida last April to climb and unwind after the winter season.

Through the Lens

Our appreciation goes out to Megan Harvey, instructor and photographer extraordinaire who created this awesome photo montage of Blake Clarkson, one instructor who's really "on the ball" (ba dum bum). Harvey and Clarkson both teach at the Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen, Colorado.

Laugh Tracks

One afternoon during Christmas week, I took my Kid's Klub group of "Gondola Blue" 8- through 11-year-olds to our mid-mountain Saddle Lodge for a cocoa break. To keep the kids engaged in our day's activities, I produced two halves of tennis balls I often use to represent slalom "poles" when teaching beginners. I put the balls on the table and placed my hands on them, as my students would later with their feet, to illustrate ankle and foot movements we would work on after the break.

Remembering some tricks I had performed during our morning cocoa break (my other "hobby" is magic), 11-year-old Olivia asked, "Jim, isn't there a magic trick with things like this that makes a little ball disappear?

"Ah yes," I replied, "the old shell game that street hustlers use to fleece people out of their hard-earned money."

Producing a third half ball from my parka, I proceeded to demonstrate how the shell game works. As the kids took turns trying their hands at the moves I had shown them, 9-year-old Kaela looked up and recognized a nearby observer. "Daddy! Daddy!" she exclaimed, "Jim's teaching us how to be street hustlers!"

As my mind raced to find an explanation that might save my ski instructor neck, her father, without missing a beat, said, "Pay close attention, Kaela, you're probably going to need this."

— *Jim Hutt,*
Gore Mountain, NY

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