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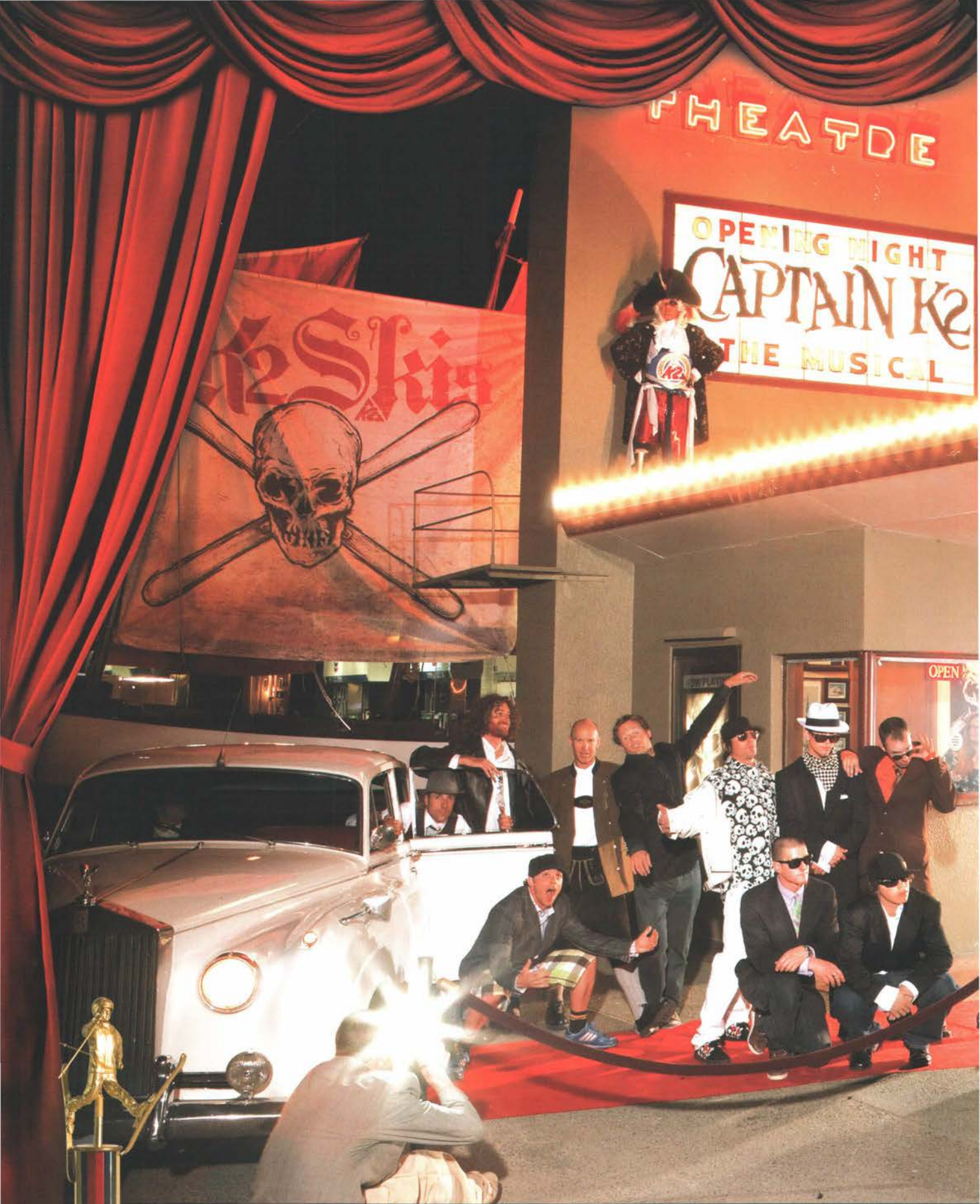
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JD Hare stays on the powder ridges to avoid the four-foot-deep icy troughs on a near-vertical face in the Mount Waddington region, British Columbia, Canada.

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CLARK STEWART, A ROCKY MOUNTAIN DIVISION FREESTYLE TRAINER AND PSIA-CERTIFIED LEVEL III INSTRUCTOR AT STEAMBOAT RESORT, FLIES THE FRIENDLY SKIES AT BRECKENRIDGE. PHOTO BY SCOTT D. W. SMITH

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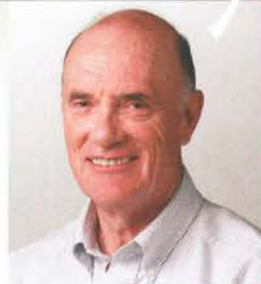
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BY RAY ALLARD, PSIA-AASI PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

this isn't rocket science; it's more complex than that!



In reference to our profession we've all said in jest, "This is not rocket science (or brain surgery)." But last season one of my first-time students responded that he, in fact, *was* a rocket scientist, and that skiing was a lot more complex than what he normally does every day!

He pointed out that math, chemistry, and physics are predictable pursuits; there are rules and procedures that don't change. While there can be complex combinations, given a set of circumstances the answers are always the same, repeatable by other scientists throughout the world. He noted that, in skiing, there are an almost infinite number of variables that change constantly. The weather, snow conditions, and equipment are but a few examples. The ultimate variable is the human element, whereby athletic ability, intelligence, fear, and mood can all play a part.

It reminded me that, as instructors, we need to constantly be aware of how both external and human variables impact learning and performance, and to consider how to make the most of the positive factors while minimizing the influence of those that can be negative, or, at best, distracting. The fact is, in order to keep things simple (i.e., easy, uncomplicated) and pertinent for our guests, we have to have a vast amount of complex knowledge. Newer, less experienced instructors might present inappropriate simplistic information (i.e., that which is crude, unsophisticated) because they may only know one progression or a couple of drills for a given situation.

Our *Core Concepts* manual does a great job of touching on the many subjects with which we should become familiar. Our technical manuals provide

even more structural framework. And the Movement Matrix that you'll read about elsewhere in this magazine goes into even more depth on situational skiing concepts. While we're aided by all these resources, it's important to realize that our educational materials can't possibly provide the answers for every situation. We also learn by experience, observation, trial, and error. We need to be attuned to how our students react to different words, situations, and activities so we can draw on that in the future.

One size does not fit all; we do a disservice when we teach by rote. Next time you come in frustrated because your student didn't "get it," even though "it" worked great for the gal last week, consider that maybe it was *you* who wasn't getting it. No two snowflakes are the

it? Was it aimed at a group or individual? Was the day warm or cold? Were the conditions steep or shallow? Was it early or late in the day? Was there a particular emphasis on a word or a demo? The trainer or ed staff member certainly didn't consciously think this all through, but, subconsciously, those gears were probably spinning. They may never do it just like that again, but their vast data bank of info allowed them to put it all together for that group, in that place, at that time. The activity of dendrites in our brains can produce solutions we didn't know we "knew."

But we shouldn't overthink it. It really isn't that complicated. Skiing and riding are about fun. We slide on snow, gravity is our friend, we turn left and right, and we share the experience with others.

We need to BE ATTUNED to how our students react to different words, situations, and activities so we can draw on that in the future.

same, nor are our students, or the exact situations in which we teach them. Every lesson is an ad-hoc performance. You might put together a detailed lesson plan for a long-time student, but how can you have one for someone you've never met? Maybe the stock "Level 3" lesson plan isn't the right fit for the Level 3 group standing in front of you today.

Something I often see at exams or while watching others teach is when an instructor takes something learned from a trainer or ed staff member—something that really resonated with that instructor—but it fails to work when he or she tries it on others. It may have been totally inappropriate, but it might have missed for less obvious reasons. What led up to

That's all our customers need to know; just remember *we* need to know a little bit more.

Getting back to my rocket scientist, it seemed that his "thinker" learning style might possibly start to interfere with his ability to acquire the sensations of gliding on snow. I convinced him that he could become a good skier a lot faster than he became a good scientist. I got him to think about feelings, rather than mechanics. I helped him focus on one new thing at a time rather than on things he already knew how to do. I earned his trust by attending to his need to feel safe and not look foolish. He did great and, in the end, decided it wasn't that complex after all! Mission accomplished! ♦

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CULTURE CLUB

Iwould like to compliment you on the article "Worldview: The Wisdom of Cultural Sensitivity" (fall 2007).

Author Melinda Cain Widener was right on target with her advice to keep it simple, talk less, and use more visual and kinesthetic teaching techniques. The only addition I would make is to caution American instructors about visitors from the United Kingdom. Don't be misled by their ability to speak English—there are strong cultural differences, notably a British tendency to understate and an American tendency to overstate. I'm reminded of the old joke in which the American says he's a top-rated tennis player, meaning he's played twice. The Brit says he has "played a bit of tennis," which means he competed at Wimbledon.

Lastly, I would recommend that the *Culture Shock!* guidebooks (written for various countries and found in most bookstores) be added to the resource reading list.

DON SULLIVAN
BRECKENRIDGE, CO

LABOR DISPUTE

Thanks for the informative article, "Worldview: The Wisdom of Cultural Sensitivity." Melinda Cain Widener did a terrific job of outlining ways instructors can improve communication and break both language and cultural barriers. I must, however, object to her simplified contention that one of the main reasons resorts hire international instructors is that "... it is often very difficult to find enough U.S.-based seasonal employees for resorts, hotels, and ski/riding schools." That sentence should have concluded with "... at wages resorts

are willing to pay." The United States has a shortage of snowsports instructors because our skill set is not appropriately valued by resorts. If pay rates were competitive within the broader employment market, resorts would have no problem attracting sufficient workers.

The federal H-2B visa program mentioned in the article simply requires that a resort pay the "prevailing wage" to international hires. That means it is perfectly all right to underpay foreign workers, as long as we are already underpaying American workers. It would be far better for the federal government to require that employers seeking H-2B visas pay a living wage based on an objective measure such as a percentage of area median income. With that simple regulatory change, more Americans would be financially capable of taking these jobs, and we would need fewer foreign workers. As a bonus, foreign workers would also be paid the higher living wage.

We should all appreciate the international flavor of our snowsports schools, but we should not forget that our employers make use of the H-2B visa program so they can fill jobs at low wages. There is no shortage of people who want to teach skiing and snowboarding. There is only a shortage of people who want to teach at the wages being offered.

TOM BUCHANAN
LONDONDERRY, VT

BE SENSATIONAL

Robin Barnes' article, "Mimic Ski Movements to Make the Most of Training" (fall 2007), was good stuff! Unfortunately, one of the exercises perpetuates a common misconception. Photo 2 (page 45) illustrates an extreme

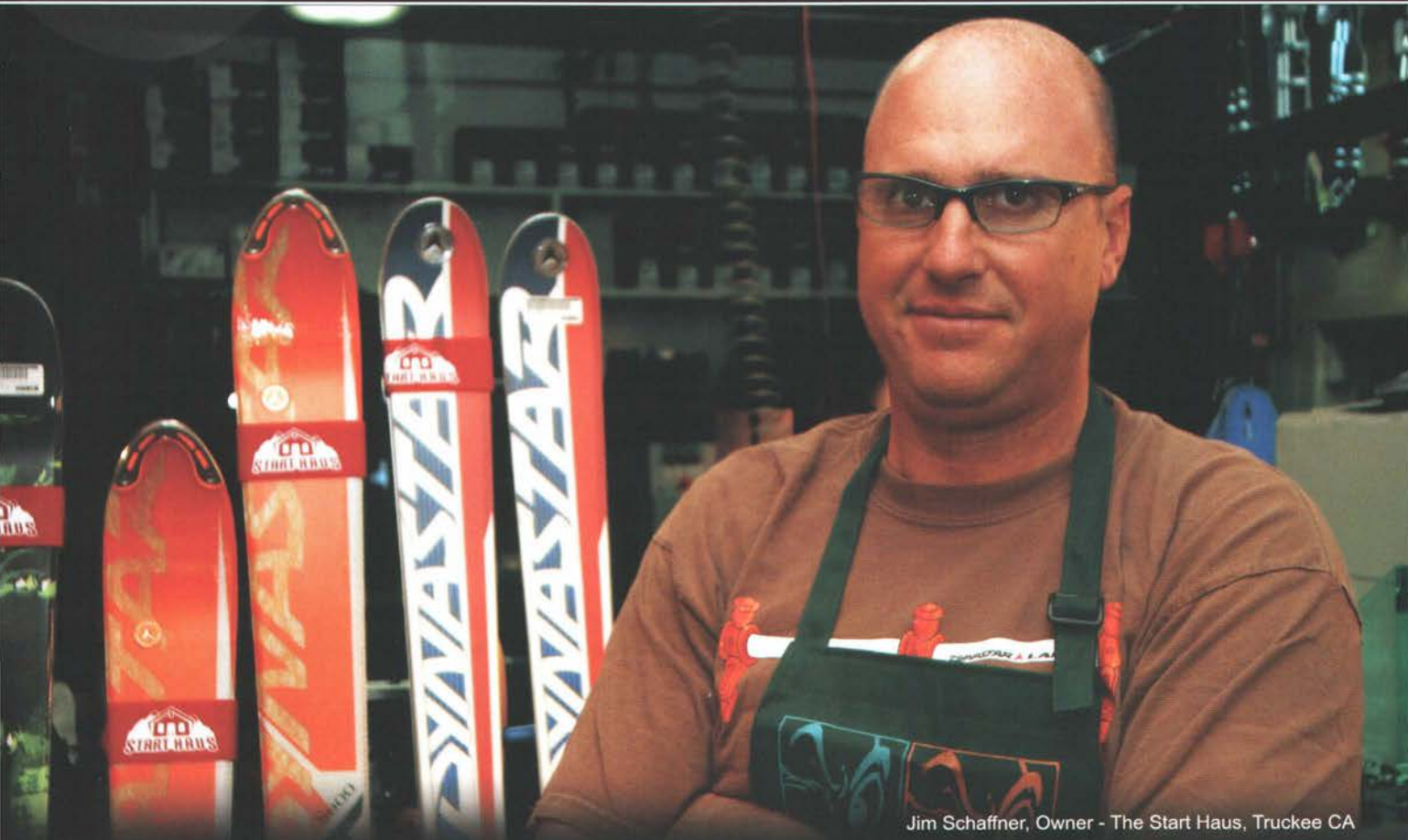
form of a common exercise used by instructors, in which the student holds your hands or poles and tries to resist your efforts to pull him or her downhill. Presumably this is to teach the student proper counter, angulation, and inclination to resist the forces in a turn. (Another pictorial example of this exercise appears on page 16 of the winter 2007 issue, but hopefully this photo shows what *not* to do, judging from the student's posture!) There is only one problem: the student will *never* encounter forces pulling on him or her at the arm sockets, with attendant tension in the shoulders and back while skiing (unless a pole gets caught when the person is skiing the trees)! The exercise is supposed to simulate what the skier will experience during the turn; unfortunately, it does not. Without going into the details of the physics and biomechanics (instructors hate that stuff anyway), let me just say that all the action happens at the feet, lower body, and the body center of mass and it is important that the exercise mimics the corresponding sensations without introducing other, non-relevant sensations.

So, if you really want to mimic what happens while making ski turns, carry a sport cord around your waist when teaching or doing dryland exercises. (This does not even put a dent in your smooth instructor profile nor interfere with skiing.) Place the belt around the student's hips, stand downhill (or to the side), and pull on the cord. This more accurately simulates where the forces act on the body (gravity and the inertial forces) and what the muscles and skeleton must do to counteract them. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

cord's elasticity allows you to vary the amount of pull to create some dynamics that occur in a real turn, which greatly aids the student's understanding. More importantly, there will be no significant kinesthetic memories created in the body that are at odds with what the student will experience in skiing. If you don't have a sport cord, pull on the student's jacket at the waist.

This is just one of the many exercises instructors have used over the years without carefully evaluating whether they truly capture the sensations they're trying to illustrate. The emphasis should be on *sensations*, not *positions*. When the body moves in a dynamic environment such as when skiing, success often depends on how accurate the "body knowledge" is and not how well the brain can dictate what should happen. Always be careful to evaluate whether or not an exercise truly emulates what you might feel in skiing

and does not introduce reactions in the body that are absent in actual ski turns.

JURIS VAGNERS, PH.D.

LEAVENWORTH, WA

Author Robin Barnes responds: Dr. Vagners is a formidable source of knowledge and very gracious to share with us another great exercise to elicit solid mechanics in skiing. He is spot-on about a skier feeling the forces pulling from the lower body vs. the upper body.

I find benefit in using the rope/sports cord held with the hands because it puts my upper body in well-aligned position with appropriate functional tension. Another great on-hill variation of this same exercise is to loop ski poles together and use one set around the right knee, one set around the left knee. The partner in this exercise will attempt to pull the knees down the hill and the skier must react when the resistance is felt even lower in the body. Certainly none of these exercises is right or wrong and all are good variations toward an end goal of being

in a position where your feet and hips are laterally displaced from each other in order to better resist forces.

I believe that we can do a reasonably good job of mimicking ski movements during dryland training. That said, the only way to perfectly simulate skiing is to ski! And the only way to simulate good technique is to ski with good technique. Efforts to maintain or develop good technique during the off season will give us a huge leg up in that endeavor when the season begins.

SHARING THE WEALTH

This letter is in response to Bill Austin's fall 2007 letter to the editor, "The High Cost of Ski Instruction." Mr. Austin made valid points and the industry should be concerned if it wants to see growth in skier visits as well as "growth and retention" of snowsports staff.

I've lost count of the director's seminars I have attended throughout my 37 years as a ski teacher and member of PSIA. One complaint always prevalent in roundtable or on-hill forums is, "My ski school cannot recruit and retain enough instructors to satisfy demand." Here at Yawgoo Valley, Rhode Island's only ski area (yes, Virginia, there is a ski area in Rhode Island), we maintain a staff of at least 130 snowsports instructors to accommodate our lesson demand and help secure our status as an important breeder/feeder to all New England resorts. How do we maintain that size staff at such a small ski area? We split all private instruction. We also withhold \$5 from every private lesson each season to maintain a fund to help needy instructors advance their PSIA certification levels. Briefly, if a one-person private is \$75, \$5 goes to the snowsports fund, \$35 to the instructor, and \$35 to the resort. The instructor gets another \$2 if he or she is requested. After 600 one-, two-, or three-person privates are sold, the fund will have amassed \$3,000.

After bringing this concept to light at seminar discussions, I realized to my

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**LEVEL
HAND**

From the Ground Up: **THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PHYSIOLOGY**

By Chris Fellows, with Darcy Norman



In the early 1990s, the legendary ski racing coach Warren Witherell criss-crossed the country introducing ski instructors to the benefits of balancing boots for optimum ski performance. I remember Witherell swaggering into the Squaw Valley ski school locker room with a roll of duct tape in one hand and an obscure leg-measuring device in the other. He said he could improve our skiing instantly by tipping our boots laterally in the binding, giving us a positive and direct effect on the ski edge.

Amazingly, he was right. After measuring, eyeballing, and putting various layers and widths of tape on our ski bindings, he had us ski so we could feel how the edge interacted with the snow. It was unbelievable: the skis actually came around easier and held better on firm snow. Witherell said he'd done this somewhat crude form of alignment adjustment for World Cup racers with great results. He really knew how to talk to ski instructors. He also said it might have been the equipment—not the technique or “pilot error”—that had been holding us back. (This gave us another reason to love him.)

After much experimentation with different thicknesses and widths of tape on my bindings, I was convinced and since then I have had my boot soles planed and balanced every season. Witherell's influence has spread throughout the land, and a cottage industry of custom boot fitting has sprung up due to his book, *The Athletic Skier*, as well as to his persistence in getting the ski industry to adopt his methods.

But even though many instructors realize the tremendous benefits of making equipment adjustments of just a few degrees, there are just as many who still aren't taking the time to consider the effects of improper alignment. Before my introduction to Witherell's boot balancing theories, I was one of them.

BODY LANGUAGE

We often spout the dogma of adopting an athletic stance, proper leg steering, functional pole use, early edging, and a variety of other “instructor-speak” catchphrases. Using the latest drills and exercise lines, we work our students *ad nauseam* trying to ingrain the “proper skiing moves.” Eventually our students come to believe that a strict diet of these technique drills will deliver them to greatness.

But are we fooling ourselves and our students by believing their troubles can be cured with technique modification alone? Would we see more success if we approached technique improvement from a different point of view? What if we took Witherell's approach, and measured and tested our students for weakness in their *physiology*? Then, with a clear picture of what they can do within their own personal limitations, we could design an improvement program with realistic goals for each individual.

After I'd been “Witherell-ized,” the experience kept nagging at me as I watched student after student fail when

trying to make basic movement changes on the ski slope. They all wanted faster results and I wanted to see faster results. So, à la Witherell, I introduced some boot alignment modifications, and those produced the desired effects. Then, it occurred to me that I should take the next obvious step: lodge-based body screening and measuring exercises. I was beginning to realize that a combination of equipment adjustment, body awareness, and on-snow technique was the *complete* approach required to fully address my students' skiing frustrations.

I soon started to send students away with homework. I prescribed a series of exercises they could do on their own that addressed their mobility, stability, and power issues.

I started by asking students to perform fundamental movements such as a basic squat, a lateral lunge, and balancing on one leg. As I expected, many of them had great difficulty performing these simple tasks on a flat cafeteria floor. After toying with Witherell's ideas and my own observations for some time—with students, other instructors, and anyone else who'd listen—I decided to enlist the services of my friend and athletic performance consultant Darcy Norman.

As a ski pro you take pride in having a sharp eye that can scan the body for inefficient movements that may be affecting technique. After a few workouts and conversations with Darcy, I realized I *had* been missing an important piece in my on-hill assessments: the role of indoor movement testing to help solve various flaws in a student's technique. Darcy's expertise in this subject area, combined with my focus on skiing technique alignment, would give me the potential to help my students make real strides in their skiing performance.

We knew that some students would balk at the logistics and expense of involving a certified athletic trainer in their lesson but that most would want to pursue this avenue once they realized its value. After all, a boot-customizing session may cost anywhere from \$250 to \$750—why not pay \$50 to test whether the body is capable of making “the proper moves” for athletic skiing? After I had skied with the group for awhile, Darcy and I would spend about an hour with them doing basic movement screens. (Having observed several full screens, I now feel confident assessing students myself and can easily absorb that cost into the regular lesson fee.) That information provided a complete picture of what each student needed to address physiologically as well as in customized boot balancing.

I soon started to send students away with homework. I prescribed a series of exercises they could do on their own that addressed their mobility, stability, and power issues—all complementing the on-hill technique work. The students who “did their homework” developed much better body awareness and

CONTINUED

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were able to make the on-snow changes almost instantly. Those who neglected to incorporate these exercises into their routine made slower progress. Many within the latter category explained that they already had a “workout routine” they were quite happy with. I encouraged them to just begin to supplement their workouts with a few extra reps of our prescribed drills, knowing that the new movements would at least give them some basic body awareness.

Here is an overview of the approach Darcy and I developed (and continue to use) to measure in a quantitative way the physical barriers that block students from achieving their potential in skiing.

PERFORMANCE PYRAMID MODEL

To assess a person’s movement quality, Darcy and I use a “performance pyramid” as our model (fig. 1). We developed this pyramid based on concepts in Gray Cook’s *Athletic Body in Balance*, an excellent resource on the subject of movement and conditioning. The pyramid is made up of three levels that represent an important cause-and-effect dynamic in skiing: functional movement, performance, and sport skill, respectively.

The bottom level of the pyramid represents the skier’s functional movement patterns, that is, his or her mobility and stability. This level serves as the foundation for the next two levels. Performance and skill cannot happen unless the student can display functional movements in a controlled environment.

The middle level represents the skier’s performance, or movement efficiency. These are the movements that enable the skier to produce and absorb power as well as generate the endurance and ability to handle challenging snow and terrain.

The top level represents the skier’s sport skill, or skiing technique. As instructors, we spend most of our time focusing on this area of our student’s development.

Optimal skiing performance is the result of a stable pyramid, that is, one in which the student has consistently strong characteristics at each level. Functional movements support performance and the ability to generate power, which leads to skill and technique. If any of these areas are out of sync, problems will arise.

Using the pyramid sequence, we begin by evaluating students on their functional movements. We use an adaptation of

Fig. 1 Performance Pyramid



Fig. 2 Overpowered



Fig. 3 Underpowered



Fig. 4 Underskilled



ADAPTED FROM ATHLETIC BODY IN BALANCE

what is called the Functional Movement Screen (FMS), which is described on www.functionalmovement.com, a website developed by exercise and movement physiologists Gray Cook and Lee Burton. Our adaptation of the FMS consists of a basic squat, lateral lunge, single leg squat, and rotary/stability test. Essentially, this test is designed to assess the body’s ability to perform basic movement patterns on stable ground with no sensory challenges. (In the context of skiing, that includes steep slopes, variable snow conditions, flat light, etc.) From this we can determine how well a person moves in a variety of different planes. If the individual does not move well or exhibits any left- or right-side asymmetries during the test, we can draw parallels with what we observe on the ski hill.

In addition to helping us identify specific asymmetries or limitations, the movement screen led us to conclude that most students can be placed into one of four categories: 1) overpowered—students who are strong and tend to use brute muscle power to get the job done (fig. 2); 2) underpowered—students who use their range of motion and elasticity to meet the on-snow challenges (fig. 3); 3) underskilled—students who have a good balance of power and mobility/stability but who need more skiing mileage to fully realize their ability (fig. 4); and 4) the combo platter—students who fall in the gray area between two of the other types.



Darcy Norman helps Mark Palamaras establish overall movement awareness and training cues that he can apply to skiing.

Placing students into these categories has helped us customize drills and exercises that address a student's total performance rather than just his or her technique. The homework (or "dryland solution" as we like to call it) gives students a way to practice and visualize skiing technique when they aren't on snow. This is always good, because the more we can prompt people to think about these concepts, the more ingrained those concepts become. Also, this total approach encourages students to become more aware of proper body alignment, which helps reduce their risk of injury and keeps them skiing longer!

MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

The following is an example of how a specific functional movement assessment relates to skiing movement analysis.

Basic Squat

From our screenings we've determined that one of the most common movement faults becomes apparent when a person performs a basic squat. When doing this basic exercise, many people struggle to move through the hips properly, largely because they fail to apply proper compensatory movement of the lower body or spine. Instructors see this all the time, particularly in those students who can't seem to "flex" evenly through their joints. As a result, they tend to bend forward or overflex their ankles or knees, and that causes them to "camp out" over the front of their skis. When watching someone do a basic squat, look for the following clues.

Observations

When the student does three consecutive squats, do the legs and knees collapse (angle in or out sharply) each time? Do the knees stay aligned while flexing? Do the feet overpronate and rotate outward? Does the person flex through the spine? These are instant clues that the student may have trouble performing the dynamic on-snow tasks of your lesson plan (e.g., upper-end carving drills, one-legged skiing, fall-line hop turns, and high body-angle drills such as "outriggers"). If the student cannot perform a one-legged balance exercise in the lodge, he or she could have problems with a one-legged skiing drill.

Ideally, the student can keep the spine neutral while flexing through the hips, knees, and ankles. As Warren Witherell so memorably demonstrated, the center of knee mass must be properly aligned as the skier flexes in the boots so the individual can apply direct pressure and energy transfer movements down to the ski.

This and other visual data gleaned from the FMS can provide a specific and very telling snapshot of a person's movement through the joints, undaunted by the variables of a ski run. If students can demonstrate the ability to perform functional movements smoothly and efficiently, they have the potential to incorporate those movements into skiing. On the other hand, if they reveal movement asymmetries or limitations in the lodge, invariably they will experience certain limitations on the hill.

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You can also conduct these basic evaluations on snow as long as you do so on a flat, packed-out area. Start by asking your student to lay on his or her back and pull the knees up to the chest. If the person can do this without difficulty he or she may have adequate movement through the hips. You can test further by gently pushing the individual's knees even closer to the chest. If the joints seem supple and glide easily, hip mobility probably will not be an issue.

If at any time the student's back arches or the movement feels stuck or jammed, immediately stop pushing. This reaction provides clues as to what you might see on snow. Examples include breaking and bending excessively at the waist due to stiffness in the hip flexors, the inability to seat evenly through the hips, knees, and ankles, and rotation of the upper body into the turn due to the student's inability to twist the legs independently of the upper body.

Finally, have the student unbuckle the top of his or her boots and do a basic squat. As the individual moves, look for the compensation movements described previously and add this information to all the data you are collecting to build your on-hill lesson plan.

This isn't as hard as it may sound. Your goal is to set the student up for success, not over-complicate things. This information should help you devise solutions that might not have occurred to you otherwise.

Solutions

Once you're armed with all of this valuable information it's time to ski. Allow sufficient time for your student to relax and enjoy the mountain, but be sure to watch how the individual makes movement adaptations when faced with terrain challenges. By matching the student with terrain that's appropriate for his or her ability level, you can provide coaching on effective tactics and help the person make the connections between technical movements both on and off the snow. That is how you complete the teaching circle for success: by helping your students develop better awareness of their own alignment-skiing movement relationships.

At the end of the lesson, the solutions to any weaknesses you've identified—along with the next step in the student's development—should be very clear. Every lesson should end with three "prescriptions:" one for technical (on-snow) drills, one for corresponding dryland drills that address any weaknesses revealed during the screening, and one for any recommended equipment modifications.

At the risk of stating the obvious, always remember that the functional movement screen is merely a tool that is used to enhance the lesson outcome. While any ski instructor can use the FMS to supplement on-hill movement analysis, it's important to focus on the connection with skiing improvement—the real crux of any ski lesson.



CATH HOWARD

CONCLUSION

Warren Witherell just scratched the surface of movement analysis with his ideas about leg alignment; undoubtedly there is much more to be learned on the subject. Instructors and performance coaches should follow Witherell's lead and study the relationships between exercise science and skiing. (There are numerous resources to support that endeavor, and instructors should seek them out, including various PSIA materials, U.S. Ski Team materials, and non-industry sources such as the Functional Movement Screen.)

The system described in this article can help you measure in a quantitative way the physical barriers that may be blocking your students from achieving their potential. Try incorporating it into your next analysis of a student's overall setup so you don't end up glossing over the most amazing piece of equipment of all, the human body. ♦

Chris Fellows is the founder and director of the North American Ski Training Center in Truckee, California, and a member of the PSIA Alpine Team. Fellows has worked with Darcy Norman for three years to help instructors, race athletes, and students find ways to improve their skiing performance.

Darcy Norman is the performance director for the Tahoe Center for Health and Sports Performance in Truckee, California. He is a former FIS and college ski racer.

QUASAR PINSTRIPE/VERMILLON GUN



QUASAR WESTERN/AMBER GUN

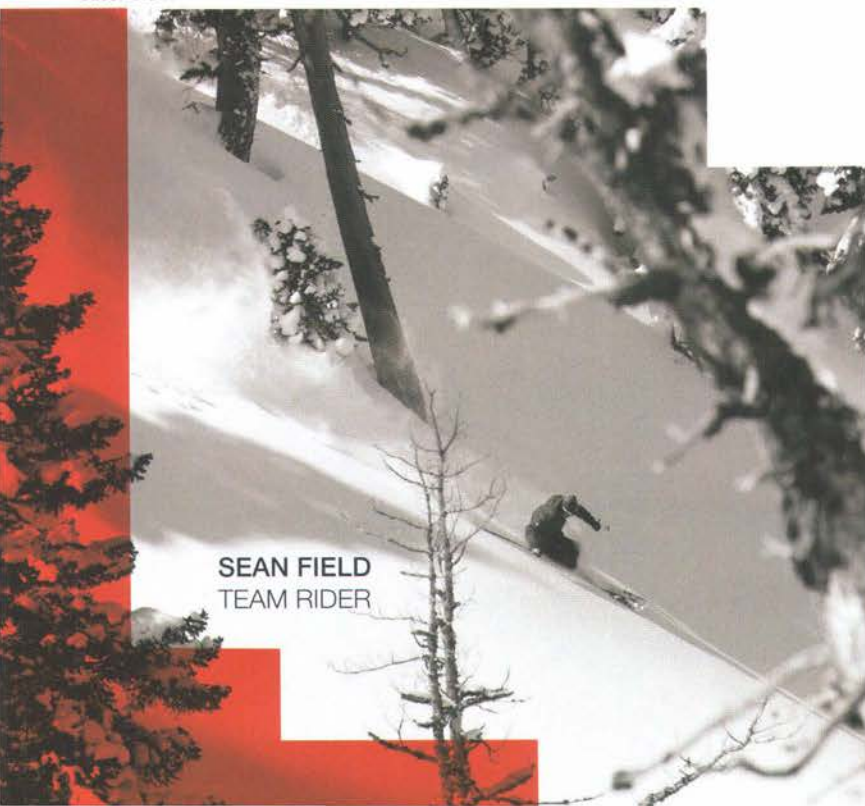


SIMMER LEOPARD/CITRUS GUN



NOVA BLACK/MODULATOR VERMILLON

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A Class Act:

TRICKS FROM Stand-Up Comedy CAN IMPROVE On-Snow Presentations

By Kevin Jordan

How many ski instructors does it take to change a light bulb?
Nine. One to actually change it and eight to analyze the turns!

What is the difference between God and a ski instructor?
God doesn't think he is a ski instructor.

These are just a few of the jokes that make the rounds of ski school locker rooms. Like most instructors, you probably like to share a good laugh, but you likely don't think of yourself as a comedian. Maybe you should—because taking a few tips from the “stand-up comic's handbook” just might help you click with your students and make your lessons more engaging.

As a ski instructor and stand-up comedian, I've found that the two professions definitely share some important correlations. When we teach skiing, the snow is our stage; our voice, mind, body, and equipment serve as the microphone by which we communicate; and our students and/or peers make up our audience.

Many of PSIA's educational materials encourage the use of humor to "break the ice" and provide guests with more enjoyable experiences. Well, if you look at that dynamic a little more closely you'll discover that when presenting information to an audience, good instructors share certain skills with the likes of Jerry Seinfeld, Wanda Sykes, and Steven Wright. (Okay, maybe not Steven Wright. On a ski slope, that low-key, depressive delivery might have students reaching for the hook.) Anyway, this article probably won't make you bust your gut laughing, but I do hope you'll be able to take away some useful suggestions for how you can deliver more effective lessons by incorporating some of the comic's tricks of the trade.

Eye Contact

When I lived in New Zealand, I had the unique opportunity to study and perform Maori Kapa Haka, or native performing arts. I learned firsthand that the Maori believe people's eyes are the windows to their soul. In other words, eye contact is an extremely important tool when attempting to connect with an individual. When I am performing stand-up, I try to make eye contact with people in the audience—well, at least audience members in the first three rows since I'd be blinded by the spotlights if I tried to look toward the people way back in the cheap seats. It's similarly wise to make eye contact when teaching snowsports. Lift up those goggles, take off your sunglasses, or wear lenses that allow others to see your eyes.

Once you have made contact with someone in your audience, stay there. Spend some time (say, 5–7 seconds) in that person's eyes. For example, when I am up on stage and have a joke that the women in the audience can relate to more than men, I may tell the entire joke to a female audience member. Looking at an individual woman, I would say, "Ladies, you think that male ski instructors are kind of like the used pieces of chewing gum you find on the sidewalk as a kid. At first, you're like, 'Score! Free gum!' And then you show it to your parents and they say, 'Spit it out! You don't know where that's been!'"

Establishing that visual connection is powerful because it helps convey your message to another individual. If you find someone in the "audience" who is not paying attention, lock in on his or her eyes and see what happens. That person will typically feel or think, "Oh, gosh. He's looking at me. What did

he just say?" Congratulations, you've just hooked that student back into your presentation or lesson.

Set-up and Punch Lines

A stand-up comedy routine follows a formula of "set-up + punch line = laughter." The set-up is the line or lines—i.e., "How many ski instructors does it take to change a light bulb?"—that sets the scene and draws the audience toward the punch line: "Nine. One to actually change it and eight to analyze the turns!" No, the joke doesn't get any funnier the second time around, but it does illustrate my point. The audience gets the joke because they're in on it.

Remember, the set-up is the necessary component of a joke that leads to the desired punch line. In my routine, I tell people that I teach private lessons. Then I ask them, "Your privates or mine?" Just explaining that I "teach private lessons" is not funny, but it is a critical piece of information for the punch line that ensues. After all, if I walked up to someone on the street and asked, "Your privates or mine?" I would probably get slapped . . . or worse.

The same goes for ski teaching. If I ask someone to negotiate a mogul field without having given them some "set-up lines" about turn shape, balance, flexion, and extension, they'll feel lost or left out of the loop. And, yes, I might get slapped . . . or dumped in favor of a more conscientious instructor.

In terms of ski instruction, I think of punch lines as the main points or bullets that I want my audience to understand. Strive for quality of punch lines, not quantity. How often do you remember the punch line of a joke but forget how to set it up? After a lesson or a clinic, I want my students or peers to remember the punch lines in order to help improve their skiing. Now the set-up might be the trails, terrain, exercises, drills, and/or games that we explore in order to reach the punch line. This is where the fun and the learning experiences of the lesson take place! Through the set-up, you are preparing the student for the punch line and bringing him or her into the shared experience of the "joke" or the lesson.

When you are doing stand-up, you want to keep the number of set-up lines low—I usually aim for one to three sentences, certainly no more than four. In order to keep the audience laughing, you need to have punch lines. In the comedy business, if your set-up is very long, you are telling a story, not a joke.

The same goes for giving instructions or talking during a lesson—if you focus all your energy on the set-up, you will never get to the punch line and you will lose your audience. In other words, we need to keep our set-up lines short and concise; otherwise you could go off on a tangent. And, please,

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put a lid on technical lectures! Keep things focused, fun, and relevant. The student may only remember the punch line, but it is the set-up that creates the experience and the emotion.

When I am writing comedy or thinking of ideas for new jokes, I frequently develop a great punch line and then have to meticulously craft my words in the set-up to perfect the joke. Thus, focus on the main points you want to get across in the lesson or presentation and then work backwards by thinking about what drills, activities, exercises, or what “set-up” will help guide your students there. Remember that often in a lesson, the set-up is where the fun, the practice time, and the learning occur. After you and your students complete the set-up, the timing will be right to deliver the punch line.

The set-up and punch line work in unison to produce a great joke. In ski lessons, the harmony between those two elements creates a positive learning experience for guests and keeps them coming back for more “jokes.” Sometimes when I am trying a new bit in my routine, I receive laughs in an unexpected part of the joke. I let the audience laugh before moving on. Likewise, in a ski lesson, when your students are having a good time and are practicing, let the students laugh and have fun. It may turn out to be a better set-up this way with a longer lasting and a greater impacting punch line.

Purposeful Movement

One reason I participate in stand-up comedy is for the adrenaline rush. I get nervous and have butterflies in my stomach before every show. When you watch people present, you can see the nervous energy take the form of fidgeting and pacing. You might have this same sense of nervousness before facing a class, regardless of whether your students are experts or never-ers.

Anxiety—while understandable—can be a little off putting. It is very hard to watch someone on stage who is pacing back and forth. Instead, I try to move for a purpose. For example, when performing in a club where the audience is on both sides of me, I have to “work” the room. I move to one side of the stage and stay there to tell one or two jokes, coming to a complete stop before I begin talking. I might say something like, “Ya know, I was born on skis. True story. I took one look at that birth canal and was like, ‘Sweet . . . halfpipe!’” Then I move to another part of the stage and say, “I came out head first. Or should I say the Head skis came out first . . . then the Marker bindings . . . then the Rossi boots . . . then the Leki poles, and finally my one-piece birthday suit!”

The same is true in teaching; you want to move for a purpose. Maybe your purpose is taking a warm-up run or maybe

it is moving the group away from the snow guns so they can hear you and one another.

Be conscious of how you move your group or class, and your movements in front of them. Do you shift your weight back and forth on one ski and then the other when you are talking to them? This could indicate that you are nervous, your toes are cold, or you are bored. If you are bored in your own lesson than it is a safe bet, so are your students. Do you lean on your poles? This could be interpreted as disinterest in the lesson topic or simply the fact that you are tired. Keep the participants moving as much as you can. Take advantage of discussing skiing with the group at lunch time, during a hot chocolate break, or on the chairlift when you have a very captive audience (they can't go anywhere else)!

Move for a purpose, because our guests are paying for a ski lesson with “ski” being the optimal word. It's not a “stand around and lecture at me” experience but a physically active one. If your guests want a less active sport, tell them to try bowling! If they want a lecture have them

take a college history course! Don't just keep them moving for movement's sake; have a reason for each movement. For example, move to increase mileage, move to ingrain a specific skill blend in the current snow conditions, or move to other terrain to learn a new skill blend. Like in comedy, move for a purpose—don't just move to cover the stage!

Visual Aids

A lot of comics use props in their stand-up comedy routine. We use props or visual aids in ski instruction or indoor presentations too. For example, we use our poles to draw in the snow or our equipment to show how it bends and moves in the snow. When we do indoor presentations, we may use video, PowerPoint, or posters.

Whenever you use visual aids remember that they take attention off of you, the presenter, and put it on the aid. Thus, give people time to look at the visual, and then draw their attention back to you.

Remember that eye contact thing? Make sure that when you talk about a visual aid, you talk to the audience, not at the visual aid. When you talk toward a visual aid you might have your side or back turned to your audience and, as a result, you lose your connection with them. Thus, refer to the visual and then speak to your audience.

Call Backs

Another standard part of comedy is the call back, which is a joke that refers to an earlier joke in the routine. For example, I do a bit about time I spent in Australia, which makes a reference to my

No joke!

The author shows off some serious moves.



"behind." Later on in the routine I do a joke about yoga—basically it is my interpretation of the "downward dog" position (use your imagination)—and I reference the punch line about my derriere in the Australian joke. Okay, so maybe you have to be there. Anyway, in ski instruction, I use the "call back" term for the summary of the lesson or the presentation. In other words, I recall with my students/peers all the punch lines that I want them to walk away with from the lesson.

If I am teaching children, I may have them remind me of all the activities we did during the day and why we did them. Then, I let their parents in on the "joke" and tell them what we did during the lesson, why we did those specific activities and how those activities will help address a specific skill or goal each child is working on or toward.

Thank You

Comedy is a very time-sensitive performance or presentation. For instance, in many performances, you are paid for only a certain amount of time. If you go over your allotted time, you may not be booked by that venue again.

So, you may hear a lot of comedians say at the end of

their set, "Thank you. That's my time." That lets the audience know that you have been conscious of your stage time. This is something that I try to avoid. Instead, I try to leave the audience wanting more, like the ending of *The Sopranos*' finale on HBO: fade to black.

I usually end my routine with something like, "Thanks. You guys have been great. For more information, check out my website" or "Please give a big hand for our host/emcee." Similarly with teaching, you may have had a long day with 10 (maybe even more) kids in your group and you are exhausted. It might be easy to say, "It's three o'clock, the lesson is over. Let's go find your parents." You might say this to yourself. However, after you perform a "call back" with your students—recalling your important punch lines for the day—thank them for coming to the lesson and tell them why you're filled with such gratitude: "Thank you for today. I had a lot of fun with you all and I hope you had fun too. We learned how to jump by flexing and extending our ankles [movement specific and body-part specific]. And if you come back tomorrow, we'll learn how to take that flexion and extension of our ankles along with the rest of our bodies

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Call Backs
Joking around makes
lessons memorable
and fun.



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into the moguls.” This example shows that you thanked them for the day and performed the “call back” or recalled the important punch line of using their ankles to help them jump. You also left them wanting more by giving them a sneak preview of what they would do tomorrow if they were to come back.

Wrapping It Up

Stand-up comedy and snowsports are participatory endeavors and some of the jokes I have written here may have been funnier in person because the written word does not allow one to see the complete delivery of a joke. In stand-up comedy, jokes receive laughs because of the timing of the delivery, the facial expressions, and the body part(s) used to help convey the meaning of a joke.

In ski instruction we try to teach lessons that appeal to different sensory preferences, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses. Thus, it is the interaction between the audience and the stand-up comedian or the interaction between the teacher and the student that allows for humor to take place. You do not have to be a stand-up comedian or be funny to deliver an effective, informative, and fun lesson or presentation. All you have to do is remember these important tips:

- Make eye contact and spend some time in your clients' eyes.
- Create clear and concise set-ups, then deliver great punch lines.

- Be purposeful in how you move a group and how you move in front of a group.
- Speak to people; not to a visual aid.
- Call back to summarize your lesson.
- Express your thanks and leave the audience wanting more.

People say that laughter is the best medicine and if you are having fun in your lesson or presentation, then you can be assured that your audience is having fun as well. Sometimes your students or guests can be the greatest sources of material, especially when they ask such tough questions as these (and, to quote humorist Dave Barry, “I am *not* making this up”):

“What time is the noon groom?”

“Where does all the white go in the summer?”

“At what elevation do the deer turn into elk?” ♦

Kevin Jordan is a PSIA-certified Level III alpine instructor and trainer for the Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen. He has earned children's, advanced freestyle, and trainer's accreditation from PSIA's Rocky Mountain division. Jordan is a graduate of the University of Vermont and The American Comedy Institute in New York City, a member of Laugh Your Aspen Off comedy troupe, and a member of the Local's Choice comedy group. For more information go to www.kevincomedy.com.



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In consideration of acceptance for enrollment in the PSIA National Academy 2008,

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Note: This application must be accompanied by the signed release form and full payment or deposit of \$520 (Full), \$290 (Resident), in the form of a check payable to PSIA Education Foundation. You may mail the form to: PSIA, Attn: Karen Hagaman, 133 S. Van Gordon St., Lakewood, CO 80228 or fax it to 1-800-222-4-SKI. If you are paying by VISA, MASTERCARD, DISCOVER, or AMERICAN EXPRESS, please provide information requested below. Balance of payment is due by Wednesday, April 2, 2008. PSIA reserves the right to cancel this event at any time, in which case all fees will be returned to the applicant.

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the **movement** matrix: making the web work for you

IN TODAY'S WEB-CENTRIC world, a click of the mouse can help concepts click in your brain.

That's never been more true than with the "Movement Matrix," a new online education tool unveiled by PSIA-AASI in December. Designed to convey up-to-date teaching and skiing information to association members through a contemporary delivery system, the subscription-based service will revolutionize the way instructors gather, absorb, and apply professional knowledge.

For PSIA and AASI members, professional development has traditionally revolved around the availability of new written materials. Our manuals deliver state-of-the-industry information, card sets and pocket guides help keep us on top of our teaching game, and videos and DVDs for the more visual among us keep us teaching and skiing at a professional level. PSIA-AASI members have always been very fortunate to have quality products coming their way through the education pipeline.

However, in a world where information travels around the world with a single keystroke, additional methods for delivering information as it's developed are necessary and, in fact, are expected by many of our members. So, to borrow a line from another *Matrix* you might be familiar with, "free your mind" to explore both the birth of the Movement Matrix and how it works.

SKILLS/SKIING CONCEPTS

The skills concept—which emphasizes balance, edging movements, rotary movements, and pressure control movements

as the foundational elements of modern skiing—has been the basis of PSIA's American Teaching System™ for years. More recently, the PSIA Alpine Team introduced what's known as the "skiing concepts" to help instructors bring the skills concept to life by relating movements to results (see the "Alpine Skiing Concepts" link in the Alpine section of the PSIA website [www.psia.org]).

The skiing concepts can be used as tools to help direct our teaching, but they do not address questions concerning *how* and *what* we teach. Realizing that this conceptual approach might not be of benefit to less experienced ski teachers, the PSIA Alpine Team sought to re-interpret those concepts as statements about many of the skiing situations and conditions that would likely confront a teacher. So, a strategic initiative was undertaken to develop the ultimate resource for instructors seeking to learn and apply PSIA skills and skiing concepts.

In 2006, at its annual training session at Copper Mountain, Colorado, the Alpine Team identified six teaching and skiing situations it wanted to clarify: powder, crud, bumps, steeps, ice, and carving. Starting with a computerized spreadsheet, team members began to fill in a large matrix with the statements they wanted to share with fellow instructors about applying the four elements of the skills concept in each of the defined teaching and skiing situations. An excerpt of the Movement Matrix in written form is shown in table 1, illustrating how the balance statement for

CONTINUED

table 1

skills concept

BALANCING MOVEMENTS

Stance: Maintain a consistent, functional distance between the legs.

situational skiing

POWDER

Stance: A narrow stance simulates a single platform, which allows the skier to balance against the snow.

CRUD

Stance: Stance can vary from narrow to wide. The choice of width is dependent upon the desired ski-snow interaction. Carving requires a wider stance, while pivoting requires a narrower stance.

BUMPS

Stance: A narrow stance simulates balance over a single platform and allows both skis to pass through the same spot of terrain at the same time.

STEEPS

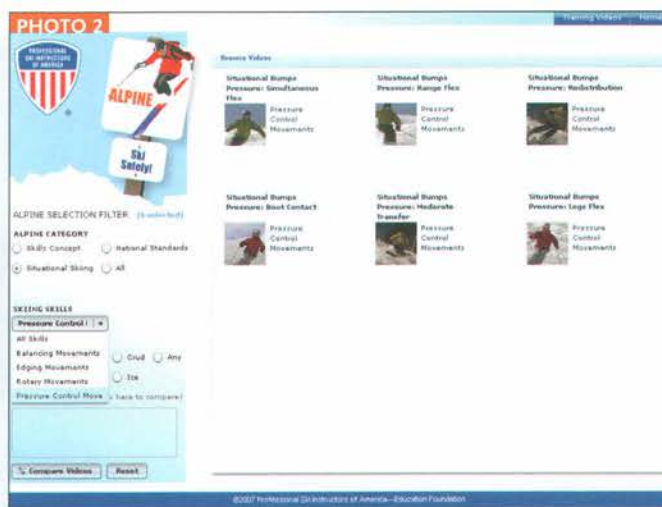
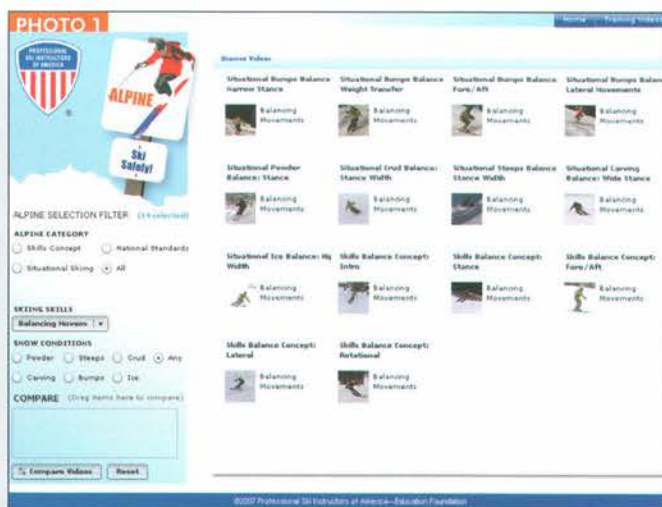
Stance: The width of the stance is influenced by the pitch of the terrain; the feet are vertically farther apart even though the legs tend to be closer together.

CARVING

Stance: A wider stance facilitates a greater lateral range of motion as balance and weight are directed to the outside ski.

ICE

Stance: A hip-width stance creates options for proper alignment over the outside ski and/or for engaging both edges.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

stance in the skills-concept column has been applied in the form of more specific statements pertaining to the various situations.

Unfortunately, as this matrix was filled in and tweaked, it became rather unwieldy, and the information proved too daunting to easily take in. The team began looking for a web-based application for the piece, something that would reach instructors through all their senses and by means of any learning style. What began as a text-based resource soon evolved to embrace a multi-media approach that would incorporate video clips with voiceovers and downloadable print materials (more on this later).

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

By spring 2007 the Movement Matrix had really begun to take shape, becoming a focal point of discussion at the PSIA National Academy in Snowbird, Utah. The keynote speaker, Alpine Team Coach Rob Sogard, gave an overview of the Movement Matrix and projected what the team wanted to do with it. Academy participants were invited to participate in the development of the program and all afternoon on-snow sessions centered on the situational skiing statements. The closing session invited members to raise questions, give feedback, and provide suggestions for the

further development of this unique educational resource.

At this point, a web design company was called upon to develop a concept for the architecture of the site, and the PSIA-AASI education department worked with this company to figure out in what way this plethora of information could best be conveyed. A format was settled upon—one in which the user would be able to quickly click on video links and text statements in a highly maneuverable setting—and then the real work began.

Team members, the PSIA-AASI education department, and various PSIA members wrote and rewrote every single statement in the Movement Matrix and reworked the wording until it met with everyone's approval. Hours and hours of video were combed to find clips that would best represent each statement in this exciting new online tool. Drills and activities were chosen to help ski teachers develop a repertoire of teaching approaches.

ONLINE OFFERINGS

So that's what has gone into the making of the Movement Matrix. Perhaps of more interest to you is what it is in the here and now. At present, the Movement Matrix website (accessible through the PSIA homepage at www.psia.org) features more than 300 short video clips with conversational voiceovers describing the skills concept and the application

of each concept in a variety of skiing conditions: powder, steeps, crud, carving bumps, and ice (photo 1). Also included are a variety of handpicked drills that help skiers develop skilled movements for the various skiing situations. By mid-winter, plans call for the Movement Matrix to include a visual representation of the national Alpine Education and Certification Standards.

Every element's wording was discussed and edited by various technical experts to make it as specific and helpful as possible. Each was then explicated by a short video clip that contains a conversational voiceover and cue words. In addition, each section has teaching drills and activities attached. For example, if you're looking at videos concerning balancing in the bumps, you can click on the "Drills" tab, and two or three drill videos will come up, each with a detailed voiceover explaining how to do/teach the drill and what it will accomplish.

All of the videos have been put into an easy-to-use, intuitive web format. Select different categories to find the type of video you're looking for. For example, say you were looking for videos that show how to manage pressure in the bumps. From the Alpine Selection Filter on the side of the screen, you'd select "Situational Skiing" under the Alpine Category, "Pressure Control Movements"

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THULE
SWEDEN



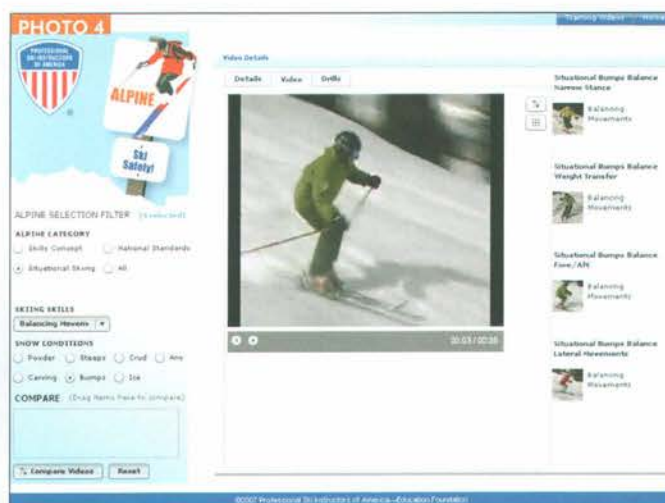
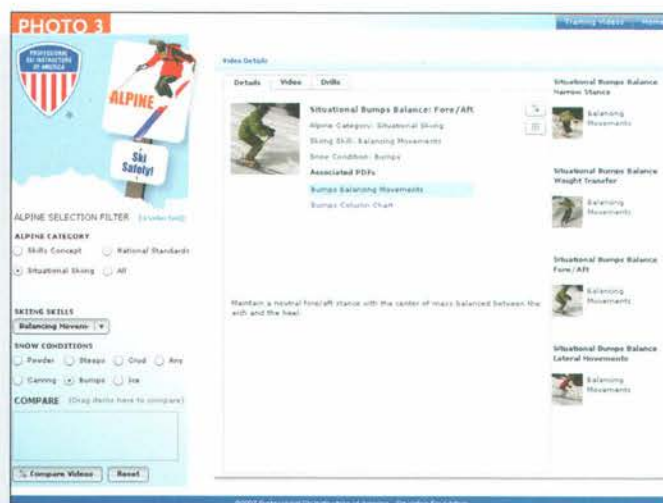
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Instructors of America

THULE
SWEDEN



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

from the Skiing Skills drop list, and “Bumps” under Snow Conditions (photo 2). Similarly, if you wanted to review balancing movements in the bumps, you’d still select “Situational Skiing” and “Bumps” in the category options, but choose “Balancing Movements” from the drop list (photo 3). From there, you could select a video on, say, the “Fore/Aft” aspect of balance in the bumps for your viewing pleasure (photo 4). Also included with each video are PDFs that you can download and print out. These PDFs contain the technical statements used to design each video, and are grouped both by skill (for example, bumps: balancing movements) and by situation (all of the bumps movements).

EDUCATIONAL APPLICATION

The beauty of the Movement Matrix is that it effectively meets the needs of any type of learner: it has visual impact, gives auditory feedback, provides simple cue statements on each video, offers a technical statement, and has a conversational voiceover. Additionally, the downloadable PDF files for each situation and of the entire Movement Matrix provide the written material many members crave.

As this project gathered momentum, the enormous possibilities for educational benefit became obvious.

It also became evident that to fully meet its potential the Movement Matrix would require ongoing care and feeding. Unlike manuals or other educational products whose production costs are fixed once printed, the Movement Matrix is a dynamic service that will require regularly updated content. In addition to ongoing video capture and production expenses, administrators must also factor in associated hosting and development costs. After much discussion, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors determined that the most feasible funding scenario would be offer the Movement Matrix to members through an annual subscription fee of \$14.95. In setting a price point, the board sought to make the cost of the service as reasonable as possible without hobbling the website’s growth and upkeep.

The Movement Matrix will provide value to members in a variety of ways. Instructors will see an obvious teaching application, but may also use the situational information to develop their personal skiing. The technical statements as well as the national standards area of the Movement Matrix will provide a solid foundation for certification training in that it provides an easy way to review and anchor specific training information, such as movement analysis and skill level comparison.

In addition, resort trainers will be

able to apply the Movement Matrix to the personal skiing development of their staff members. And of course, snowsports school managers and instructors will see the consumer application as an added benefit. This tool’s situational and drill videos can be used to anchor skills and drills for a client over lunch or at the end of the lesson.

From a production standpoint, there are many advantages to the flex design and web application. As equipment and technique evolve, so too will the Movement Matrix. It is an uncomplicated process to switch outdated video clips or information for something new. Unlike unavoidable constraints encountered when producing a written manual, this application will allow PSIA-AASI to more quickly keep up with contemporary thinking and industry innovations by substituting new videos for outdated information.

For the 2007–08 season, the Movement Matrix will contain only alpine information. Future plans envision modules for nordic, adaptive, snowboard, and children’s education—so there is a lot to be excited about! The Movement Matrix will evolve and grow as we move down the road.

So log in (www.psia.org), watch the demo, subscribe, and explore—in various dimensions—the virtual reality of skiing and ski teaching. The adventure will be worth your while! ♦

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

more US alpine ski team athletes choose
TECNICA and VÖLKI... shouldn't you?



Photo: Jay Michels/Edger

From the Left: Jimmy Cochran, Tim Kelley, Cody Marshall, Paul McDonald, Hailey Duke, Lauren Ross, Libby Ludlow, Kaylin Richardson, Caitlin Ciccone, Katie Hitchcock, Laurel Carter. Not Pictured: Travis Ganong, Bump Heldman, Kristin Leggett



TECNICA
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völkl
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boot and flat work— do they **really** matter?

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED if time spent familiarizing students with their boots and doing flatland exercises really makes that much difference? There's a strong temptation to brush such elements aside, cut to the chase, and simply have students dive into the skiing experience. Isn't that the best way to learn?

Surprisingly, a little prep before heading to the hill might make a big difference in the speed with which students pick up skills.

In order to find out if pre-hill prep could help new skiers, the staff at the area where I work monitored a dozen “never-ever” lessons. The results suggested that student success in executing several key beginner movements is directly related to the amount of time new skiers initially spent moving in boots—without skis—and then performing basic drills with skis but on level terrain. Spending up to one-third of total lesson time on such basics usually helped create a more positive experience for first-timers.

By experimenting with the amount of time devoted to what we called “boot work” (not to be confused in this context with “boot fit”) and practice on the flats at the outset of a lesson, instructors were able to measure each student's ability to execute a linked wedge leading up to matched beginning parallel turns—the essential components of beginning skiing. Half of the lessons devoted 20 minutes to such prep work and the other half spent only 10 minutes on this aspect of instruction. The percentage of each class that achieved basic skills, along with some demographic information, was recorded.

The accompanying graphs (table 1) demonstrate student achievement with regard to linked wedge turns and subsequent parallel turns. Linked wedge success increased from less than half of the class to three quarters of each class when the extra 10 minutes of prep and practice were added during the opening of the lesson. Success with beginning parallel turns more than doubled with the additional time spent exploring in-boot sensations and performing flat-terrain drills.

SKILLS AND DRILLS

The main difference between the 20- and 10-minute warm-up/prep portions of the lessons had to do with the number of drills performed and the duration of each of those drills (table 2 on page 32). The extra time with the 20-minute

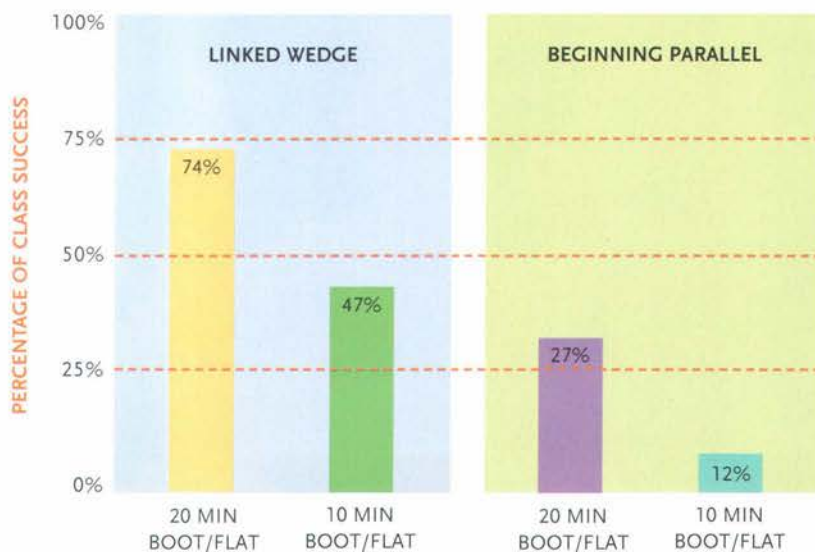
prep was used to focus on increasing student awareness of the four key skill components: balance, edging, rotary movement, and pressure control. The additional time also allowed students to develop some muscle memory to help out when movements were repeated on the hill.

In developing preliminary boot exercises and drills, the content of the introductions evolved as a result of investigation and analysis. The principles of what we affectionately term IRA—introduce, refine, and adapt—apply to foot- and boot-work, and the progressions employed at the outset of lessons were designed to help refine beginning skiers' recognition of the connection between foot movement and skiing prior to “hitting the hill.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

table 1 overall results

Attainment directly related to time spent on boot and flat work.





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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

In conducting the study—which, admittedly, was not exhaustively scientific—we came upon insights and practices that might be helpful to pass along to fellow instructors. For example, for a final drill in footwork practice it's helpful to get students to step with their boots in a wide circle or figure-eight pattern. After they've made a full circle or figure eight, ask them to reverse direction in order to practice moving their feet in both directions. Next get students to describe what they feel in their boots. Can they feel the edging? Are they balanced? Do they feel the cuff of the boot on their shin? Encourage students to continue to practice until they have a

good sense of these sensations, because the following drills blend the four vital skills of balance, edging, rotary movement and pressure control.

Ideally, students should be walking on the edges of their boots, pointing their toes (and subsequently their feet), while rotating around their ankles, knees, and hips as they walk. Ask them to stop where they are before changing directions. Using the outside of the circle or figure eight they've just made, have them walk in a much smaller or tighter circle. Now you can encourage students to describe what feels different from the last exercise. If they're developing a feel for the moves and can accurately describe what they feel, students

should be able to sense that they're experiencing more edging, foot-steering, and dynamic balance. Proper pressure control is needed before they can generate a smaller circle in the snow.

Next, try to get students to further refine their “feel” for the movements. Upon having them stand in a circle around you, ask them to focus on the big toe and ball of one foot by drawing a half circle in the snow, rotating around the outside of their stance while pressuring the inside of the foot. Encourage them to apply pressure to the big-toe side and rotate around the ankle and hip. Then ask students to repeat the move with the opposite leg. When a skier has successfully completed the exercise on both sides, he or she should have a circle wider than the outline of his or her body (fig. 1).

Now repeat the exercise, having them start at the tip of an X and drawing a half-circle in the direction of the inside of the opposite foot. Encourage them to trace the pattern back out again. Ask the skiers to repeat the moves with the opposite foot.

table 2 skills and drills

Boot Exercise and Flatland Practice

20 minutes

BOOT-FIT AND FLATWORK

- Check boot-fit and buckle tension
- Practice walking in boots
- Do stance work: pressuring the boot tongue, moving forward and backward in boots, adopting a neutral-stance
- Balance on one foot, without poles if possible
- Practice steering the toes in the air and on the snow, in a wedge, and while paralleling
- Hop on both feet, then one foot
- Sidestep uphill and down

FLAT TERRAIN WORK

- Edge skis on each side
- Rotate skis in each direction—on the side of the little toe and big toe
- Turn tips/tails to move in circles
- Step in a figure eight
- Practice scooter turns in both directions, with many repetitions
- Step and steer into wedge turns
- Vary wedge size
- Sidestep or “herringbone” on a level surface

10 minutes

BOOT-FIT AND FLATWORK

- Check boot-fit and buckle tension
- Practice walking in boots
- Do stance work: pressuring the boot tongue, moving forward and backward in boots, adopting a neutral-stance
- Balance on one foot, without poles if possible
- Practice steering the toes in the air and on the snow, in a wedge, and while paralleling

FLAT TERRAIN WORK

- Practice scooter turns in both directions and with a few repetitions
- Step and steer into wedge turns (with toes, not using heels)
- Practice varying wedge size during turns
- Sidestep on a level surface

figure 1



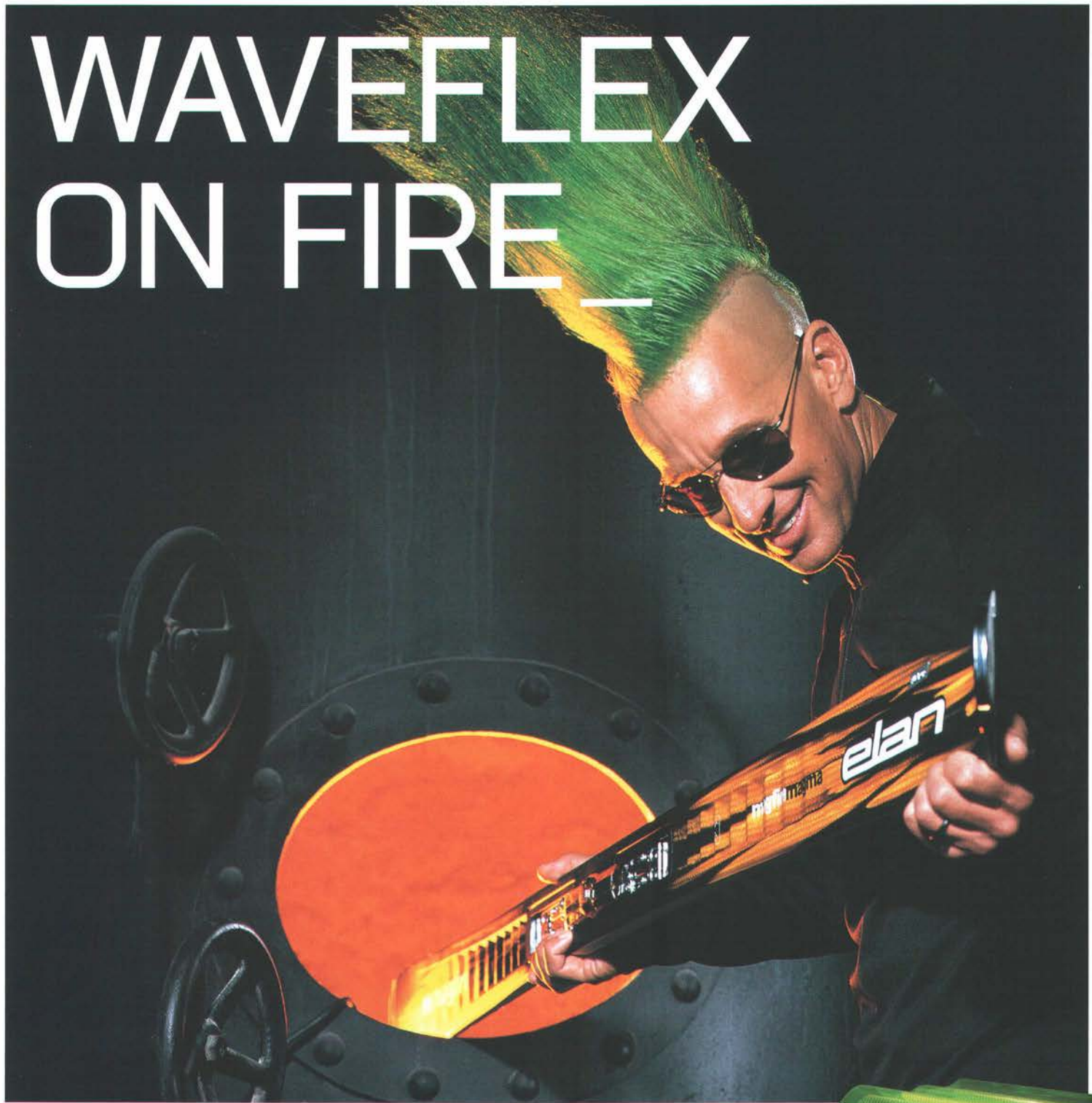
Once they have mastered these moves, have students step back and look at the pattern in the snow: the carved drawing in the snow should resemble an “X” (fig. 2 on page 63). Successfully creating such a pattern requires a combination of balance, edging, rotation, and pressure control.

DRILLS WITH SKIS

Following the preparatory boot work,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 63

WAVEFLEX ON FIRE _



MAGFIRE PLUS WAVEFLEX _ MULTI CONDITION _ ALL IN ONE _

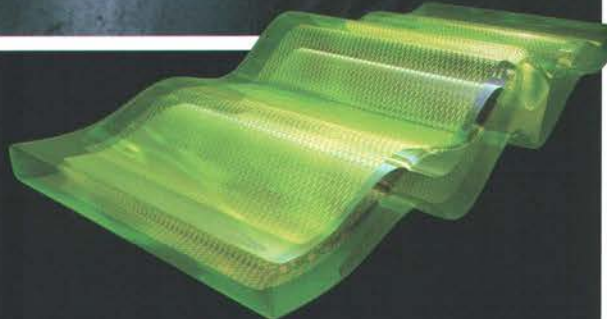
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national dues increase slated for 2008–09

SURE, A DUES INCREASE is a touchy subject, kind of like the last Chicago Cubs World Series win (1908, for those keeping score), but unlike the Cubs, your investment in PSIA-AASI means many happy returns. Membership dues are a primary revenue source for the association (43.6 percent). While none of us wants to dig deeper into our pockets, our dues enable PSIA-AASI to fulfill its mission: to support us in our personal and professional development and provide us with educational tools to create positive learning experiences and have more fun.

With that in mind, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors has approved an increase of \$10 in national dues—from \$40 to \$50—for the 2008–2009 season, effective July 1, 2008. Inflation is partly to blame, but the need for the increase is the result of other factors as well (more on those later). Whatever the reasons, PSIA-AASI must be able to fund its education programs sufficiently and provide much-needed services to its divisions and individual members. Simply put, PSIA-AASI needs to raise its revenues—while cutting expenses where feasible (more on that in a minute, too).

It's only fair to mention that PSIA-AASI dues increases at the national level are rare occurrences; in fact, there have been only two in the past 17 years. The following discussion provides more details on the issues that are forcing the increase as well as a brief refresher on the benefits these additional funds will support.

CHANGES IN NSP RELATIONSHIP

After an unprecedented period of administrative consolidation with the National

Ski Patrol that lasted some 17 years, that relationship is changing, requiring each organization to absorb the infrastructural costs they formerly shared.

Looking back, it's important to note that the consolidation has been extremely beneficial to PSIA-AASI on the whole. PSIA-AASI was able to increase the professionalism of its staff, dramatically increase member services, and move from virtual bankruptcy to sound financial footing. Over time, however, each association has developed its own goals and aspirations. Eventually, PSIA-AASI and NSP may have needed to hire more staff dedicated to each association's needs. Unfortunately, instability was the catalyst.

During the past two-and-a-half years, NSP has faced a member lawsuit, dealt with a rapid and nearly complete change in the composition of its national board, employed three executive directors (including its current director), and seen five board chairs. NSP's governance issues began to take a toll on senior staff and significantly reduced their effectiveness in working on behalf of PSIA-AASI. Stephen Over, the longtime executive director for both associations, left NSP in December 2005. Mark Dorsey, Over's successor and the shared executive director, resigned from NSP in January 2007 to work solely for PSIA-AASI. The board of directors was and is deeply concerned about the real and potential impact NSP's many changes would have on PSIA-AASI if the situation were to continue.

Initially, the PSIA-AASI board hoped to reach agreement with NSP on how best to manage the remaining staff while NSP filled a number of vacant NSP-only posi-

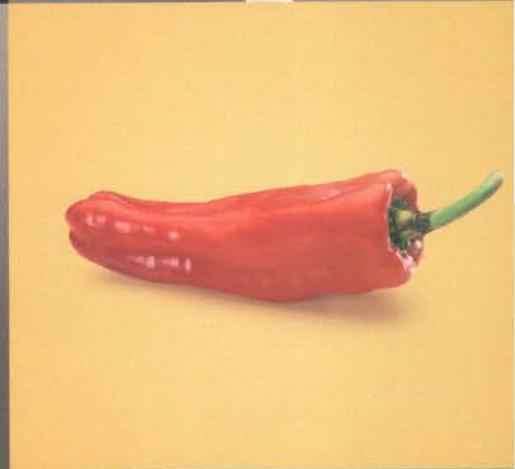
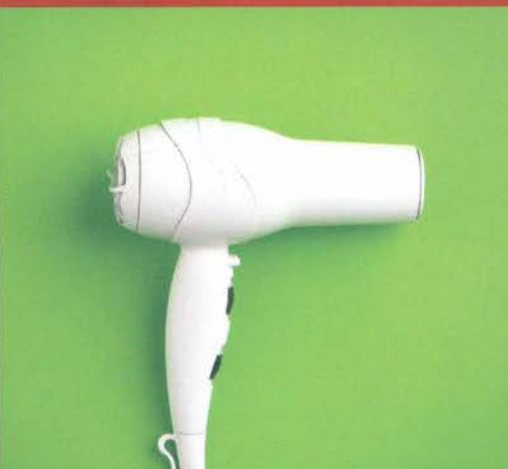
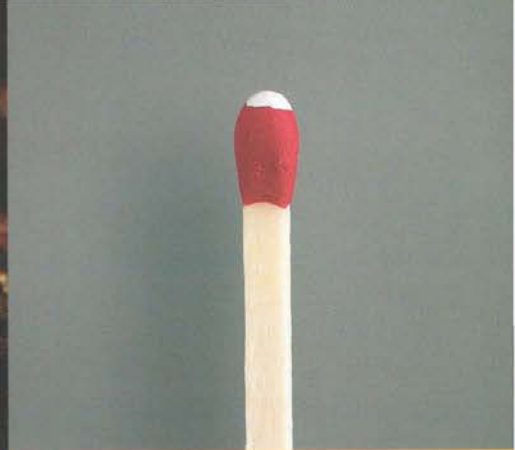
tions, including that of the NSP executive director. However, NSP sought more independence in specific functional areas, resulting in separate administrative, communications, marketing, and member services departments. Fortunately, experienced staff members who were formally shared with NSP came to work solely for PSIA-AASI. Accounting functions, warehouse fulfillment services, and information technology continue to be shared with NSP.

In the short term, this creates additional financial strain as both organizations incur the increased costs of separating specific functions. In the long term, however, the separation of this relationship allows staff to focus exclusively on key PSIA-AASI projects. The association stands to benefit from greater specialization and more efficient work flow.

SOFTWARE UPGRADES

For several years the PSIA-AASI board and the divisions have been requesting services that the association cannot adequately provide without investing in a significant upgrade of its association management software. Most of the association's divisions use the system to track their membership information. Unfortunately, the software requires substantial staff time just to maintain the status quo and further develop web services. Also, the current software package is nearly 10 years old and unsupported, meaning that it won't meet the association's needs in the near future, creating considerable problems for the divisions as well as the national office.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



It's toasty.



The PSIA Vail Sweater from Dale of Norway.
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Having postponed this expenditure for as long as possible, the board has approved the purchase of the new software. Unfortunately, due to the current situation with NSP, our association must now bear that cost on its own. On the upside is the fact that the software will enable a more seamless flow of information between divisions and with the national organization, and allow PSIA-AASI to improve membership services and accuracy of information.

COST OF DOING BUSINESS

No matter how much we may wish otherwise, the increased cost of doing business cannot be overlooked. The pressures of inflation have real effects on our organization, to the tune of 4 percent annually. The \$40 in national dues that PSIA-AASI members paid in 2003 (when the association passed its last increase) is worth \$31.30 today. That means the organization has to collect \$50.60 to have the same buying power, assuming 4 percent inflation.

Although PSIA-AASI raises more than \$1 for every national dues dollar collected, we cannot position the association to become overly reliant on non-dues revenue. Why? Because non-dues revenue is a somewhat arbitrary source of income from year to year, forcing us to rely on factors beyond our complete control. Having unrealistic expectations about non-dues sources of income would only jeopardize core services, including administrative responsibilities necessary to a functioning central office; the management of financial data and reporting; the ability to facilitate membership communication and service; and the ability to support marketing, sponsorship, and advertising functions.

SUPPORTING YOUR DIVISION

The majority of revenue going to the national organization is spent on activities such as publishing *The Professional Skier* and *The Pro Rider*; developing and

publishing education materials to support education and certification; maintaining member records and fielding member inquiries from across the country; publicizing the value of professional instruction to the industry, international organizations, and the public; and creating web-based resources and benefits—notably member-only promotional and professional discount programs. However, tens of thousands of dollars go toward division-specific activities.

PSIA-AASI funds training and development of the national teams, whose members feature prominently in division clinics. Each division also receives a subsidy each year to encourage visits by team members. These two budget items alone amount to approximately \$86,000. In addition, the national organization finances annual gatherings of division presidents and executives, committees (e.g., Snowsports School Management), and typically funds an annual examiner's college within a discipline—all of which add up to about \$28,000 a year. PSIA-AASI also provides free access to video and photo images as well as access to resources for the national marketing initiative known as "Go With A Pro."

Further, the association recently launched new member recruiting resources at no cost to the divisions, and in some cases paid for development and production of local recruiting materials. These are but a few examples of how PSIA-AASI supports your division.

RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT

The most important rationale for the increase is the continued service improvements offered to all members. Whether it's a national marketing campaign to heighten awareness about the value of snowsports instruction, additional online options that enable you to access services from your division or the national office more readily, or even pro form availability to help you manage the costs of your profession, the value of PSIA-AASI member-

ship continues to increase (See "Benefits of Being a Member Aboard," page 38, for more information).

In all its dealings, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors strives to be wise stewards of the association and provide value for your membership dollars. Please note that each and every national board member is either a ski or snowboard instructor, and knows full well the importance of keeping dues as low as reasonably possible. Moreover, the board is not pinning its financial future on a dues increase without also looking to trim expenses where possible. Just as you might rein in non-essential spending when managing your own household budget, the board will assess PSIA-AASI's operational model over the coming months and years to see what sort of efficiencies and cost savings can be realized.

CONCLUSION

Your board takes its responsibilities seriously and has undergone considerable deliberation on the matter of a dues increase for the past several years, exhausting all other viable alternatives. In the end the board is simply not willing to put the association's infrastructure in a vulnerable, financially tenuous position.

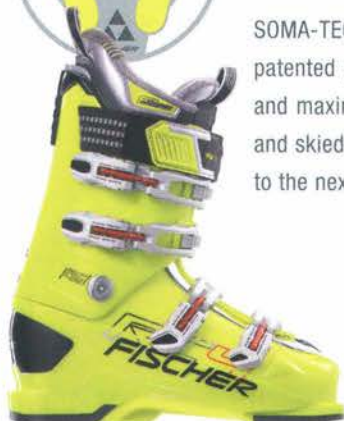
PSIA-AASI must maintain the momentum it has developed over the years, and the dues increase is essential to that endeavor. The factors mentioned in this article are not going away, and the association must continue to make ends meet and provide the services each member deserves.

"It all comes down to the value you feel you're getting for that \$50," said Ray Allard, PSIA-AASI president. "When you pay for dinner at a restaurant or buy a ticket for a concert, you get an immediate return. But when you pay dues to PSIA-AASI, you get long-term as well as immediate benefits—particularly in terms of promoting snowsports instruction and the value of instructors to the industry and the public. All in all, the benefits of membership far outweigh the cost of dues." ♦



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ENJOY
INNOVATION



benefits of being a member around

WHENEVER AN ASSOCIATION implements a dues increase, as PSIA-AASI will do later this year, some members inevitably ask “What do I get for my dues?” It’s a valid question, and one this article will address. But before launching into a list of “stuff we get”—and there is lots of stuff—I think it’s important to note the primary reason for belonging to an association.

Think back to when you first joined. Most likely, it was to feed the need to ski or ride better, to teach more effectively, to learn more about the snowsports we all enjoy. Your dues go to support the organization that supports you, and to facilitate meeting others with the same interests.

The bottom line is that this is a pretty cool club to be in. The vision of your association is to inspire lifelong passion for the mountain experience, and the association mission is to support our members, as a part of the snowsports industry, to develop personally and professionally, create positive learning experiences, and have more fun. At a minimum, PSIA and AASI offer the opportunity for you to make lasting friends and colleagues in the snowsports industry. And, of course, there’s the stuff we all get:

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND CONVENTIONS

PSIA-AASI division clinics and conventions are held throughout the country each season. These are invaluable opportunities to improve your skills as a teaching professional. Whether your taste runs to the PSIA National Academy or the AASI Rider Rally (each held in the spring), these are educational events that

every snowsports teacher should experience at least once in his or her career.

CERTIFICATION

PSIA-AASI stimulates the creation of national snowsports performance and teaching standards, thereby strengthening our viability to the entire industry and its members. PSIA-AASI certification is recognized across the country, and often can mean increased wages, additional benefits, and recognition.

PUBLICATIONS

Members of our association receive a subscription to *The Professional Skier (TPS)* and *The Pro Rider (TPR)* magazines, the definitive publications on what is happening in teaching alpine skiing, snowboarding, nordic skiing, adaptive skiing, etc. Members receive three issues of *TPS* and one issue of *TPR* annually.

EDUCATION MATERIALS

PSIA and AASI research and publish a wide range of manuals, videos, and other materials to support your education. These materials are made available at the lowest possible cost to the member and can be found online (at www.psia.org or www.aasi.org) and in the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*.

MEMBER SERVICES

Member services staff are available to PSIA and AASI members via phone, fax, or e-mail to answer questions about events, courses, membership status, catalog orders, policies and procedures, and a host of other topics. More than 200 members use this service each day. The

Member Services section of the PSIA and AASI websites enables you to view and change your member records, shop the online catalog, participate in discussion forums, check out courses and current events, and much more.

PROMOTIONAL AND AFFINITY PROGRAMS

The PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*, published annually and online, offers accessories that help you show your pride in the association. The catalog also features dramatically reduced prices on a number of hard-to-find items that make teaching easier.

Working with corporate sponsors and other companies through PSIA’s and AASI’s Official Supplier program, the office staff puts together exclusive promotional and professional offers. These include deals on ski and snowboard gear, industry magazines, and a host of other offerings. Each of these programs can be worth many times your annual PSIA-AASI dues. Official Suppliers support your association by both promoting PSIA and AASI to area management and the public, or by making a contribution to PSIA-AASI’s education foundation. In this way, suppliers help keep potential dues increases in check by generating non-dues revenue. Each program is developed as a way to say “thank you” for your investment in time and money as a member of PSIA-AASI.

PROMOTING THE ASSOCIATION AND YOU

PSIA-AASI has worked hard to establish links with other snowsports organizations

to strengthen the industry as a whole and increase industry and public awareness of the value of professional teaching. These organizations include the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA, www.nsaa.org), National Ski and Snowboard Retailers Association (NSSRA, www.nssra.com), and Snowsports Industries America (SIA, www.snowlink.com). PSIA-AASI is represented at the NSAA convention and SIA trade show. Additionally, PSIA-AASI works with industry media, sponsors, and supporters from outside the industry to promote snowsports and your role as an instructor.

Go With A Pro

The Go With a Pro (GWAP) campaign promotes a universal consumer message to increase interest in taking lessons. By increasing participation, as well as availing the GWAP program to ski and snowboard schools, PSIA-AASI hopes to increase the value of lessons and instructors. GWAP offers an online research kit with simple marketing and messaging tools that can be adapted by PSIA-AASI divisions and member schools to deliver the three primary goals of the campaign: 1) attract more guests to lessons at all levels, 2) raise the image and value of pro instructors, and 3) make taking a lesson from a pro "cooler" than merely learning from friends. GWAP is supported through a half-hour show and tips aired via outlets such as Skipresstv, Resorts Sports Network (RSN), and other cable networks, reaching 129,611,420 households.

Public Relations

By maintaining effective public relations, PSIA-AASI reached 450 million readers in fiscal year 2006-07 through editorial mentions with an equivalent advertising value of over \$3 million.

Yür Mountain

In partnership with Subaru of America, Yür Mountain is a consumer-oriented interactive website (www.yurmountain.org) designed to entertain and educate

young skiers and riders about snowsports. Aimed at the "tweener" audience and their parents, the animated site demystifies the snowsports experience and encourages users to go out and enjoy a day of skiing or riding. The site features etiquette tips, video instruction on many topics, and even information on how to rent gear. The program is promoted through consumer media and industry association links.

Tip-of-the-Day cards

In partnership with Subaru of America, and available at no charge to member instructors, skiing and riding tip-of-the-day cards are a great tool to pass along to students. Each card includes pre-printed tips for a variety of terrain, as well as space for the instructor to write comments and insert a business card. These cards are available through the PSIA-AASI websites or the PSIA-AASI Accessories Catalog.

INCREASED ONLINE OFFERINGS

PSIA-AASI has made continuous upgrades and improvements to its websites to provide not only a better online experience, but also to boost the amount of useful content available to the member.

For example, the recently launched Movement Matrix is an interactive, multi-layer website designed to revolutionize how PSIA-AASI delivers content to its members. This new tool uses online video to illustrate the skiing concepts, situational skiing, drills for teaching, and the national standards (see "The Movement Matrix: Making the Web Work for You," page 25).

The Internet Learning Center is another interactive educational resource for instructors. Designed to be used in conjunction with PSIA-AASI sport-specific manuals, it represents the nucleus of what a snowsports pro does

CONTINUED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

in his or her life and job. Website content has also expanded to include Freestyle and Park & Pipe initiatives that give readers introductory information and answer common questions. Additionally, a PSIA-AASI Team biography section has been added, allowing the public and member instructors to learn more about those pros who represent an important resource in the growth and evolution of our sport.

PRO FORMS

Since the last dues increase, PSIA-AASI members have seen an increase in pro form opportunities. With only three offers four years ago, new relationships and website upgrades have helped us increase that to more than 25 direct offers to the membership, including access to the Patagonia pro purchase program. Additionally, the Subaru VIP program continues to offer substantial

value to our members. Available savings vary by car model, but at a minimum represent more than 30 years of membership dues at current prices.

LOOKING AHEAD

Moving forward, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors has committed to a number of new education and marketing initiatives designed to continue to provide the membership with an evolving contemporary experience. While there are many projects on the table for the coming years, here are a few program highlights:

Winter Feels Good

PSIA-AASI has partnered with Snowsports Industries America (SIA) to develop and promote a new learning program that introduces winter sports to school-children across the country.

Through this program, part of SIA's successful Winter Feels Good national campaign and a key piece of the PSIA-

AASI children's initiative, PSIA-AASI will provide targeted materials for snowsports school managers including the *Go With a Pro* DVD, a snowsports outreach presentation, and suggestions for connecting with influential members of the snowsports community.

National Recruiting Campaign

PSIA-AASI has begun a new member recruiting campaign. Much like the *Go With a Pro* program, this campaign provides snowsports school directors with customizable but unified marketing materials to encourage snowsports instructors to join our organization. With pilot tests completed in spring 2007, the full program was launched in December and is now available to snowsports schools.

MONEY'S WORTH

All of this "stuff" represents the tremendous value we get for our membership dollars. But you know what? In 39 years as a member of this association, I've never struggled to justify the cost. Maybe that's because when I joined I decided that in order to get my money's worth, I needed to contribute, thereby gaining opportunities to grow personally. Along the path from new instructor to veteran instructor, board member, and communications vice president, I also served as a coach and member of the PSIA Alpine Team for 14 years and the association's education vice president for three years.

More than any other professional organization I know, PSIA-AASI has provided an opportunity to have fun, contribute, and associate with the best people in the world. Along the way I've developed not just skiing skills, but skills that have influenced every aspect of my life. Because of this organization I have become a teacher—and teaching is all about lifting the performance of another. After all, when the water in the lake goes up, all the boats rise together! ♦

"Weems inspires people to look at the issues from multiple angles."
~ Nelson Wingard, PSIA Alpine Demo Team

"The Sports Diamond is such a valuable tool for me in regards to repeat performance."
~ Katie Fry, Teams Manager for PSIA/AASI Teams

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PSIA-AASI

fiscal picture in focus

THE 2006-07 FISCAL year presented many challenges, notably the first steps toward separating many operations from those of our long-time partner—the National Ski Patrol—and significant staff transitions with the hiring of a new executive director, education director, and marketing director. In the face of these major changes, I'm pleased to inform PSIA and AASI members that both associations remained on solid financial footing during fiscal year 2006-07. Responsible leadership and management by the board of directors and professional staff made this possible. PSIA-AASI continues to focus its efforts on member benefits and services to assist you in your role as a teaching pro.

This article summarizes information in an independent auditor's consolidated report of the associations and the American Snowsports Education Association Education Foundation (ASEA EF) for the 2006-07 fiscal year that began July 1, 2006, and ended June 30, 2007. All figures show combined gross income and expenses for PSIA-AASI and ASEA EF. To understand how revenue is generated and distributed, consult the accompanying financial charts.

REVENUE

Gross revenue for the 2006-07 fiscal year was similar to last year: \$2,499,057 in 2006-07, compared to \$2,504,948 in 2005-06. Revenue is presented in the independent audit after subtracting the cost of catalog sales (\$440,889, resulting in net revenue of \$2,058,168). This report is based on the total revenue generated by the associations.

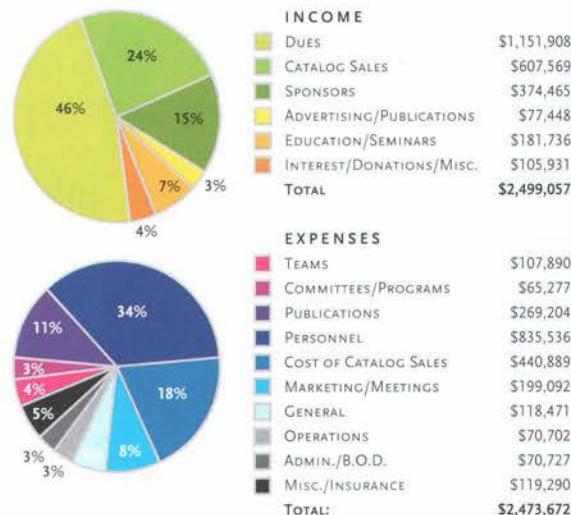
Membership dues last year accounted for 46 percent of PSIA and AASI's total income, meaning that the membership contributed 46 cents for every dollar of the associations' income. The remaining 54 cents was generated through sales of catalog items (24.5 cents), sponsorship revenue (15 cents), advertising (3 cents), and education seminars (7.5 cents). Interest and miscellaneous revenue 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; such as specially priced merchandise available through partnership programs and the *Accessories Catalog*, educational materials, the PSIA National Academy, and promoting the value of membership to area management, suppliers, and the public.

EXPENSES

Expenses in 2006-07 included general operating costs as well as the costs of publications, marketing, the cost of catalog goods sold, insurance, education committees and programs, training programs, teams, research and development, and member services. Those expenses totaled \$2,473,672 in 2006-07, compared to \$2,453,416 last year.

All of PSIA-AASI's expenditures support the associations' educational and promotional goals, as well as our commitment to serve members. This is primarily achieved by carefully directing expenditures to address membership



needs at the divisional, national, and snowsports area levels. A major aim is to enhance educational products and support the work of our committees and teams. This commitment was illustrated by the fact that during the 2006-07 fiscal year, 25 percent of total expenditures, i.e., 25 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 75 cents of each dollar spent roughly broke down into: personnel (34 cents), cost of catalog sales (18 cents), marketing and meetings (8 cents), general and operating expenses (8 cents), administration and board of directors (3 cents), and miscellaneous and insurance costs (5 cents). Overall, the associations finished the year with a positive bottom line of \$25,385.

If you have questions about the PSIA-AASI financial statements or would like a copy of the audit, please write to: Craig Albright, Operations Vice President, PSIA-AASI, 133 S. Van Gordon Street, Suite 101, Lakewood, CO 80228. ♦

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skier: Andy Docken - PSIA Alpine Team photo: Tomas S. Zuccareno



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an adaptive tool

suitable for framing

in lessons, you likely work within a strong yet flexible framework of educational theory. Many students—especially those in adaptive programs—might benefit from working within a strong yet flexible framework of their own. Literally.

Widely used and known by a variety of names, the ski frame is an easy-to-build piece of equipment that helps instill confidence as students develop balance and fundamental sliding skills. As an instructional tool, the ski frame offers maximum versatility: almost anyone who needs help honing his or her balance, speed control, body position, and rotational movements will benefit from its use. The student can ski (or snowboard) either within the frame or behind it, with two instructors skiing to the left and right of the student (photo 1) or one instructor skiing backward in front of the frame to face the student. Once the student is able to effectively use pressure, rotational, and edging movements to control direction and speed, use of the ski frame can be phased out.

The model outlined here—which can be built in different sizes to accommodate the age, body type, and ability of different students—was designed by Richard and James Nuzzo, of the ARISE & Ski adaptive program at New York's Toggenburg Mountain. Lightweight and easy to transport on chairlifts, it's simply a rectangle made of 1-inch PVC pipes. We were able to make seven frames for less than \$60 in materials that can be easily purchased at any home improvement store:

- Eight 10-foot lengths of 1-inch PVC pipe
- Thirty-six 1-inch, 90-degree PVC elbows
- One 8-ounce can of all-purpose PVC cement

PHOTO 1



WILL WALLACE

Note: PVC pipes may break in cold temperatures and when they're dropped or skied over. For protection against breakage, wrap the PVC in duct tape. You can also buy foam pipe sheathing (for padding) and some Velcro straps with which to attach it if you are concerned about the pipe making contact with your student's head or face—although this has yet to occur in any of our trials.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut the PVC pipe to specified lengths and widths using a wheeled tubing cutter or fine-toothed saw (such as a hacksaw). In creating frames out of the materials listed here, we were able to build three 24 x 36-inch frames and four additional frames in the following dimensions: 24 x 41 inches, 36 x 48 inches, 30 x 43 inches and 42 x 30 inches. (We have found that frames larger than 42 x 30 inches have a tendency to pull apart or over-flex.) Remember, measure twice and cut once.
2. Clean the pipes and use sandpaper to smooth out rough edges.

3. Spread PVC cement on the interior of the pipe elbows and the exterior of the pipe ends. Take care to work in a well-ventilated area and be sure to follow the PVC cement instructions carefully, especially if you're working outside. Curing may take longer in cold temperatures.

Ski frames such as this one aren't necessarily a new innovation—many adaptive programs use manufactured products, such as the Sno-Wing™ or even Hula Hoops™, and still others have come up with their own designs. That said, we've found this option to be one of the most cost effective for our needs.

Before you invest the time and money in constructing ski frames, however, make sure your area management authorizes their use. ♦

Christopher Weiss, a PSIA-certified Level III alpine and Level II adaptive instructor, is the technical director for the ARISE & Ski adaptive snowsports program at New York's Toggenburg Mountain.



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P: Tom Silla



P: Tom Silla

to build skiing skills, lay down some freestyle

Throughout the past 30 years, as ski instruction has advanced, evolved, and even been overhauled to some extent, there's been one constant: the four fundamental skills of the Skiing Model. Descriptions have been modified, but balance, edging, pressure control, and rotary movements still govern the skier's success on the hill.

As instructors, we dissect these movements into bite-size pieces to help students master the sport. Sometimes, however, our efforts inadvertently lead students down the path to "analysis paralysis." They focus so hard on the mechanics of each movement that they lose the ability to naturally accommodate the forces at play as they slide down the hill. Too much thought disrupts the "flow" we all strive to promote in our students' (and our own) skiing.

To foster flow and keep analysis paralysis at bay, I use exercises that emphasize exploration and play—and nothing is better suited to that approach than a little freestyle action. By taking certain freestyle elements out of the terrain park and onto the hill, I've seen skiers of all ages and abilities show significant improvement in overall skiing performance. And the fun factor keeps them coming back for more!

SWITCH IT UP

Trying to teach a student to actively guide his or her new inside leg through the transition from one turn to the next typically results in some sort of preparation movement. The skier will generally perform a rotary push-off or create some other platform from which to begin a turn, neither of which facilitate flow or make proper use of the ski's

PHOTO 1A



SUZY CHASE-MOTZKIN

PHOTO 1B



design. To help your students explore how subtle movements enhance ski mechanics, balance, and flow—while eliminating habitual preparation movements—take them out of their forward-skiing comfort zone. Play with ground spins and backward skiing to overwrite existing bad habits with an awareness of being centered and relaxed.

Start by taking your students to a wide, nearly flat slope without much ski traffic. I'll often kindle their interest by saying, "Okay, gang, we're going to learn

how to ski switch like the X Games guys, and in the process we'll become better skiers." While standing on the slope, show them how to dorsiflex by lifting a ski off of the snow and relaxing the ankle. Then, ask them to lift the big toe of that foot toward their shins while noting the tightness in the front of their shins and ankle. Call this the "strong ankle" action. Then have them repeat the exercise with the other leg.

Next, ask your students to stand relaxed and equally balanced on both feet, facing uphill. (Remember, you should be on fairly flat terrain. Consider directing them slightly across the hill if they are gaining too much speed or are fearful.) As they begin to glide backward down the run, encourage them to retain the relaxed and centered stance. Then reintroduce the strong ankle action, which will create a weight transfer and lead to a slight change in direction.

After practicing subtle direction changes with a strong ankle, introduce a shortening of the same leg. Relate this action to that of a cyclist doing a hill climb: one pedal pulls up while the other moves down. (Regardless of whether your students are cyclists, the analogy of pulling up the bicycle pedal often helps them understand leg-shortening.) Explain and demonstrate that upon strengthening the ankle, they are to gently draw the thigh toward the chest while keeping the skis on the snow. In essence, the abdomen and thigh fold; the chest stays upright. As they try this statically, explain that it feels awkward without adding the dynamics of moving down the hill. Name this action "up pedal" (photos 1a and 1b) and emphasize

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

PHOTO: JAY MICHELFELDER

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 46

that the skis must stay in contact with the snow at all times. Students will be amazed by how easy it is to initiate and shape a turn.

Give your students time to experiment and coach them if you see their ski lifting off the snow. Point out that the up-pedaling leg is on the inside of the arc, and that the foot and leg action initiate the change in direction. As the skiers begin to link turns, have them turn their head in the direction of the shortening leg to see where they're turning. Remind everyone to stay relaxed (and keep in mind that this is an easier task for some than others).

With enough practice, your students will develop a flow from one direction to the other and will stand centered on the skis as they become more confident in their movements. When your students have mastered skiing backward, have them turn around. If they've logged

enough reverse practice time, switching to forward travel should alleviate the habitual preparation movement. Jog their memories of the up-pedal analogy, and revisit backward skiing if old habits make an uninvited appearance.

ADD SOME SPIN

As soon as your students have mastered backward and forward skiing sans the preparation platform, they're ready to spin. A simple rotary action is all it takes.

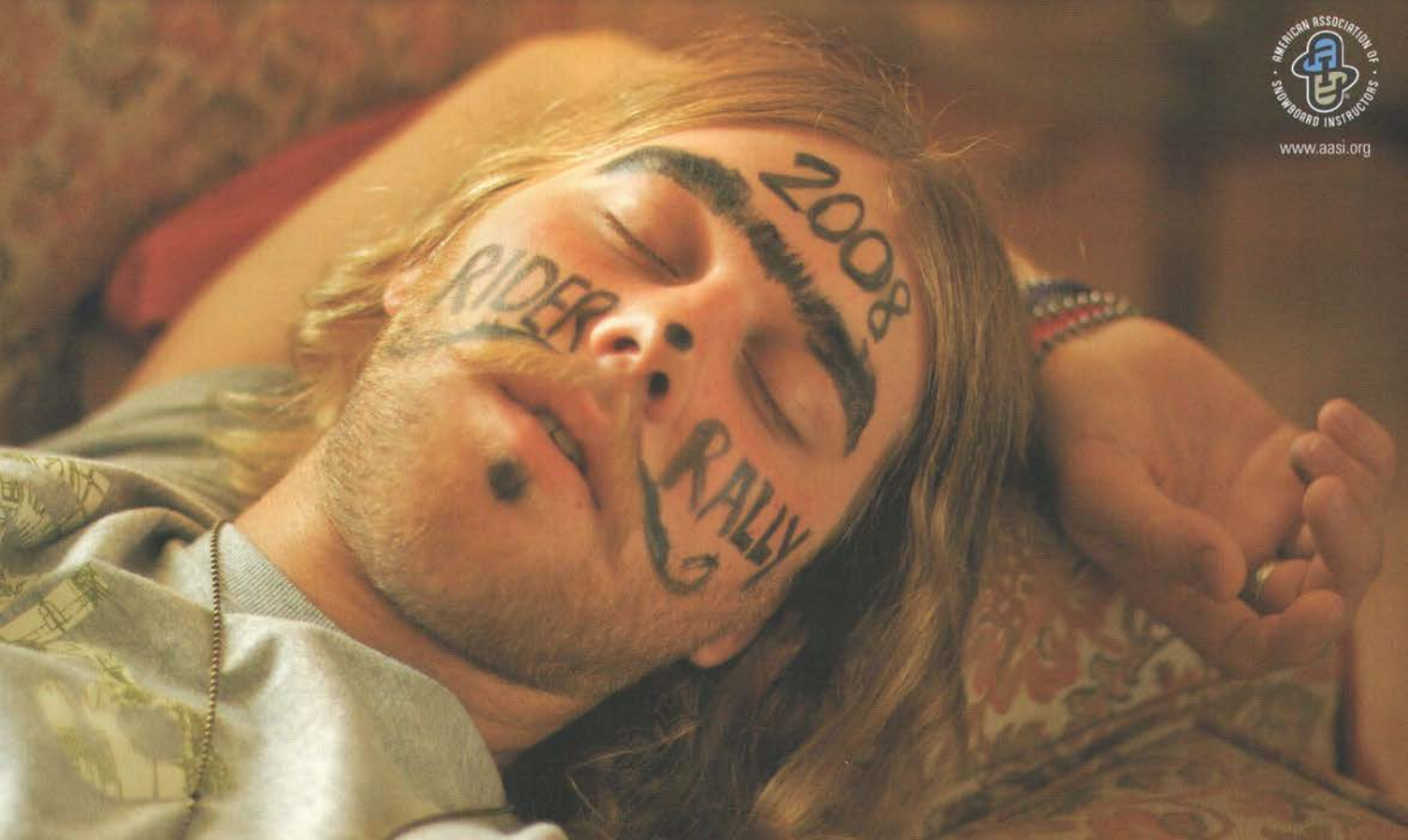
Instructors tend to have different ideas for facilitating a spin. Some recommend starting from the feet with a push-off or step; some start with a fore or aft movement. Both methods could force the body off its axis relative to the skis. (A skier who remains perpendicular to the skis will spin more easily.) Some prefer to use a pelvic rotation or look over their shoulder, which works if the skier is airborne. But if the goal

is to stay true to ski design and pursue economy of motion and flow on the snow, the skier should use leg rotation coupled with weight transfer. Sound familiar? That little backward skiing drill segues nicely into spinning.

Next, have your students focus their attention on an outward turn of the foot and thigh, directly under, or in line with, the rest of the body. To help instill the necessary muscle memory, have your students stand with their skis across the hill, planting one pole next to the outside of the downhill ski tip and the other pole next to the inside of the ski tail (fig. 1 on page 50). Ask them to lift the ski slightly and rotate the foot and leg to press the ski's tip and tail against both poles (photo 2 on page 50). Repeat the movement several times to allow them to focus on how the outward turn movement feels, committing the action to muscle memory.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50

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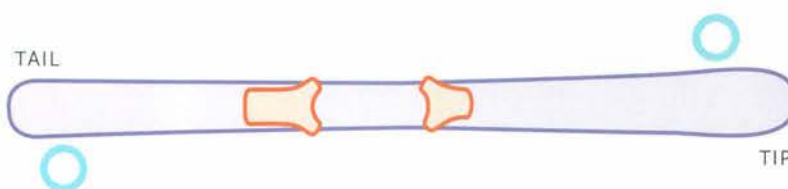
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PHOTO 2



SUZY CHASE-MOTZKIN

figure 1



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

When performed simultaneously with the up pedal, the leg rotation will initiate an on-snow spin. Your students' first attempts may appear awkward until they develop confidence with the new movement, but will gradually become more effortless provided they remain centered over the skis.

Now that your students have explored skiing backward and spinning, it's time to enhance the forward-moving skier's edging skills. Have your students expose the new inside ski base (under the foot) to the other foot. The ski base should be revealed at the transition from one turn to the next and should continue until the

next transition. To help your students perform this movement while standing in front of you, ask them to make a strong ankle and turn the thigh outward. Then have them plant the pole tightly against the middle of the uphill boot and rotate the thigh outward to bend the pole slightly (photo 3 on page 52). Point out that students should feel tightness in the outside of the thigh; this is what they should feel when "laying the thigh over."

The foot and leg action will edge the skis, thereby revealing the ski bottom. This movement is so easy to do that the student's body can remain relaxed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

A vertical advertisement for Super Fly Paragliding. The top half features a large image of a person paragliding with an orange and blue canopy against a blue sky and snow-capped mountains. Below this are three smaller, tilted photographs showing different paragliding scenes. The bottom half has a red background with white and yellow text. At the very bottom, there are logos for 'Super Fly PARAGLIDING' and 'GIN'.

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PHOTO 3



SUZY CHASE-MOTZKIN

bag o' tricks

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50

to absorb the pressure that increases throughout the turn.

Aside from upping the fun factor, introducing your students to these terrain park and halfpipe movements will reinforce balance, edging, pressure management, and rotary skills. Basically, the recipe for fluid and effortless skiing can be modified by the following: The steeper the hill or the faster the speed, the more ski base you show. The slower we up pedal, rotate, and lay over the new inside leg, the longer or rounder the turn. The faster we up pedal, rotate, and lay over the leg, the quicker the turn.

Have your students practice blending these skills on non-threatening terrain until they've developed muscle coordination and awareness of turn timing. Once students become confident enough with skiing backward, rotating, and edging, transfer these useful concepts to more challenging terrain. With patience and repetition, students will gain confidence and progress to turns that are less about thought and more about flow.

CONCLUSION

Next time the habitual preparation movement rears its ugly head in one of your lessons, attempt a few playful freestyle moves to liven things up and keep your students from overthinking things. Prevent analysis paralysis by taking terrain park and halfpipe techniques to the rest of the mountain. After all, why should the park pack have all the fun? ♦

Suzy Chase-Motzkin has been an active examiner for PSIA's Eastern Division since 1988. She has competed and coached in racing and freestyle disciplines, is a USSA-certified Level II inverted aerial coach, and is currently the president of the Hunter Mountain Racing Foundation in New York. Chase-Motzkin is a former editor of Eastern Division's Snow Pro newsletter, and wrote the division's park and pipe accreditation program.

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pizzas, pigs, and zigzags:

lessons learned from kids

One of the core coaching concepts of PSIA is the student-centered learning environment. As coaches, we aim to develop a partnership with our students, interacting with them to set goals, working together to refine movements, and, with timely and effective feedback, helping them internalize newly explored maneuvers.

In the case of adult students it seems reasonable and natural to aim for an equal and active partnership. Is the same true when teaching children? Three kids I was lucky enough to teach—Charlie, Emily, and a little guy I affectionately call Crying John—showed me that the answer is yes. With an open mind and a flexible plan backed by technical expertise, we may discover a strong and rewarding partnership with even our youngest guests.

PIZZAS ARE ROUND

Crying John wasn't crying when I met this resourceful five-year-old and his mom at the start of our lesson. Crying John wasn't crying as we did some straight runs down our snow-belt slope, nor did he cry as we explored from one side of the slope to the other. The first chin quiver began as I told him about pizza and skiing. Real tears began when I told him to make his skis into a pizza shape. As I went deeper into the intricacies of retaining the pizza shape while going down the hill, John became Crying John.

It wasn't a blue-in-the-face tantrum cry, but more of a disappointed one, so in my first positive step of our lesson I sat down in the snow next to him and asked him what was wrong. Between sniffles and leftover tears, he raised his arms up, touched his mittens together



Smiles will likely be free-flowing when instructors relate well to young students.

in a circle over his head and stammered, "But pizzas are round! My skis are straight! I can't make a pizza."

Crying John had a very good point. And rather than blindly bulling ahead toward French fries, I shared John's insight. Pizzas are indeed round and although slices are sometimes triangular, they can also be squares or rectangles. For that matter, the best French fries are, in my humble opinion, curly fries. With this discovery concerning the limits of food imagery in skiing, I had a chance to develop something that John might relate to better.

Looking at him sitting with his ski tails stuck into the snow and his skis pointing straight up, I took my best shot: "Do you know the alphabet?" I asked. He gave me the standard "adults-are-kind-a-dumb" look and answered, "Well, yeah." He of course knew the first letter of the alphabet was A, and with his skis

sticking up in the air was able to put the tips close together and make an approximation of a capital A. Crying John had just saved me.

John skied his A down the slope; he changed it to an H to go fast. He used his A to draw a C in the snow behind him as he slid down the slope. Then he skied S's, lots and lots of S's in the snow. Near the end of the morning he fell, and with his skis still on he looked at them and told me, "Hey! Here's a letter you don't want to make when skiing!" With his skis crossed, we both agreed that X is bad.

I haven't revisited pizza and French fries since Crying John (although that doesn't mean all instructors should ditch these visual images among kids for whom they might work well). Nearly all kids know the alphabet and once introduced to the idea of using letters,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



PROGRESSOR

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One child's pizza may be another's capital A.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 54
their imagination takes off. They'll try lots of different letters on their own. As coaches we can use certain letters to promote specific skill development (*J* versus *L* for sideslip and edge engagement, for example). With appropriate safety guidelines, pairs of kids can explore different skill blends necessary for more complex letters like *D*, *P*, and *B*. Not to give away everything I've learned, but working up to *W* can make for a pretty good clinic!

TEACHING PIGS TO FLY

I need to categorically state to Emily, her parents, her grandparents, and to any future progeny of Emily's that Emily was in no way a pig. Emily was a sweet, bright-eyed, eager six-year-old girl in a whole group of six-year-olds I was coaching with a colleague. Nonetheless, there are two undeniable truths about teaching pigs to fly: 1) Pigs cannot actually fly, and 2) Attempting to teach them to fly only serves to upset the pigs.

Somewhere between the group's skillful straight runs and my decision to help them progress to the wedge, Emily began exhibiting clear signs of that second truism. Although she understood the idea of ski tips being close and



For some children, turns may need a little zigzag magic.

tails being apart to form the wedge, her young legs weren't complying, and that was upsetting her. Emily and I took a little break together off to the side.

"Emily," I asked, "can pigs fly?" I could tell by her face that this was an unexpected question, however she quickly answered that no, to her knowledge, pigs did not fly. I agreed, and then asked, "What *do* pigs do?" We had quite a discussion, deciding after a while that pigs root around with their noses, going this way and that, using all their best pig skills. And with that Emily and I were back on the hill, going this way and that, but pointedly on my part, making no more wedge attempts. Instead we progressed from straight runs to picking up first one ski, and then the other ski off the snow. After she got good at that, we began to change direction slightly while we were stepping, until we were step-turning this way and that, from one side of the slope to the other.

After watching Emily, some of the other kids in the group began to try what she was doing and pretty soon we had a perfect working example of a multi-dimensional learning partnership, with kids and coaches all teaching, doing, and learning. After a while, most kids in the

group were making nice, skidded, open-parallel turns. They were using their best little-kid skills, which at their stage of development meant a stepping/skating movement, rather than attempting to form a wedge with a simultaneous and progressive twisting of their femurs in their hip sockets (which even *sounds* hard).

Rather than attempting to teach pigs to fly, I instead worked with the skills Emily already had, namely good balance on one foot and a willingness to experiment with step-turns. This eventually allowed the whole group of kids to work toward the important goal of speed control using turn shape.

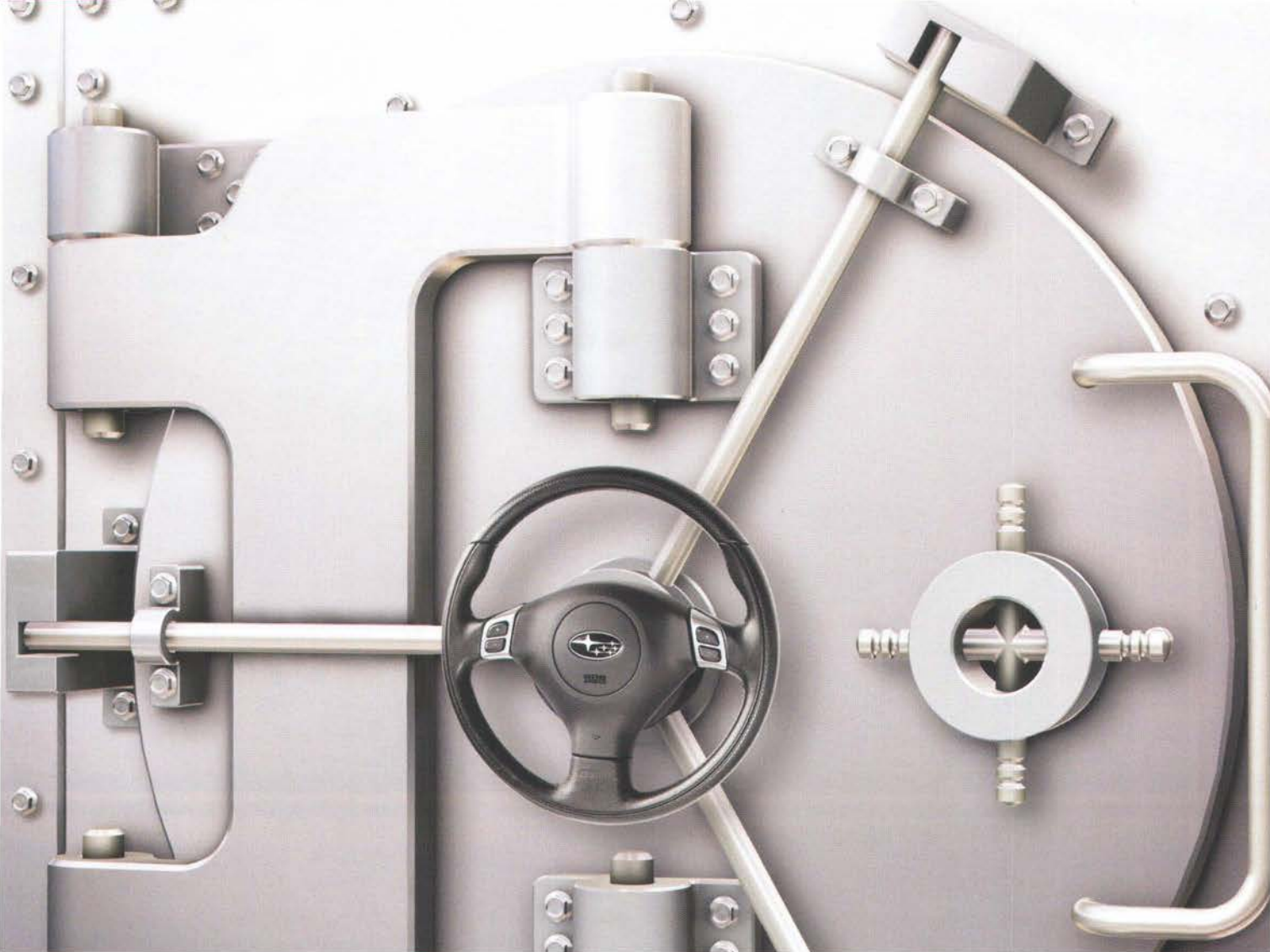
YOU SAY ZIG, I SAY ZAG

I knew it, and Charlie—bless his 10-year-old heart—knew it too. What we both understood was that Charlie was in critical need of some speed control. As Charlie put it, "I like fast, but I don't like really fast." Since it was clear that Charlie could change directions while going down the hill, it was my goal to get him to shape the turn, or round out the belly of the turn more. Even though I had drawn enough *S*'s in the snow to get down to dirt, the whole thing about *S*-shaped turns just wasn't connecting with Charlie. After he watched me draw yet another *S* in the snow, he gave me a look, equal parts impatience and confusion, and asked, "Are you trying to tell me to zig and zag?"

It was a delicate moment. The academic and technical adult in me was about to launch into a well-used dissertation on the limited utility of abrupt, *Z*-shaped turns, the tendency of the tails to wash out, the resulting loss of momentum into the direction of the next turn, and on and on. The other part of me—the frustrated part that realized I had gotten nowhere to this point in our lesson—threw up his hands (metaphorically) and said, "Yup, Charlie. Go do it."

What to Charlie was a zig and zag looked to me not like a dreaded *Z*-turn

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 56

but a lot like darn good wedge turns completed back and forth across the fall line. I decided to let Charlie school me some more. He explained to me that to him, zig meant go towards the left of the trail, zag to the right. He added that he even said the words out loud to remind himself! It was a brilliant building block for the rest of our time together. For example, drawing out each word gave Charlie longer-radius turns. The unusual idea of repeated zigs and then repeated zags, “zig-zig-zig-ziiiiig-zag-zag-zag-zaaaag,” had Charlie skiing garlands across the slope!

We tried other Z-words. “Zoom” between zig and zag suggested speed, reminding Charlie to let his skis become parallel between turns, which generated spontaneous wedge Christies. We decided “zowie” required us to jump

up in the air. As the opposite of these extension movements, I demonstrated absorption (flexion) over a bump, which Charlie immediately termed “zap.”

Charlie led me around for the rest of our day, zowie-ing some jumps, zapping others. We zoomed along the flats and zigzagged down steeper sections. After we zoomed up to his parents at the end of the day, I made sure to thank Charlie for one of the best clinics I had ever had.

COACH AS WILLING AND ATTENTIVE STUDENT

With Crying John, Emily, and Charlie, I began our time together with a firm and clear lesson plan in my head, one that I had reason to believe might work on that day as it had before with other kids. In each case though, the presumptive student instead inserted him- or herself into the role of master teacher.

As coaches, we should be open to these opportunities. This requires, first, that we are observant enough to notice when our planned progression becomes ineffective, however well-intentioned or successful it may have been in the past.

As if that first step isn't difficult enough for us as experienced coaches, this next one is even more disconcerting: being flexible enough at that moment to modify or even radically change our approach. Until I skied with Crying John, I firmly believed in pizza and French fries, having seen hundreds of non-skiers use those most important foods to begin their skiing lives. Maybe it was John's tears, but he got my attention and then together we came up with an approach using the letters of the alphabet, which has since become a fruitful coaching tool.

Having offered our guests their full role as partners, it is then up to us as coaches to apply our technical knowledge toward the guests' development. Emily wasn't exhibiting the skills necessary for developing a wedge. Realizing the wedge is just one precursor to the more important goal of using turns to control speed, Emily and I simply explored a different way to change direction while skiing.

Finally, the best lessons we as coaches take from our guests are those that we can build upon to use with other guests. After Charlie showed me that I was too rigid in my interpretation of zigging and zagging, we found other z-words that helped him progress to wedge Christies. In many later clinics with guests looking for more confidence in bumps, I've used Charlie's zowie and zap to identify and isolate the absorption skills necessary for smooth skiing in moguls. Most clinics, I pause to the side of a bump run we're on to tell them the story of the ski lesson I got from Charlie. ♦

Harold Smith is a PSIA-certified Level III alpine instructor and staff trainer at Attitash, in New Hampshire. He is also a division clinic leader with PSIA-Eastern.



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Stroke Claims Former Board Member Jeff Patterson

With sadness we note the passing of Jeff Patterson, a tireless force in snowsports instruction, who succumbed to a stroke on November 12, 2007, at the age of 43. Patterson distinguished himself as a member of PSIA-AASI, serving in a variety of capacities for working instructors throughout the United States.

Patterson served on the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors from 2003–06, and for several seasons was the lead examiner/Snowboard Committee chair for Rocky Mountain Division. A trusted reviewer for *The Pro Rider* and Vail Resorts' training manuals, he was known for his breadth of expertise as well as his tremendous enthusiasm for snowboarding and skiing.

Patterson began his career in snowsports instruction at Spring Mountain (Pennsylvania) in 1987. He went on to work at Blue Mountain and Montage, and then moved to Vail, Colorado, in 1993. He was involved in PSIA-AASI snowboard programs from their inception, sometimes joking that he was at the very first Level III snowboard exam offered by the Eastern Division—and also at the second. That was one of the few times Patterson didn't quite meet the mark, and he went on to set a standard for excellence in teaching



LOWELL HART

and instructor training. He was certified at Level III in snowboarding, Level II in alpine skiing, and had also earned children's and freestyle accreditation.

Patterson liked to challenge the status quo and while he vigorously worked to serve the association's members, his focus first and foremost was on creating great relationships with his students. He will be remembered as a loving husband and father, a teacher's teacher, role model, mentor, and a beloved friend and riding companion to many, many people.

A fund has been set up to benefit Jeff Patterson's 11-year-old daughter's education and care. Checks should be made out to "Donation Account for Hannah Patterson" and mailed to FirstBank, Attn: Jessica Hermosillo, P.O. Drawer 5270, Avon, CO 81620. ♦

NSAA Study: Ski Industry Retaining Older Participants

Among the most prominent trends noted in the 2007 NSAA National Demographic Study is the continued aging of the visitor base, with strong growth in skiers and riders age 45 and up—which some consider a boon for the industry. The average age of participants has risen steadily from 33.2 in 1997–98 to 36.6 in 2006–07. Age variations across different regions of the country are dramatic. The Midwest has the youngest visitor base with a median age of 22, followed by the Southeast at 28, Pacific West at 32, Rocky Mountains at 39 and the Northeast at 40.

This year's study also indicates a continued increase in helmet usage. Overall, 40 percent of survey respondents were wearing a helmet when interviewed, up from 38 percent last season and 25 percent in 2002–03.

Season pass usage also continues to rise. Thirty-one percent of respondents owned a pass this season, up from the 26–29 percent levels during the prior five seasons.

A total of 138,919 surveys were completed at 92 participating ski resorts during the 2006–07 season. The annual demographic study is available for purchase at www.nsaa.org. ♦

NSAA Survey Estimates 55.1 Million Skier/Rider Visits in 2006–07

The final 2006–07 Kottke End of Season Survey indicates that the U.S. snowsports industry recorded 55.1 million visits for the 2006–07 season, up 0.4 percent from the preliminary estimate of 54.82 million, and down 6.5 percent from the record 2005–06 season.

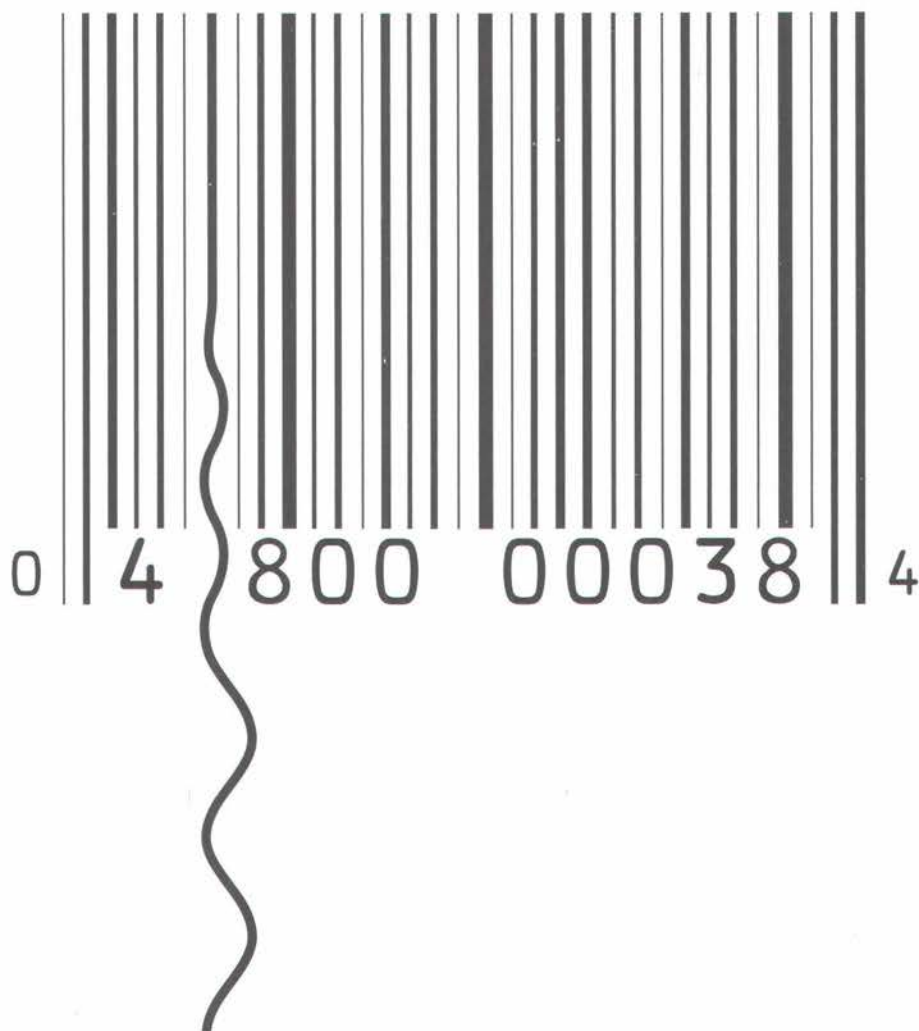
Abnormally warm temperatures and below average snowfall in 2006–07 created a challenging year for the snowsports industry in most areas of the country, however, it was still the sixth best season on record. The Southeast and Pacific West experienced declines of 16.3 percent and 14.3 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, the Northeast, down 5.6 percent, and Midwest, down 7.5 percent, both rebounded in the second half of the season to avert what would have been far more significant declines. In contrast, the Rocky Mountain region managed a slight increase in visits, up 0.6 percent, setting its third consecutive record, and reaching 20.8 million visits—about 38 percent of the nation's total. ♦

Ready for Your Close-Up? Team Selections Slated

PSIA Alpine, Adaptive, and Nordic Team contenders will gather to show off their skiing and teaching skills at the PSIA-AASI national team selections slated for April 27–May 2, 2008, at Mammoth Mountain, California. The event will be held in conjunction with the selections for the AASI Snowboard Team.

Division nominations were due to the PSIA-AASI office by December 31, 2007. The national office must receive completed candidate applications by 5 p.m. (MST) February 29, 2008, sent to the attention of: Kim Seevers, PSIA-AASI Education Director, 133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 101, Lakewood, CO 80228.

Those selected for the national team can expect to spend at least 30 days a year for the next four years participating in team activities aimed at supporting PSIA programs and elevating the standards of skiing instruction throughout the country. For more information, please visit www.psia.org. ♦



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letters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

dismay that Yawgoo Valley seems to be the only ski area that "splits" on privates. Our school works as hard as any other in terms of training, covering the various disciplines, and building communication skills. But, bear in mind this is easier to do with economically happy instructors.

So, listen up resorts. Loosen the purse strings. You will see a new level of respect and camaraderie radiating throughout your area. Obviously, my staff has a strong financial incentive to generate private lessons when they know they can earn \$35 to \$60 per hour. It's a win/win situation.

MAX DE WARDENER
EXETER, RI

BARGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS

after reading Bill Austin's fall 2007 letter to the editor about the cost of teaching skiing and maintaining one's membership, I thought I'd put a different perspective on things.

I taught skiing and snowboarding at Mammoth Mountain for seven seasons before moving back to Scotland (yes, a silly decision). While at Mammoth, I paid my PSIA dues every year—sometimes late but, still, every year. Without a valid license I would not have been able to get my visa to work there or be covered for insurance. Outdoor professionals have to maintain current status with their governing body—that's just part of the job.

Moving on to the "high cost of certification," I have to say that the PSIA system is one of the cheapest, if not *the* cheapest in the world. I am currently moving in to the British system (i.e., the British Association of Snowsports Instructors, or BASI), and in order for my ISIA stamp to be valid I have to complete certain courses. Two of the three modules I am doing are \$2,000 each, including travel, lift pass accommodation, and course fees. That is \$2,000 *per module*. For the price of those two I could go through the PSIA system again and still have change to buy skis on a

pro form. The cost of all the modules in this course is around \$10,000. That's just for the ISIA level—there are two levels below it and one above. I dread to think of the total cost to go the whole way through the system, but it is about \$10,000 in course fees, *not* including any travel, accommodation, lift passes, equipment, etc. Budgeting for that, you could spend easily over \$20,000 to get fully qualified. That's a little different than the cost of doing all three levels of PSIA certification.

Why am I moving over to BASI and spending all this money? Because a friend said, "Get the qualifications for the country you are working in." I also want to keep developing my professional knowledge in the sport and industry. It will not mean more money in the short term but over time it will be beneficial. I want to be able to work in France and to do so I need the highest qualification in the world. I will need to invest time, effort, and a good bit of cash, but the rewards at the end will be better pay and knowing that I have developed as an individual and an instructor. I will have to do more teaching, technical skiing, and advanced off-piste modules and then train my butt off to pass the GS speed test. To get an exemption from this you need to be a 50 point FIS GS racer. This should give you an idea of how much more work is involved. Teaching in Europe is not cheap.

Trying to make a living as an instructor is difficult, but getting paid to go skiing and impart your passion to others and help them improve is more of a lifestyle choice. And it's a pretty fun way to live. If the cost of teaching skiing is that much of an issue maybe it is time to look at what you want out of life. I would rather be teaching and living in the mountains than sitting behind a desk in the city, which is what I do now.

Enjoy the winter and think about all those sad people wishing they could be back living in the mountains right now.

NEIL MACGRAIN
RENFREW, SCOTLAND ♦

boot and flat work

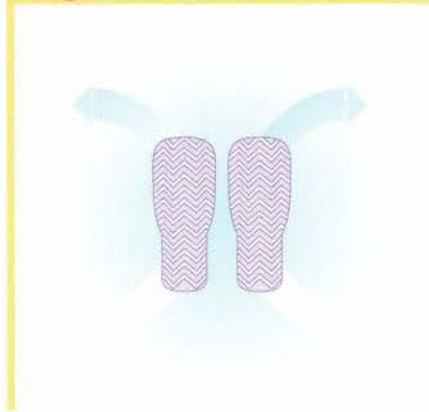
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you can help students build new muscle memory with a series of “flatwork” exercises that now incorporate skis on flat terrain. Have students click their right boot into a ski and repeat the balance, edge control, and the rotary and pressure control movements from the previous drills. Start skiers moving on one ski into scooter turns. Have them keep the right ski flat on the snow while using the other leg for propulsion to create a circle along the outside of each turn. Next have the skiers reverse movements by using the ski on the inside of the turns. Figure eights can also be incorporated into this part of the lesson when you're working with smaller groups.

For a slightly more novel **APPROACH** to introducing a downhill slide, have skiers practice flatland drills at the base of a small hill.

Next, have students repeat the previous circle drill wearing only the left ski, then repeat it wearing both skis (something that requires greater edge control movements to provide forward motion). To help students build coordination, have them step the skis around in a circle—first moving just the tips and then moving just the tails, as if they're moving the hands of a clock through the hours.

figure 2



At this point students are ready to start moving up the hill. Depending on available space, you can encourage them to use a traditional sidestep to ascend

a slight incline. After a short climb have the student do a quick turn into a straight “downhill” run using either a wedge or a beginning parallel turn on the descent.

For a slightly more novel approach to introducing a downhill slide, have skiers practice flatland drills at the base of a small hill. Ask them to walk their skis

CONTINUED

the finer points of our experiment

Students for whom we measured introductory boot exercises and flatland practice varied in age from 10 to the early 40s, and none of them had ever skied before. Physical fitness of the skiers included one student who was a speed skater to a variety of couch potatoes who had limited exercise experience. Class size varied from 4 to 22 students, with an average of 11 in each lesson. Classes lasted between 60 and 75 minutes.

The linked wedge turns in lessons were introduced based on a subjective measure of students' ability to successfully execute turns around a minimum of four ski poles placed on the hill as obstacles. To record turns as beginning parallel required that the student exhibit only extremely minor wedging in executing turns around the pole course. Turns were only counted as parallel when there was evidence of rotation from foot steering or edge engagement (hopefully both) with no more than a moderate degree of tail displacement.

The percentages indicated in table 1 are the percentages of the students who exhibited the skill in class. Students could exhibit both linked wedge and beginning parallel turns, and therefore the totals for both groups can exceed 100 percent when it comes to total percentages for class success. —Bill Claire

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boot and flat work

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63

in a large circle that starts at the base of the hill and move upward. In this way the students will arc the upper half of the circle onto the hill and finish its second half with their first on-hill descent. Once students are comfortable making a swooping downhill descent, you can introduce a straight run and that allows them to move the skis naturally into the new turn in parallel fashion. Movements are made in the direction of travel while facing down the hill instead of as a means to resist the force of gravity.

Get students to keep moving each

circle higher up the hill with constant forward movement. In a short time your class will be ready to catch a lift up the hill for some real downhill.

CONCLUSION

If you're inclined to repeat these introductory exercises and drills, try experimenting with the amount of time you put into boot exercises and having students practice on flat terrain. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised with the difference a few extra minutes can make. If this kind of practice works for your skiers, you've saved them some


extra effort on the hill. But whether or not they know the difference, you'll be glad as an instructor that you took the time up front. ♦

Bill Claire serves as an instructor with the Mad River Mountain Learning Center in Ohio. He started skiing at age 7, began instructing in the mid-'70s, took a long hiatus from teaching to free ski, and returned to snowsports education last year. An engineer by trade, he is the CEO of a software and consulting company and has twice been recognized as an Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year.

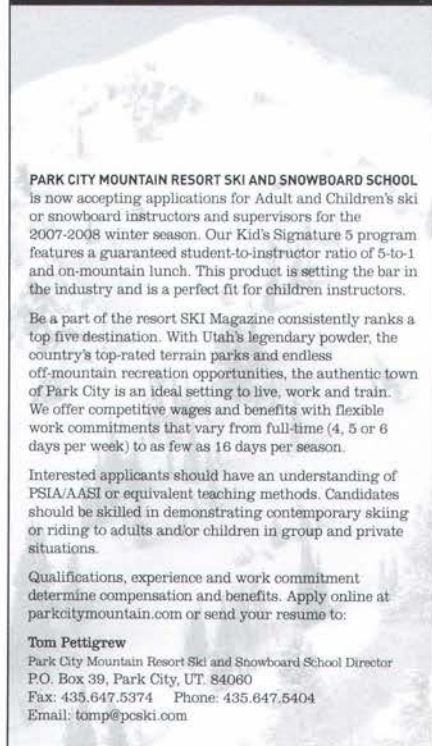
equipment check

It is important to spend time at the beginning of every lesson to make sure that students' boots fit properly. It's not uncommon to have skiers show up for a lesson wearing three pairs of sweat pants, often tucked into the top of their boots with the buckles undone. Instructors should take a few moments to check and see that clothing is clear of the tops of the boots and that buckles are at appropriate tension. A few minutes spent checking fit at the start of a lesson can be critical to student success.

When it comes to the way new students prepare themselves for a lesson, it's amazing what you will find. Interestingly, rental skis and boots are unique in that a student can often put the heel of the boot into the toe of the binding and, vice versa, the toe of the boot will fit into the heel of the binding with equal ease. More than once, I've found students anxiously waiting for a lesson with their skis on backwards! —Bill Claire



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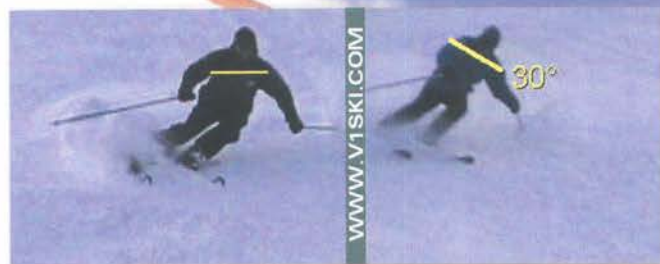
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parting shot

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ERIC PARISI

winning captions

FALL
2007

THE WINNER

Although Apple's new iChild is a hit, the batteries don't last long in cold weather.

—Chip Pulitzer, Whiteface, NY

Runners-up

1. "Sorry boss, I was just explaining the CAP model and the next thing I knew she was asleep!"

—Jerre Smith, Keystone, CO

2. The newest fad from the Fingerlakes region of New York: Ski Yoga. Downhill Dog, anyone?

—Bob Spofford, Snowbowl, VT

3. As you can see, the location of the center of mass in kids is different than in adults.

—Gary Marks, Stevens Pass, WA

4. "My last instructor said I sit back too far. How's this?"

—John R. White, Swain Resort, NY

5. Weebles wobble, and they *do* fall down.

—Diane Whatley, Stratton Mountain, VT

Actual Caption

Whiteface Mountain (New York) ski instructor Lana Washburn waits patiently while her four-year-old student, Josephine, decides whether or not she wants to take a ski lesson.

WINNING ANECDOTE: Jim Flanagan, Stratton Mountain, VT

The beginner class had worked hard all morning on the small slope next to the parking lot. They were ready to move onto the real hill. Before the instructor took them up the lift to their first green trail of the day, he gave his students an important pointer. When standing on any slope with an incline, point the skis across the hill and keep them on edge to avoid sliding forward or backward unexpectedly.

The group took the lift to the top of a winding trail and began to ski down, taking several breaks on the way. During one of those breaks, a female student slid up to the instructor and asked, "When we get to the bottom, could I run into the ladies room for a minute?" The instructor replied, "Why don't you hang behind the class, slide into the woods, do what you have to, and then catch up to us?" figuring that would be easier for everyone. "That's a good idea," the woman replied, not wanting to hold up the class. So, she hung back while the others skied down the trail. Apparently, however, the woman forgot to keep her skis on edge and point them across the hill while she was doing her business.

The next time the class saw the woman, she was sliding straight down through the woods with her ski pants around her boots. She slid right past the class and headed straight toward the parking lot. A few minutes later as they rode the chairlift up for the second time, the class saw a car moving rather quickly out of the parking lot. They never saw the woman again. ♦

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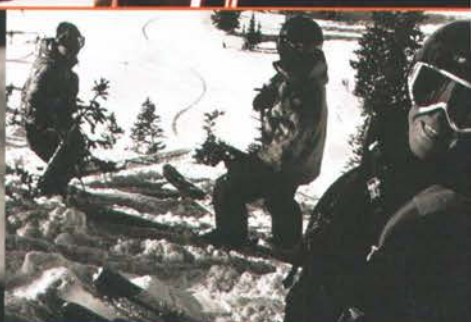


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