MAXIMIZE THE MIX OF FAMILIES AND ABILITY SPLITS pgs. 40, 66

32 DEGREES

THE JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTION | WINTER 2012

KID STUFF

Whitney was right; children *are* the future pgs. 60, 110, 112

Gimme a Breakthrough

Successful Lessons Bank on Trust and Belief pgs. 20, 72

For the Fun of It

Seriously, Just Have a Good Time! pgs. 48, 50, 110

Teaching Tip

Once More, with Feeling pg. 92


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32 DEGREES

The Journal of Professional Snowsports Instruction

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32 DEGREES is an official publication of the American Snowsports Education Association Inc. Education Foundation and is published in the fall, winter, and spring of each year. *32 Degrees* is a registered trade name of the American Snowsports Education Association Inc. Education Foundation, located at 133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80228.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Address changes and inquiries regarding subscriptions may be submitted via e-mail to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org or by conventional mail to 32 Degrees, 133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200, Lakewood, CO 80228. Please reference the old address and ZIP code as well as the new. Association members can also indicate a change of address through their member profile accessed via www.TheSnowPros.org. The post office will not forward copies unless you provide additional postage. Replacement copies cannot be guaranteed.

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VISION:
Inspiring life-long passion for the mountain experience

MISSION:
We support our members, as a part of the snowsports industry, to:
- Develop personally and professionally
- Create positive learning experiences
- Have more fun

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ISSN 1943-7463

32 Degrees in printed with inks that contain a minimum 27.3% by weight renewable content.

ENVIRO/TECH INK

32 DEGREES: The Journal of Professional Snowsports Instruction

CONTENTS

Winter 2012

COVER SHOT: It's all child's play for little ripper Alex Krylov at Vermont's Sugarbush Resort. Photo by Eugene Krylov.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Props to Our Place in the Industry

By Eric Sheckleton
PSIA-AASI Chairman of the Board

This commentary picks up where I left off in the last one, when I said ". . . if we stay focused on our overall mission to get people excited about snowsports, our value will be understood—and celebrated—by the industry, area operators, and members."

Some may ask why PSIA-AASI would be concerned about whether its value is understood by the industry and area operators. After all, aren't we "*member* driven"? Of course we are, and we should be! But there's also an industry component in what we do—because we all seek to serve the needs of guests in the hopes of building lifelong skiers and riders.

In *PSIA Beginnings 1937–1970*, compiled in 2007 by PSIA co-founder and first PSIA President Bill Lash, I found this statement on our original purpose: "The nature of the business of PSIA was to nationally promote ski instruction, handle problems of common concern, establish and maintain high standards of business practices, and promote and advance the interests of the profession of ski teaching." Additional statements of purpose included "to conduct promotional activities" and "to appraise the public of the scope and character of the professional ski instructor." These statements hold true today, except they now also apply to AASI.

Our original purpose was to develop and maintain a national standard and to promote this to the industry and the public. This is still true. Even with all the other benefits of membership, including educational resources, pro deals, and access to some of the best clinicians in the world, the primary benefit of membership is a consistent, nationwide standard of training and certification.

PSIA-AASI is focused on the education of its members and the public, a focus that makes us attractive to much of the industry. Many manufacturers view us as innovators and leaders who influence the buying habits of guests and others on the slopes, in the shops, and even in the bars. We continue to make that case effectively to current and potential Official Suppliers and have seen the sponsor pool grow each year. This most certainly results in an added benefit for members.

Industry associates value our perspective on snowsports. At Interski 2011, instructors from across the globe filled the lecture halls to hear the American view on new ski and snowboard technology and how it will influence teaching. They were also very interested in our continued focus on the guest experience, not just the technical aspects of teaching. This balance is appreciated by PSIA-AASI members working at the highest levels of coaching within USSA and USASA, crediting our guest-centered approach as a valuable complement to their technical understanding.

In my opinion a vital key to our success, now and in the future, is our relationship with the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA). NSAA's focus on attracting new beginners and converting them to lifelong skiers and riders is important to all of us. Our partnership with NSAA and support of Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, Lids on Kids, Smartstyle, and Get a Clue raises awareness of our association and the major role it plays within the industry. So too does PSIA-AASI's participation in NSAA's regional and national conventions as well as the annual SnowSports Industries America (SIA) Snow Show. SIA is a key partner as well, supporting Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month and providing valuable links to the manufacturer and retail community.

Promoting our association at the highest levels of resort management will lead to improved support and appreciation of the role certified instructors play in guest satisfaction and retention. In other words, the role our members play in the success of the industry. This should lead to greater commitment to the snowsports school, resulting in improved learning areas, better training, and support of certification.

Forging these kinds of relationships takes time and dedication. It also takes a willingness to improve our services in an effort to provide a better product for guests. Snowsports school directors play a big role in this effort. Our continued work on our Strategic Education Plan will result in improved communication with the directors, enabling us to better utilize their valuable feedback about what is working for students. This is all about happier guests who want to return, regardless of whether it's to a for-profit resort or a non-profit foundation teaching those with special needs.

Student needs have always been considered when developing education materials and training, and, by extension, those needs influence the certification process. After all, we certify based on the education we provide our members. Therefore, as our understanding of the needs of the guest and the industry grows, our education and certification processes will evolve, leading to further support for our members, their education, and the service they provide.

PSIA-AASI helps drive the success of our industry. This is recognized across the globe, by suppliers, partner associations, and our employers. This, in itself, is a wonderful benefit of membership, and one that enables so many of the others we often take for granted. 32°

PHOTO: SAMO VIDIC

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To Carve or Not to Carve

By Alain Bertrand

Illustration by Alain Bertrand

There are studies dedicated to the flow of pleasure provided by food, love, sloth, but the source of skiing's elation eludes scrutiny. Beyond scenery, speed, and shared friendship, may I offer a new clue?

One demure couple in my beginner's class completely baffled me. They hated sports, cold, and the outdoors. For years their colleagues came back from skiing trips with tales of tumbles, exhaustion, numbing cold, terrifying ledges, getting buried in bottomless snow, not to mention dislocated shoulders, slipped discs, shattered legs, months on crutches. These catastrophic vacations were enormously expensive, and yet their colleagues returned winter after winter. Worse, they subjected their innocent offspring to the same ordeal starting at age three. My couple wanted to find out about this mental disorder. A week later, they parallel skied down intermediate slopes. Their blend of bewilderment and sensual pleasure proved they had humbled the slope, conquered their bodies . . . and something beyond. I wondered about that "something beyond," the spell that bonds us to skiing.

Actually they fell prey to the most common motivations on earth—the stick and the carrot, fear and elation.

Yes, fear serves quite well as a stick.

Turning requires tipping vertically to the slope to set one's center of gravity forward and downhill of the feet, which amounts to falling downhill. Falling from man's height is no light matter, falling from mountain height is a no-no. Therefore, my couple leaned determinedly uphill. I got them to realize that a turn is an interrupted fall. Instructors enjoy the fall because they know gravity is the invisible wing that bears them, gliding with lithe gracefulness. But before wingless students let go into emptiness they require a foolproof brake and stop. The universe knows only one means to slow down motion: friction. Skiers apply friction to the snow by sideslipping or skidding. Carving, designed to reduce friction and increase speed, is the opposite of the controlled braking beginners crave. I teach it to racers. But to my demure couple, on their third and fourth day skiing, I taught sideslipping, edge release at 90 degrees to the fall line on steeper slopes, where it is efficient and turning is mechanically easier. No gravity, no skiing. No steepness, no learning. They felt secure and kept on learning happily ever after!

In defense of carving, I acknowledge that FIS regulations restrict giant slalom skis to a narrow waist that carves a 17-meter radius turn and slalom skis to a 12-meter radius. Any other radius involves skidding, forcing racers to first

What PSIA-AASI Has Done For Me

Until my 20-year pin arrived this fall I had no idea that I've been a member of PSIA-AASI or teaching for that long! Time flies, indeed.

Thoughts of what we do as ski instructors echo in my thoughts—and there is much to appreciate. I can still remember a lesson from 10 or 15 years ago in which a student became truly excited by achieving a new level of ability and could now keep up with her family, something she'd not been able to do before arriving at the ski school. The family went on to buy a ski condo and commit their time and recreational dollars to the sport.

But I also remember the marvelous coaching I received from a PSIA Level II exam clinic leader. He asked me to call him after the exam to let him know if I had passed. I had, and he later sent me an inscribed pin which today remains on my car's key chain.

Across the board, I have been very impressed by the quality of people who

Mary Davis

are part of PSIA-AASI. While styles may differ, to a person they are dedicated to the development of the members—on and off the hill. It's a splendid operation, and I sometimes wonder how the association gets such outstanding people to do what they do.

So, it's been a good 20 years with PSIA-AASI and being a ski instructor. At 79, this may be my final year, but I'll hold off that decision as long as I can.

Joseph "Jay" Davis
Dartmouth Ski Way Snowsports School, NH

LETTERS

PRAISE FOR PRO DEALS

I just wanted to thank you guys for the great work you've done in securing our pro deals. I was able to purchase a great pair of 22 Designs AXL bindings and a new pair of Blizzard Bushwackers this fall. Both companies were great to work with and a few hundred bucks in savings will go a long way in this tough economy. Thanks again!

Tim Thompson
Level III Alpine, Telemark Instructor
Breckenridge, Colorado

PFD WAS MIA

I've been teaching skiing full-time for 30 years, and for 45 years have taught sailing and boating. In all of these activities, safety is *everything*. As paddle surfers take to my local waters, I've noticed that the overwhelming majority do not wear any type of personal flotation device (PFD).

Charlie MacArthur's Fall 2011 article on stand-up paddling (SUP) mentions the need for a life vest, but the photo that accompanies the article shows the paddler without any type of PFD. One can easily conclude from the snowy scene in the photo that the water is cold . . . dangerously cold. Even a cold-water wetsuit and a PFD might not be enough for the conditions in that photo.

There is also no mention of the nautical rules of the road. Some users of human-propelled watercraft do incredibly stupid and dangerous things, either through ignorance or arrogance, but I've seen SUPers raise that to a whole new level. All users of our waterways need to be aware of the rules and risks of such use.

Bill Austin
Level III Alpine Instructor
Okemo Mountain, VT

Bill, thanks for your comments. We received SUP photos from Charlie MacArthur that showed the use of PDFs, but chose the snowy valley shot for publication. Charlie informs us the pond pictured was just 2 feet deep and 10 feet wide and that the shot was taken during a nordic photo shoot, which is why he is wearing nordic ski clothes. We recognize that the photo, while dramatic, did not convey a focus on proper safety equipment. Our apologies.

Charlie tells us that in moving and whitewater rivers, where he does the bulk of his paddling and teaching, "we ALWAYS wear a PFD." In ocean surf zones, he adds, SUPers might forego a PDF in favor of a leash connected to their floaty boards, but that, away from surf zones, inflatable vests are gaining popularity among the SUP community. He concurs with your advice that stand-up paddlers need to know and heed nautical rules of the road. —Eds.

change direction while airborne, then skid until they reach the speed and direction they want, at last to briefly carve to save momentum. Recreational skiers couldn't care less about speeding a few tenths of a second faster and, thus, pivot on mostly flat skis, happy as larks! Although sideslipping is a dirty word, just try skiing without it. Imagine the carnage if your car were preset for single-radius turns. As Einstein said, "It is harder to crack a prejudice than an atom," so I often battle to calm the craze to carve and to prevent students from mistaking the gas pedal of carving for the brake of sideslipping.

If fear is the stick, the carrot of elation is a more elusive matter.

Snow is a scourge as old as mankind. Remember the Donner Party?! Moreover, falling from towering peaks instills fear! So why go skiing?

I observe that once a sideslip has disposed of the fear of freefalling, relying upon frail human balance, weighing friction against gravity gives us leverage over universal forces. Such powers intoxicate.

Tipping into the fall line, the alien force of gravity oozes into our guts, swells through our flesh, stretches along our limbs, and off we soar. Surfing gravity, we slip away from gravity's bonds, escape from our plodding condition, and glide through space. Our command of gravity and friction yields a feeling of elation.

Those who run snowsport schools wrack their minds to sell the fun of skiing. They develop socializing, services, spas, and bars. Today, going back to the original nature of skiing might boost business. It requires acknowledging gravity's essential contribution to skiing and providing the brake to control it. That is setting sideslipping at the core of our teaching. Aren't skidding roostertails sheer glee? 32°

Alain Bertrand is a Level III-certified alpine instructor who teaches in PSIA-AASI's Western Division— unless he's spending time in Chamonix, France.

REACH OUT IN 'YOUR SPACE'!

32 Degrees **welcomes your views! Feel free to write a letter to the editor, opine on a topic near and dear to your heart, or submit an essay on "What PSIA-AASI Has Done for Me." Submissions to the Your Space department may be sent by fax (in care of *32 Degrees*) to 303-987-9489, by e-mail to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org, or by conventional mail to *32 Degrees*, 133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200, Lakewood, Colorado, 80228. Please include your full name, address, and daytime telephone number.**


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Activate your online account at TheSnowPros.org and get instant access to all the benefits of PSIA-AASI membership like pro offers, educational opportunities, association events, instructor tools, and more.

NEWS OF NOTE

2012–16 Team Coaches Chosen

Leading into 2012 PSIA-AASI Team Selection scheduled to take place in April 2012, PSIA-AASI had several important choices to make—namely who would lead the 2012–16 Teams as coaches. Following a thorough application, review, and interview process, PSIA-AASI is pleased to announce the following selections:

Lane Clegg will continue as coach for the AASI Snowboard Team. Clegg brings strong vision and the motivation to raise awareness of AASI and increase the team's contribution to the education content and message of PSIA-AASI.

Scott McGee will continue in his role as PSIA-AASI Nordic Team coach, working with the cross-country and telemark disciplines. McGee's unique experience and skills across these disciplines will serve him, and the association, well as the Nordic Team evolves with the 2012 team selection process.

Kim Seevers has been named coach of the PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team. Seevers' history and contributions to PSIA-AASI and adaptive snowsports over the years have been significant. The credibility and qualities she brings to the position of coach will strengthen the association's ability to deliver exceptional education to our members and the adaptive community.

Rob Sogard continues as coach for the PSIA Alpine Team. Rob brings a valued perspective from his years as team member and coach. His contributions and collaborative style exemplify the leadership that will help the teams succeed.

"Lane, Scott, Kim, and Rob each bring an individual style and unique approach which, when taken together, creates a very strong team among themselves," said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. "There is great experience and knowledge within this group, which will help PSIA-AASI continue to be the leader in snowsports education."

He added, "The strength of the applicant pool did not make the selection process easy. Each individual who applied for a coaching position displays a passion for snowsports and a commitment to PSIA-AASI that is truly inspirational."

For more information, log on to TheSnowPros.org and check out the 2012 PSIA-AASI Teams community in The PSIA-AASI Community.

2012–16 Team Coaches


Lane Clegg


Scott McGee


Kim Seevers


Rob Sogard

Education Foundation Receives Grant to Support Program Growth

The PSIA-AASI Education Foundation has received a $200,000 grant to support the growth of adaptive programs, consumer promotion, and professional development initiatives. The anonymous grantor believes that the projects this grant supports offer valuable resources and training for volunteers and instructors who teach snowsports to the general public, especially those teaching adaptive students.

Projects supported by the grant include the following:

- Distribution of the *PSIA-AASI Adaptive Manual* to qualifying adaptive programs and their instructors
- Free access for PSIA-AASI members to the *Movement Matrix*, an online tool featuring more than 300 video clips of real-life skiing and riding situations
- Ongoing partnership with Disabled Sports USA and PSIA-AASI's involvement in The Hartford Ski Spectacular
- Consumer messaging, including PSIA-AASI's involvement in the Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month initiative and *Go With a Pro* television programming
- Standards development and assessment conducted as part of the association's Strategic Education Plan

"Receiving this grant is a testament to the hard work of our members and the vision of the board of directors to provide the best resources available to the skiing and riding public," said PSIA-AASI Executive Director and CEO Mark Dorsey. "It is no secret that PSIA-AASI provides an authentic and engaging connection to the snowsports experience, and as the hub of that opportunity, we are honored that we can provide access for the philanthropists who wish to support initiatives like these. One hundred percent of these funds will support PSIA-AASI Education Foundation programs, and we are honored and grateful for this support." 32°

LOCKER ROOM TALK

	NAME/ CREDENTIALS	MEMBER SINCE/ DIVISION	GOAL FOR THIS SEASON	THREE WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOUR PERFECT RUN	BEST PSIA-AASI MEMORY	SKIING/ RIDING ON
	**Erin Ramberg** Hyland Snowsports Academy, Bloomington, MN Snowboard Level I	2009 Central	Improve my park riding.	Long Powder Untouched	Meeting many of the original PSIA members at the 50/50 Celebration.	Never Summer Heritage
	**Robin T. Macri** Copper Mountain, CO Snowboard Level III, CS2, Trainer, Freestyle Accreditation	2004 Rocky Mountain	Get back on the horse after a rugged knee blowout.	Glorious Inspired Majestic	Cert I Exam in Snowmass. I almost peed my pants in fright from the Snow Monster that popped up on the kids trail, used to prevent children from escaping their lesson.	141 Burton Blender—P-Rocker all the way!
	**Steve Muise** Timberline Snowsports Center, Timberline Lodge Ski Area, OR Snowboard Level III, CS1, FS2, DCL, Examiner	1996 Northwest	Training my staff to focus more on the student/instructor relationship, making lessons more personal and fun.	High Speed Pow!	Too many to choose from, but trying out for the Northwest Division Staff in 2003 was memorable. There were a lot of great riders, it snowed an inch an hour for three days, and I made the staff!	163 Atomic Alibi Wide, 163 and 159 Atomic Hatchet Wide, Atomic Godfather Bindings, Atomic Super Boots

Courtesy of Scott McGee

PRO FILE: SCOTT MCGEE

Where did you start teaching nordic skiers?

In my sophomore year at college, the Dartmouth Outing Club hosted a learn-to-cross-country ski day. I taught seven seniors to ski by the end of the morning. The next year I applied to teach the physical education programs for both cross-country and tele. The program needed a supervisor so I took the winter off and taught. I had the best time teaching and applying my technical knowledge to help peers learn to ski. It became a career path.

What was your route to PSIA and the PSIA Nordic Team?

After moving to Wyoming and teaching at Grand Targhee Resort, my mentor, Chi Melville, encouraged me to get certified. I joined, took a clinic—and failed my first exam. I passed my Level III telemark in 1992, and naively submitted an application for the nordic team. I earned my Level III nordic in 1994, and applied for the team again in 1996. I didn't make the team that year—but made it in 2000.

How'd you get into guiding?

I began guiding as a canoe expedition instructor for Outward Bound (OB) in the Boundary Waters of northern Minnesota—my first job out of college. I worked with OB in seven western states, and worked in wilderness areas each summer for 15 years. Eventually, I looked to settle down for the summers. I applied to Exum Mountain Guides, right in my home range. Now I work four to five days a week teaching beginning or intermediate climbing, and leading climbers up classic routes on the Grand Tetons and the Wind River Range.

Are there similarities between guiding and teaching?

There are so many! I use my teaching foundation daily, and instructing skiing has definitely helped me teach climbing and vice versa. Most helpful has been understanding the needs of the struggling student.

And differences?

In climbing, sometimes it's *where* you look for holds, but more importantly, it's *how* to read the rock and *how* to use your body to move up. Every pitch and every move is different. There are no groomers. You can ski in front of, beside, or watch your client from any vantage point. In climbing, sometimes you can't even see your client. You coach beforehand. Some guides will "chalk" holds to mark the way. But you can't be right there with them when you're up above on the belay ledge. On the other hand, you're always connected to your clients while climbing. Famous French guide Gaston Rebuffat referred to this as the "Brotherhood of the Rope." And in winter, what we've got is the brother- (and sister-) hood of the slope.

How do you keep your sports enthusiasm alive year-round?

You're always turning someone on to something new. I relish the challenge of helping people get up (or down) something they think they can't. They overcome perceived impossibility.

Is it true you ride a unicycle on mountain trails?

I picked up the uni in college and it's not that hard to learn, especially if you have parallel bars. Inspired by Canadian Kris Holm, I got a 'muni' (mountain + uni) about 10 years ago, and love riding trails. It's safer than a mountain bike, because you're always going at running speed or less.

What's this rumor about you ski-skating across the Tetons?

Once or twice a year the conditions align to allow skate skiing at high elevations, and I can cross the range in a day. I call it skate-ski mountaineering because it does call on ski mountaineering skills, even on the light gear. These days are glorious, and etched in my memory as some of my sweetest, and most challenging skiing memories. 32°


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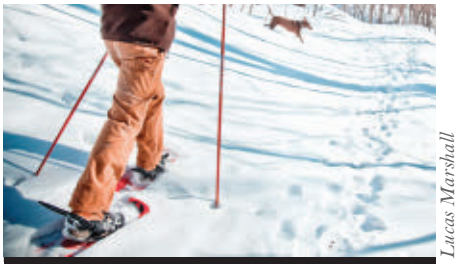

Lucas Marshall

SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

Mountain Khakis

LOCATION: Jackson Hole, Wyoming
YEARS IN THE BIZ: 8

WEBSITE: MountainKhakis.com, Mountain Khaki's pro purchase program can be accessed via the member login at TheSnowPros.org.

WHY THEY ROCK: The motto says it all: Mountain Khakis are "Built for the Mountain Life." As the Official Après Pant of PSIA-AASI, they provide the perfect apparel option for PSIA-AASI members who make outdoor adventure a way of life. Their "rugged yet refined" design approach is perfect for everything from base camp to boardroom.

WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW: Established in 2003, Mountain Khakis launched its product line with "the best damn khakis on the planet." Outfitting everyone from ranch hands to golf pros, corporate execs to ski bums, they've ignited an incredibly loyal fan base. Mountain Khakis quickly became the best-selling pants in the outdoor industry, and with the mission to be the best mountain-inspired lifestyle apparel brand, the company launched its Original Mountain Tops collection of shirts, sweaters, vests, and jackets in August 2011. They now outfit the outdoor enthusiast from head-to-toe.

REASON TO GET EXCITED: MOVEMENT MATRIX IS NOW FREE!

TAKE THE BLUE PILL, TAKE THE RED PILL; IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE PSIA-AASI MOVEMENT MATRIX IS NOW FREE! THANKS TO AN ANONYMOUS GRANT TO THE PSIA-AASI EDUCATION FOUNDATION, ALL MEMBERS NOW HAVE COMPLIMENTARY ACCESS TO THE ONLINE TOOL THAT HAS MORE THAN 300 VIDEO CLIPS OF REAL-LIFE SKIING AND RIDING SITUATIONS. CHECK IT OUT AT THESNOWPROS.ORG.

HOT

***American Snow*, the new book covering PSIA-AASI's amazing 50-year story of instructional innovations.**

Getting your pro orders in early for the hottest deals on new gear. PSIA-AASI has six new pro offer pages this winter, including Salomon, Atomic, Elan, Alpina, Flow Snowboards, and RAMP Sports. Check out all the new gear on the pro offers page in the Member Center at TheSnowPros.org.

PSIA-AASI's CS1 and CS2 credentialing, with a spot-on focus for kids' needs that provides comprehensive instructional tools for customizing every kind of lesson.

Alpine touring bindings. Skiing's fast-growing SUV category of ski bindings lets skiers ski hard and tour for the powder as well.

NOT

Not knowing the incredible history of U.S. ski and snowboard instruction.

Skiing in 10-year-old boots that are two sizes too big. Take advantage of your PSIA-AASI member pro offers this year and upgrade your gear before it's all gone!

Cookie cutter lessons.

Boot packing while your friends skin for fresh tracks.

Where Do You Read *32 Degrees?*

WIN!

Kristy Aserlind, a PSIA-certified Level III instructor at Mt. Hood Meadows, Oregon, writes: "I was absorbed in *32 Degrees* during my recent trip to the Westmann Islands, in Iceland. This photo was taken on the waterfront in Heimaey, the only inhabited island in the Westmann Islands. The town was buried in lava and ash when a nearby volcano erupted in 1973.

"We didn't make it to the Hlidarfjall ski area," she continues, "but we were there during the first snowfall of the year in Akureyri!"

For her efforts, Kristy will receive a $25 gift certificate to the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*. Have a

shot that features you, the magazine, and a similarly out-of-the-ordinary spot? Send it—and some info on how you came to be there—to lineup@thesnowpros.org. You just might be a contender for our next gift-certificate giveaway!

ROAD TRIP WORTH TAKING Want to get the inside scoop on next year's gear and industry happenings? Make plans to be in Denver January 26–29, 2012, to attend the SnowSports Industries America (SIA) show. The SIA Snow Show is the industry's largest trade event globally and is also host to the first international On-Snow Demo/Ski-Ride Fest. As a PSIA-AASI member you are able to register and attend this industry insider event. Visit SnowSports.org for more information on the event and learn how you can be "in the know" on the latest trends and topics surrounding the snowsports industry.

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FROM THE JIBBER'S POCKET

Welcome to the latest installment of the forever freestyle section of 32 Degrees, where PSIA-AASI Team members answer freestyle questions that are not normally covered in divisional or national clinics. Our latest question is from Stevie Lund in Eagle Nest, New Mexico: "Hey there Jibbers, in the last 'Jibbers Pocket' you had a stompy rail. Where did you get it"?

Stevie, that's an awesome question, and thanks for asking. This is where jibbers and instructors get to show off our MacGyver skills. There isn't a company building stompy rails, so we have to build them (see the "Talk to Your Team" sidebar). These rails are worth their weight in gold when you realize how helpful they are for learning.

First things first: You gotta have welding skills—or know someone who does. This is where the inter-departmental relations at the hill comes in. If you talk to the park crew or lift mechanics they may be able to help you with the construction. And don't forget to buy them a soda pop!

Next come the parts (photo 1). A stompy only needs to help people learn how to get on a rail, so length should be around 4 or 5 feet. A nice piece of 2x6 tubing (or wider) is nice, but almost any tubing will work. The rail needs legs; in this case we recommend 2x2 square tubing.

Remember, the name is stompy so the legs should be so short that it makes it easy to stomp into the snow (all the legs do is keep the rail from sliding away when you're playing on it). For the stompy shown here the legs are about 5 inches long. End caps are also essential to the smoothness of the feature. We don't want to gouge our boards . . . or our bodies—do we? Since the rail is 2x6 cut two pieces of two-inch round pipe, about 5½ inches long.

Since we like our rails slippery, we keep the sliding surface on the table so as not to get it scarred up from welding. It's going to look weird because we are working on it with the legs sticking straight up in the air. Get the legs square to the center of the rail length-wise. Then burn them into place with the welder (photo 2).

Next are the end caps. Place them into the ends of the 2x6 square tubing; these are there to round off the ends of the square rail. Spark those caps onto that rail with the welder (photo 3).

Now flip the stompy over and polish the sliding surface with a grinder and a flapper wheel (photo 4). Make sure to smooth out those end-cap welds so they look as smooth as a tune on your winter gear. Finally, after letting the project cool down for 30 to 45 minutes, take it outside and flip it so the sliding surface is face-down to the ground.

Now it's time for a paint job (photo 5). Choose any color that makes the bosses happy and have at it.

Next comes the time to enjoy it! Remember these things are light, so they are easy to handle. But that lack of weight also means they go missing quickly, so get a lock and a bike chain. We hope this helps out and answers your question, Stevie. Stay safe and keep jibbing. 32°

—*The Jibbers*

If you have a question for The Jibbers, send it on in to: lineup@thesnowpros.org


Photo 1


Photo 2


Photo 3


Photo 4


Photo 5

Photos by Max Tapes

TALK TO YOUR TEAM

Before you blaze on through the design and assembly for your stompy rail, take the time to check in with other departments at your area. Working with the park crew to spec the rail and so they know where and how you plan to use it is a good way to develop a relationship. Another early connection should be a chat with the risk manager. And when you get the final okay and you're ready to fire up the torch, be certain your welder has the skills to make it work, make it last, and make it safe. — *The Jibbers*

Design : www.super-regular.fr / Photographie : Arnaud Childeric

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Willy Booker

RACER TURNED NORDICA USA PREZ

Willy Booker has spent his life on snow. The Colorado native first skied at Berthoud Pass at the age of two, the same year his mother started working in a ski shop.

From ski racing at Burke Mountain Academy and the University of Vermont, to working his way up from marketing and product management to become president of Nordica USA, he has seen the snowsports industry from the inside out. *32 Degrees* Special Projects Editor Peter Kray sat down with him recently to talk about what he has learned through all those seasons, and where he thinks the sport is going next.

32 Degrees: *You grew up in the ski industry—what was that like, and how does it affect how you look at the industry now?*
Willy Booker: My mother started working in a ski shop when I was about two so that we could get season passes at Loveland ski area. (She still manages the Loveland Sport and Rental Shop today). I think all the hours hanging around that shop when I was a kid gave me an appreciation of how hard it is to run a successful ski shop. It's also given me a perspective on how much people love the ski industry and the sport. The same people come back year after year because they love skiing.

32 Degrees: *Who are your role models?*
WB: As a ski racer I grew up idolizing Ingemar Stenmark and the Mahre brothers—there are certainly a lot of great things that you can take from those guys today. I was born the same year as Bode Miller and we both raced in the East in high school. After he toasted me (and everyone else) I've followed his career closely. People run hot and cold on Bode but I love how clear he is on his motivation in the sport. He's always challenging himself and, I believe, is in it for the best reasons. Today I'm a huge Rory Bushfield fan. You will not find a skier, or person for that matter, with a more infectious positive attitude. In other sports I'm all about John Elway!

32 Degrees: *The new 45-degree instep technology in your ski boots is making news. How important is new technology to the sport?*
WB: I think it is very important. The 45-degree instep is just a part of it though. The most important thing is that we never stop trying to move the sport forward. Skis are a lot different today than they were 10 years ago. They are fatter, the sidecut is dramatically different, they are substantially shorter, and now we have rocker technology in most skis. The result is that the way that we ski and the needs of our boots have changed significantly. Yet the technology in boots has been largely static for decades; you might even say that there has been regression in some ways. The new Fire Arrow boots are specifically designed to work with modern skis and modern skiing. Fatter skis and more sidecut leads to more lateral forces, so we built the boots with that in mind.

32 Degrees: *How well do you think the snowsports market—from pros to enthusiasts—understands rocker right now?*
WB: There's a big range of understanding out there at the moment at every level. I would characterize the understanding as "fair." A big part of the issue is in the messaging from the manufacturers. Companies have different philosophies and right now it's hard for a consumer to understand what it all means. Pros can play a very important part in clearing up consumer confusion on the issue. If we keep it simple and ask ourselves what rocker will or will not do to make skiing easier, better, and more enjoyable I think we can get the message across.

32 Degrees: *When it comes to on-mountain professionals, do you have equipment you feel is designed particularly for their use?*
WB: Absolutely. We build a number of products that are specifically designed for the on-hill pro and products that would otherwise be relatively unneeded in the in-line retail world. There are just not many skiers outside of the pro ranks who need a Dobermann Pro 130 for example.

We also work closely with our Pro Team on products. [PSIA Alpine Team Captain] Michael Rogan has been an integral part of the Nordica product development process for many years, as have a few pros from Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and a couple of other countries. We work with these guys on top-level product all the way down to product designed for beginners.

32 Degrees: *Where do you think the sport goes from here?*
WB: Up! I'm a certifiable optimist. I think skiing is ready to break out at the moment. There are many positive signs right now—more people visited ski areas than ever before last season regardless of the fact that they were being told by news stations that the sky was falling on a 24/7 basis. People are more passionate about skiing because there is no substitute—nothing will replace the feeling that you get from a great day on the hill. Who knows where we'll go from here. But I know that at Nordica we'll be pushing, trying, testing, failing, and starting over again and again each day so that we can succeed in making skis and boots that perform better, fit more comfortably, and ultimately make skiing more fun. 32°

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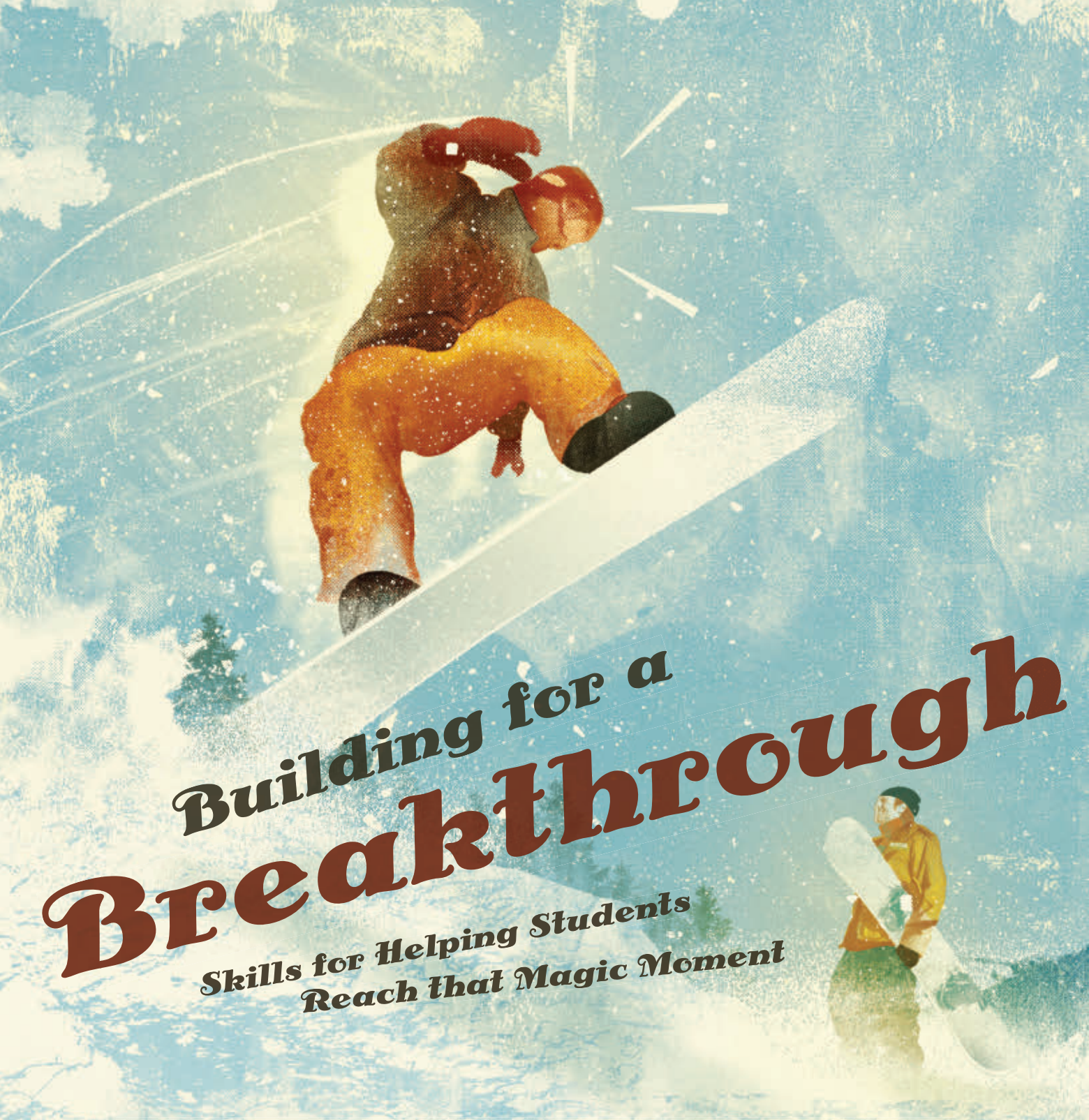

Building for a Breakthrough

Skills for Helping Students Reach that Magic Moment

You can teach a million skills, watch 1,000 videos, and develop hundreds of new techniques and metaphors to convey how something should work . . . but none of it will do any good unless your students can use those tools you give them to experience "a breakthrough." You know, that moment when everything clicks and a skill or experience that was once purely theoretical (even impossible, perhaps, in a student's mind) becomes physically real.

By Doug Schnitzspahn ***Illustration by Kevin Howdeshell***

It is the most important moment in any lesson, and the tricky part is that after all you have said and done, every student still has to reach the breakthrough on his or her own. But you can certainly lead the way.

"You have to be a psychologist, a mentor, a teacher," J.T. Thompson, a master instructor at Colorado's Winter Park Ski and Ride School, said of all the different skills an instructor must use to help a student achieve a breakthrough.

A Level III alpine and Level II telemark instructor, Thompson said the biggest thing to remember when teaching for a breakthrough is not about conveying the mechanics of a certain skill, but focusing on coaching, and giving the student room to experience all of the incoming information and sensations as they occur. "It's about empowerment," Thompson said.

But don't worry if you lack a master's degree in transpersonal counseling. There are specific strategies an instructor can use to bring students to their own personal breakthroughs. Of course it all begins with a strong foundation in the fundamentals of teaching skills and mechanics, but a class can take a much more esoteric turn from there. The key? Build up students' trust in you and then start to lead them in a direction where you are confident they will succeed.

Holly Anderson has students take on super-powerful alter egos, complete with silly superhero names. When the students begin laughing about their names and acting like their new alter egos, they can sometimes fool themselves into riding like superheroes.

"It should be more about the student's experience than what the instructor is telling them," said Earl Saline, the professional development manager for PSIA-AASI. "I call it 'independent study.'"

All of this seems to go against the grain of instruction. Teaching without teaching and students learning on their own? Yes, the breakthrough is like some type of Zen koan. Listen up, grasshopper: As much as it is about the student, bringing on a breakthrough starts with rethinking your role as an instructor as well.

Establishing The Mindset

It's important to remember that many of us did not start skiing or snowboarding with a lesson. We simply went to the hill with some friends in high school, rode the lift to the top of the mountain and were told to "just try it." Or there was a "breakup moment" when your significant other took you up, told you a bunch of things that didn't make sense, and then left you to your own devices while he or she headed off with friends.

Level III snowboard instructor, examiner, and Big Sky (Montana) Public Relations Manager Chad Jones started that way. The first time he went out with a friend, he spent two hours suffering on the mountain and by the time he was done he hated snowboarding. Of course, it is precisely at this most vulnerable phase that an instructor can really make a difference, but only if he or she has some empathy for the student's state of mind.

"Especially when it comes to beginners, they are doing something very foreign to them," Jones said. "No matter how good of an athlete they are, you strap them to a board and it's going to feel foreign. But once they trust you, you can tell them, 'I know you can so this. We are going to step out of your comfort zone a little. But I know you can do it.' What you are really trying to do is help them remove their own doubt in themselves."

And one of the best ways to do *that* is with visualization and humor. Holly Anderson, a Level III snowboard instructor and examiner at Mount Snow, Vermont, has students take on super-powerful alter egos, complete with silly superhero names. When the students begin laughing about their names and acting like their new alter egos, they can sometimes fool themselves into riding like superheroes or at least laughing enough about themselves that they loosen up on the hill.

"Making it fun can boost the comfort level," she said. "Sometimes they come to those breakthroughs because they get out of their own heads. When they imagine themselves as someone else, they don't hold anything back."

Respect the abilities students have, give them faith in themselves, but also be realistic about how to help them improve.

Sherri Harkin

Anderson also stressed the importance of understanding how different people communicate and learn. Instead of saying the same thing over and over, she will keep trying to explain techniques to her students in different ways. Students start to turn off if you keep saying the same thing ad nauseam. They can also begin to lose trust if it feels as if you either don't understand them or are simply spewing out a canned line.

As the great Zen meditation teacher Suzuki Roshi said, "All of you are perfect just as you are, and you could use a little improvement." Whether or not you think the saying is corny, it's still a good principle to think about when you build a relationship of trust with your students. Respect the abilities that they do have, give them faith in themselves, but also be realistic about how you can improve their game. That type of foundation helps build the confidence they need to start approaching the physical skills.

Build Up Terrain

The most tangible technique an instructor can use to steer students toward a breakthrough is to bring them up the terrain ladder. Start low. Teach a new skill on easy terrain so that they will be simply concentrating on the technique and not worrying about the mountain, which can easily lead to a psychological downward spiral. If you slowly build up the difficulty of the terrain, it will in turn boost their confidence to the point where the new skill becomes less of a revelation, and more of a reliable tool.

The most tangible technique an instructor can use to steer students toward a breakthrough is to bring them up the terrain ladder.

"Too often coaches try to get breakthroughs by challenging the student on terrain that's too difficult for the student's skill level," said Greg Fatigate, Smugglers' Notch (Vermont) training manager and an AASI-certified Level III snowboard instructor on the education staff and examiner training squad in PSIA-AASI's Eastern Division. "My approach is to first listen to the student and find out where they are least comfortable—it might be a given skill, it might be a given run. From there, after watching the person ride, we come up with a plan *together*."

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Fatigate and his student then practice the new skill on comfortable terrain. He coaches the skill and gives feedback that centers on the kinesthetics of what the student feels physically, as well as mentally. Or, according to him, "On *what* they feel as opposed to *how* they feel."

"You teach the movement on familiar terrain," stressed Thompson. "If I'm trying to get someone to break through to ski moguls, I don't start there. Skiing in control in the moguls requires complex mechanics and there is a ton of pressure. Students tend to apply too much pressure using the side of the ski. So we go back to familiar terrain and simply explore more rotary movements. Here they can slow their world down. They can pivot and skid the ski more, as opposed to over edging it. Then we go to small moguls and apply that same pattern."

Chad Jones uses a ladder approach. He starts with the skill on simple terrain, then slowly ramps up the level until students find themselves using the skill not because they are practicing it, but because they are reacting to the mountain.

Jones also uses a ladder approach. He starts with the skill on simple terrain, then slowly ramps up the level until students find themselves using the skill not because they are practicing it, but because they are reacting to the mountain. "I teach them under less pressure. But then the real breakthrough comes when it becomes a built-in part of how they ride."

The Ultimate Goal

Of course the most difficult part of teaching at this level is not being a teacher at all. Once again in the words of Suzuki Roshi, "You want a teacher so that you can be independent. So you study yourselves."

That is exactly the attitude an instructor needs to cultivate in his or her students. The beauty of the breakthrough is that it is an achievement that comes from the inside. "It all boils down to one concept," said Thompson. "Less is more."

He explains that on a purely physical level, that means getting the student to actually try less. "When you are teaching movements and patterns with your students, keep it simple," he advises. "Sometimes they just try to overpower and muscle their skis. But less is more."

It's not just about the student, however, according to Thompson. Teachers all too often try to overpower the lesson. They try to teach too hard. "Again," he says, "less is more. You need to ski more and teach less."

Now, that doesn't mean an instructor just leaves a student to his or her own devices. That would be no different from the bad experience Jones and so many others had the first time on the hill with unsympathetic buddies. It's more a matter of combining the trust and terrain skills that students have been taught, then letting them enjoy those new skills for themselves.

"It's cool to see people enjoying themselves doing something they were afraid of, or at the very least unsure of, before. As you start moving up in different skill levels, whether it's a trick on a fun box or hitting the halfpipe for first time, you start to see them relax . . . and then they start processing. Then they can focus in such a way to make changes on their own," said Saline.

When that transformation begins to happen to students on the hill, you can see it in their posture, and their attitude. They begin enjoying the mountain for themselves rather than being a "student" who needs you and your approval. They begin developing and expressing their own style on the hill. The breakthrough has arrived and it goes well beyond learning a skill underfoot—it can even translate to confidence and breakthroughs off the hill.

When that transformation begins to happen to students on the hill, you can see it in their posture, and their attitude. They begin enjoying the mountain for themselves rather than being a "student" who needs you and your approval.

Anderson likes to tell the story of one student who came to her determined to learn to snowboard. She was a single mom with three kids whose husband had left her for a snowboarding "chick" when he was in the Rockies on a trip with friends. Through tears and frustration, Anderson and her new student worked on snowboarding, while also discussing the bigger issues off the hill.

Finally, the student had a breakthrough moment on a blue run. It all clicked. She did it on her own. And her kids were watching. According to Anderson, the next time they saw their dad they told him, "Mom snowboards better than your girlfriend." 32°

Doug Schnitzspahn is a freelance writer and the editor of Elevation Outdoors. *He also studied at the Tassajara Zen monastery founded by Suzuki Roshi.*

America's GO BACK TO BASICS

LEANNE SMITH PLACES

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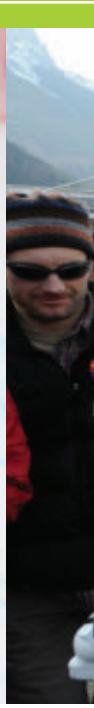
Jon Margolis

KILEY STAPLES SPEEDS



LAUR

In May of 2011, three of the best ski racers in America went back to ski school. At a training camp at Mammoth Mountain, California, Stacey Cook, Leanne Smith, and Laurenne Ross—all members of the U.S. Ski Team's World Cup speed team—took in the tutelage of Michael Rogan, captain of the PSIA Alpine Team. The premise: Technically better skiers can be better ski racers, and when it comes to developing better technical skiers, no one does it better than PSIA.

In many ways, the collaboration between instructor and elite athletes wasn't very different from what happens daily throughout the winter in snowsports schools across the country. The fundamentals of good skiing, for a World Cup racer or a never-ever beginner, are basically the same. But because the Mammoth sessions involved an instructor at the top of his game working with ski racers at the top of theirs, it was a unique situation that called out for deeper examination. And it begged at least two basic questions: What can elite athletes learn from PSIA-AASI instruction? And what can a PSIA-AASI-certified instructor learn from working with skiers or riders with such a high skill level?

"We were all a little skeptical at first," Cook said, recalling when Chip White, the speed team head coach, told her and the other athletes about the concept. That skepticism was particularly acute for Cook, because even as a kid she never went to ski school. She figured she had a pretty good handle on how to ski properly at this point in her skiing life—she was the world's 19th-ranked downhiller last year—so what was she going to learn now?

Instructors regularly encounter that attitude in higher-level skiers. I know how to ski. Why do I need ski school? Racers, however, are different in one important respect from highly skilled recreational skiers: they operate in a results-focused arena. For them, good skiing is simply defined as skiing faster. And while 19th in the world is pretty good,

Best

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN PSIA AND THE U.S. SKI TEAM JOINED FORCES LAST SPRING

BY PETER OLIVER

Jon Margolis

ENNE ROSS CELEBRATES

Jonathan Selkowitz

PSIA'S MICHAEL ROGAN

Jonathan Selkowitz

COACH CHIP WHITE

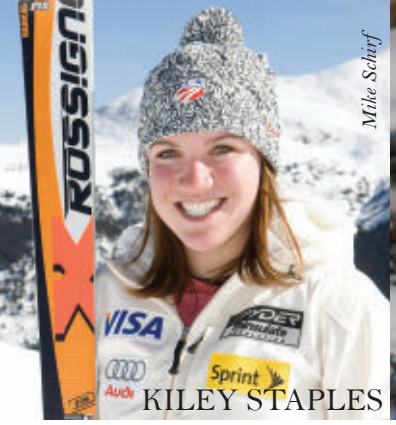
being top 10 would be even better. One way to get there, White believed, was "a return to fundamentals. And what PSIA-AASI does well every day are drills and fundamentals."

Enter Rogan, whose only mandate from White was "to get athletes to go faster." To do that, Rogan first needed to do what any instructor must do with any client—establish trust. That put the initial emphasis of the relationship on communication, where Rogan could count on an important factor in the mental makeup of most competitive athletes, which is that they will try almost anything it they think it will help make them better. As Ron Kipp, the director of education for the United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA), put it: "Elite athletes are very, very motivated. They'll do anything to gain that hundredth of a second."

But dig even deeper, and, according to Cook, the athletes also appreciated the flexibility of Rogan's PSIA-AASI-based approach. Coaches, she said, are more likely to approach skills issues as "a hit-or-miss situation." In other words, there is one way of skiing properly, and either you get it right or you don't. Kipp said, "Most coaches teach to an outcome," meaning that the end—a fast run—might overshadow the means of skiing well to get there. Rogan, by comparison, used his instructor's experience to explore various solutions to the same problems. "He made it a conversation, not a lesson," said Cook. "That makes you more creative in the way you think about things."

According to Rogan, such an interactive approach, finding whatever communicative magic is necessary to connect with any client, is critical groundwork in making skill-development drills work. "Because I work with general public/ski teachers, I have learned how to deal with different abilities in the same class," said Rogan."My PSIA background has taught me how to customize the same drill to different people so that it becomes their own drill with their own emphasis."

To do that, Rogan proceeded to conceive drills built around an imperative very foreign to racers of Cook's, Smith's, and



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KILEY STAPLES

Jonathan Selkowitz

LAURENNE ROSS

Doug Haney

LEANNE SMITH

Jonathan Selkowitz

STACEY COOK

"MY PSIA BACKGROUND HAS TAUGHT ME HOW TO CUSTOMIZE THE SAME DRILL TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE SO THAT IT BECOMES THEIR OWN DRILL WITH THEIR OWN EMPHASIS." —*Michael Rogan*


Doug Haney

CHIP WHITE ADVISES

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STACEY COOK CRUISES

Ross's caliber: Go slow. In the drill package, Rogan said, were "slow parallel skiing, one-footed traverses, one-footed skiing, and no-pole skiing mixed with skidding and carving." Ironically, the slowness of many of the drills pulled the skiers out of their comfort zones. For these women speed is second nature, but what Cook discovered was that skiing at slow speed "brings out every deficiency."

The goal, then, was to correct those deficiencies. And to hear White describe how they did that, it sounds as if he was reading from a PSIA manual. Among the skill components the athletes worked on, White said, were basic stance, ankle flexion, knee flexion, and head position. "The drills were challenging and demanding," said White. "(But the racers) wanted to do it right. They felt the benefits of better body positions and being more efficient on their skis."

For Rogan's part, he appreciated the athletes' dedication to the painstaking and sometimes laborious effort required to make technical improvements, noting that the natural athleticism of high-level skiers can sometimes mask or overcome deeply rooted flaws in basic technique. "Ingrained movement patterns are hard to break for anyone," he said. "But the best athletes seem to be more determined to change and are not afraid of the process or the work that is needed to make it happen."

He said that perhaps the central component—translatable to any skill level—was creating a good, basic stance. "You can spend years developing a solid stance," said Rogan. "Most people do not give enough credit to that piece. A good stance, no matter what the situation, is hard to maintain. There are so many factors that can knock you out of balance. Being able to see and predict those things so you can anticipate them instead of reacting to them is not an easy skill to acquire."

Of course, as groundbreaking as the concepts of the Mammoth camp may sound, collaboration between professional instructors and national race teams is nothing new. Both the Austrian and Slovenian national teams have

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been doing this sort of thing on a regular basis for years. The U.S. has been down this road before as well. According to Kipp, George Capaul, a former U.S. team coach, enlisted the help of an Austrian instructor in the late 1990s to work on top racers' fundamental skills.

The rationale behind that decision was based on the premise that coaching and teaching are not the same. ("Everyone knows our coaches can't ski!" joked Cook). The on-hill focus of elite-level coaches tends to be more tactical than technical, and White concedes that when it comes to the latter, PSIA is really in its element. "Because of the broader spectrum—the more diverse and wider range of ability levels—that PSIA deals with, they know how to teach," he said.

"BECAUSE OF THE BROADER SPECTRUM—THE MORE DIVERSE AND WIDER RANGE OF ABILITY LEVELS—THAT PSIA DEALS WITH, THEY KNOW HOW TO TEACH." —*Stacey Cook*

Scott Thurston

STACEY COOK THRILLS A FAN

Jon Margolis

LEANNE SMITH GETS EDGY

Just ask Daron Rahlves. The former U.S. speed team star—who was one of the athletes who benefited from Capaul's willingness to seek instructional help to fine-tune technical basics—said, "I credit him for sure with keeping me in the game and my making the U.S. team." What Rahlves worked on in the '90s was very similar to what the current U.S. Ski Team athletes worked on more than a decade later at Mammoth: "simple balance, going really slow, and fine-tuning technique," as Rahlves remembers it.

Rahlves, who continues to make a name for himself as a big-mountain skier in ski movies, is coming full circle as he pursues certification as a member of the PSIA-AASI family. For him, whether it's on a race course, a powder slope in Alaska, or in a lesson within resort boundaries, effective skiing comes from the same fundamentals: "edge control, pressure on the front of the boot, keeping shoulders down the mountain."

That's really one of the main takeaways for both the Ski Team and PSIA at the Mammoth camp—that better skills make you a better skier, which in turn should lead to better results. At the same time, elite athletes are very goal-oriented. While paying clients can come to lessons with mixed motivations, racers are clear about their expectations: they want to go faster.

That might be a lesson for instructors working with paying clients: If you can help a client establish a goal to shoot for—to ski a certain trail, say, or to beat a spouse in a NASTAR race—that client might be more receptive to putting in the hard work to get there. Having goals motivates elite racers, so why not other skiers, too?

As Rogan and the athletes proved at the Mammoth camp, every skier is different. Good instruction, while focusing on the same basics across the ability spectrum, is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. While all of the athletes went through the rigors of the same drills at Mammoth, the technical changes for each were different. And one of the results of the camp was that each athlete got a personal pre-race drill package to prepare for competition.

If there's a big-picture lesson to be learned here, it's a message PSIA-AASI has been trying to promote for years: No matter how talented a skier or rider you might be, you're never so good that you can't benefit from going back to school. 32°

Peter Oliver is a regular contributor to 32 Degrees, *and lives in Warren, Vermont. He is a PSIA-certified Level II nordic instructor, as well as a prolific writer about outdoor sports.*

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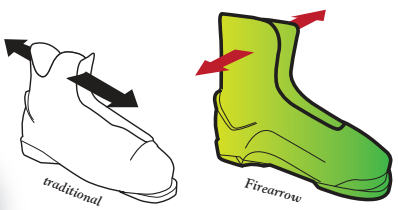

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THE Session Lesson

COMMUNITY LEARNING COMES OF AGE

BY PETER KRAY; PHOTOS BY CESAR PIOTTO

If the 20th Century ended with the Information Age, then what we are living in now is the Age of Interaction. Not only can we immediately access newspapers, videos, and sports scores from our computers, cell phones, and iPads, but we can immediately react to that media as well, weighing in with our own opinions and additional insight on Twitter, Facebook, or in online chat rooms.

Long gone are the days when talking heads were expected to deliver the world's news in 30-minute segments every evening. Today, information comes from everywhere, all day long. And smart companies are harnessing that free-flow of information, and using it to the benefit of their brand. Vail Resorts, for instance, stopped charging for its on-hill photo service this season, reasoning that many more guests will opt to get free photos, and then personally broadcast them in a virtual explosion of grassroots marketing.

For ski and snowboard instructors, that same inclusive sense of give-and-take has resulted in the advent of the "session lesson." As much a change in mindset as it is in presentation, the session lesson takes more from coaching

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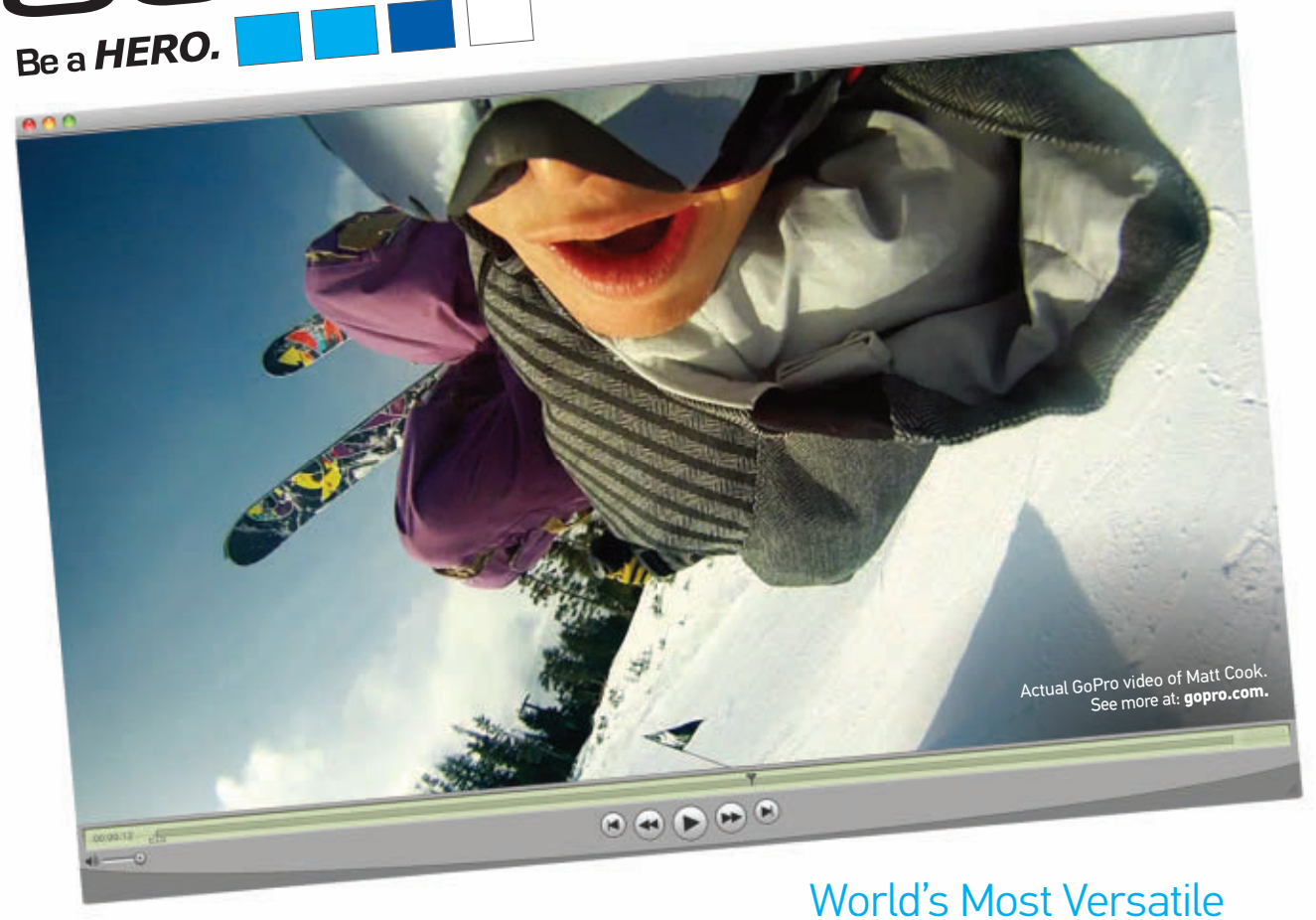

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than it does from the traditional structure of the classroom. At its heart, it recognizes that each lesson is a group or team experience—an experience that is only improved by the active participation of everyone.

"What changes is the instructor's behavior and group-management tactics—moving toward a much looser format—but there is still structure, just not as obvious," PSIA Alpine Team member David Oliver wrote in the Spring 2011 Issue of *32 Degrees*, in an article titled, "The Road to Retention? Freestyle!" which previewed the rise of the session lesson.

In an interview for this article, Oliver stressed that rather than just assigning tasks in the hopes of achieving specific outcomes, the instructor has to be more of a facilitator, actively encouraging students to participate in the lesson, and the fun. "That kind of thinking just raises the involvement of everybody in the class," Oliver said. "We've always focused on that command-task way of teaching, and this changes the whole dynamic."

FREESTYLE FOR EVERYONE

The session lesson atmosphere certainly thrives in settings where instructors are focusing on freestyle riding. Snowboard-born (see page 38), the term itself comes from the free-form way in which boarders tend to hit the halfpipe or terrain park, everyone encouraging each other to try new tricks, and pushing each other while still providing a support group, as well as plenty of high-fives and stoke.

"There's this level of mutual inspiration—like you find when skateboarding with your friends—that I don't think you can find in too many other sports," said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline.

Saline said that, frankly, that kind of dynamic creates a situation in which "learning is more fun, because you don't really think about it as it's going on." It also helps strengthen the sense of on-snow community, to which every aspiring skier and snowboarder wants to belong. But most importantly, it creates an environment that encourages imagination and involvement, and according to Saline, "the idea that there really is no right or wrong."

That session lesson mentality was an important aspect of PSIA-AASI's freestyle presentations at Interski 2011 in St. Anton, Austria, which showed how to work freestyle concepts into any level of lesson. Along with PSIA-AASI's early embrace of rocker technology, and also its focus as much on technique as on a culture of connection, it may also be an example of another venue in which U.S. instruction differs significantly from what and how other countries are teaching.

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That's not just because so much of snowboarding's innovation and style come from America. But also, according to PSIA-AASI Executive Director and CEO Mark Dorsey, because, in the U.S. especially, back in the 1980s ski schools were the first venue for skiers and snowboarders to join forces. "The first place skiers and snowboarders ever really came together was in snowsports schools," Dorsey said. "As far as learning from each other and perfecting technique was concerned, snowboarding just breathed new life into that whole process."

Mixing the new energy of snowboarding with the tried and true student- and skills-based focus of the American Teaching System provided benefits to both, most immediately in the way it created a standardized instruction method for getting more riders on the lifts. But now, decades later, in new innovations such as the session lesson, that longstanding relationship continues to deliver new ways of improving instruction.

MIXING THE NEW ENERGY OF SNOWBOARDING WITH THE TRIED AND TRUE STUDENT- AND SKILLS-BASED FOCUS OF THE AMERICAN TEACHING SYSTEM PROVIDED BENEFITS TO BOTH

And as the popularity of freestyle skiing and snowboarding booms, it may also provide an important basis for instructors who are helping to steer the sport toward what's next. That's because the two categories are growing so quickly that in the past year they have achieved the kind of recognition that many old hotdoggers might not have expected to see in their lifetime.

Just days after the PSIA-AASI Teams arrived home from Interski, the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association announced the launch of a U.S. Freeskiing brand in order to capitalize on the accelerated level of freestyle competition. "Freeskiing is a distinctly different and growing segment of our sport," the USSA's Chief Revenue and Marketing Officer Andrew Judelson said in announcing the launch. "Millions of young skiers worldwide are being drawn to this new genre of skiing."

Then in April, the same week PSIA was celebrating its 50th anniversary in Snowmass, Colorado, the International Olympic Committee announced that halfpipe skiing would premiere at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, as a medal event. Finally, over the summer the IOC also added new medal events in slope-style skiing and snowboarding.

That kind of exposure will certainly help market a lot more freestyle-based session lessons. And with the excitement freestyle can bring to any terrain—from rail riding in the city park to shredding Alaska's steepest slopes—it could also introduce a lot more kids to the snowsports. But for David Oliver, to say that session lessons are only applicable to freestylers would be to sell the idea short of its full potential.

"THIS IS THE NEXT BIG STEP IN STUDENT-CENTERED TEACHING"
—DAVID OLIVER

STUDENTS FIRST

"This is the next big step in student-centered teaching," Oliver said in explaining the true impact of the session lesson. "The fact it comes from the roots of what U.S. teaching is all about only makes it that much cooler for me. It's really just taking it to the next level in the whole experience."

Oliver does acknowledge there are instructors who will have trouble adjusting to a more free-flowing style of teaching that deviates from a strict A to B to C progression. And he said some of the more open-ended aspects of the session lesson were hard to grasp for a few of the international instructors who did attend PSIA-AASI's freestyle clinics in St. Anton—particularly the Austrians, who, Oliver said, kept asking him, "But when do you tell the students what they need to have learned?"

For Oliver, it was a question based on an even deeper philosophical difference: "Are you teaching students what they want to learn, or are you only teaching what you think they should be taught?"

"I think that some of them are so command-task focused that they couldn't really wrap their brains around the whole message," Oliver said. "Part of that could be from having a fairly narrow definition of what good skiing is, and only trying to get to that one perfect image that looks the same for everyone. To me, good skiing is defined by being able to have a positive, selective effect on your equipment at any given time in any given condition—whether that's in the moguls, the powder, or the terrain park—and that's really the point that we were making."

Which in the end, Oliver said, is the ultimate aspect of the successful session lesson—that each lesson continues to evolve based on exactly what each student wants to learn.

GOOD SKIING IS DEFINED BY BEING ABLE TO HAVE A POSITIVE, SELECTIVE EFFECT ON YOUR EQUIPMENT AT ANY GIVEN TIME IN ANY GIVEN CONDITION.

By soliciting constant interaction, input, and ideas from the group, good instructors can more easily focus on introducing tactics and techniques to benefit the people they're teaching. Whether that's for beginners, intermediates, or experts looking to uncork the next big trick that helps them win gold at the X Games won't matter. The important thing will be that each lesson makes students the center of the class, all while giving them the opportunity to create their own level of interaction, and their own definition of satisfaction. 32°

Pete Kray skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is the founder of Shred White and Blue (www.shredwhiteandblue.com), a media and apparel company celebrating American boardsports.

HOW SNOWBOARDING INSPIRED THE Session Lesson

Just look at all the fat skis, twin tips, halfpipes, and terrain parks at snowsports areas these days, and you can see how completely snowboarding has impacted snowsports. Turn on the television and the way it has affected popular culture is nearly as dramatic, from video games to the X Games to the Winter Olympics, where boarding has increasingly taken the spotlight. But in the past 20 years, has it also changed ski instruction?

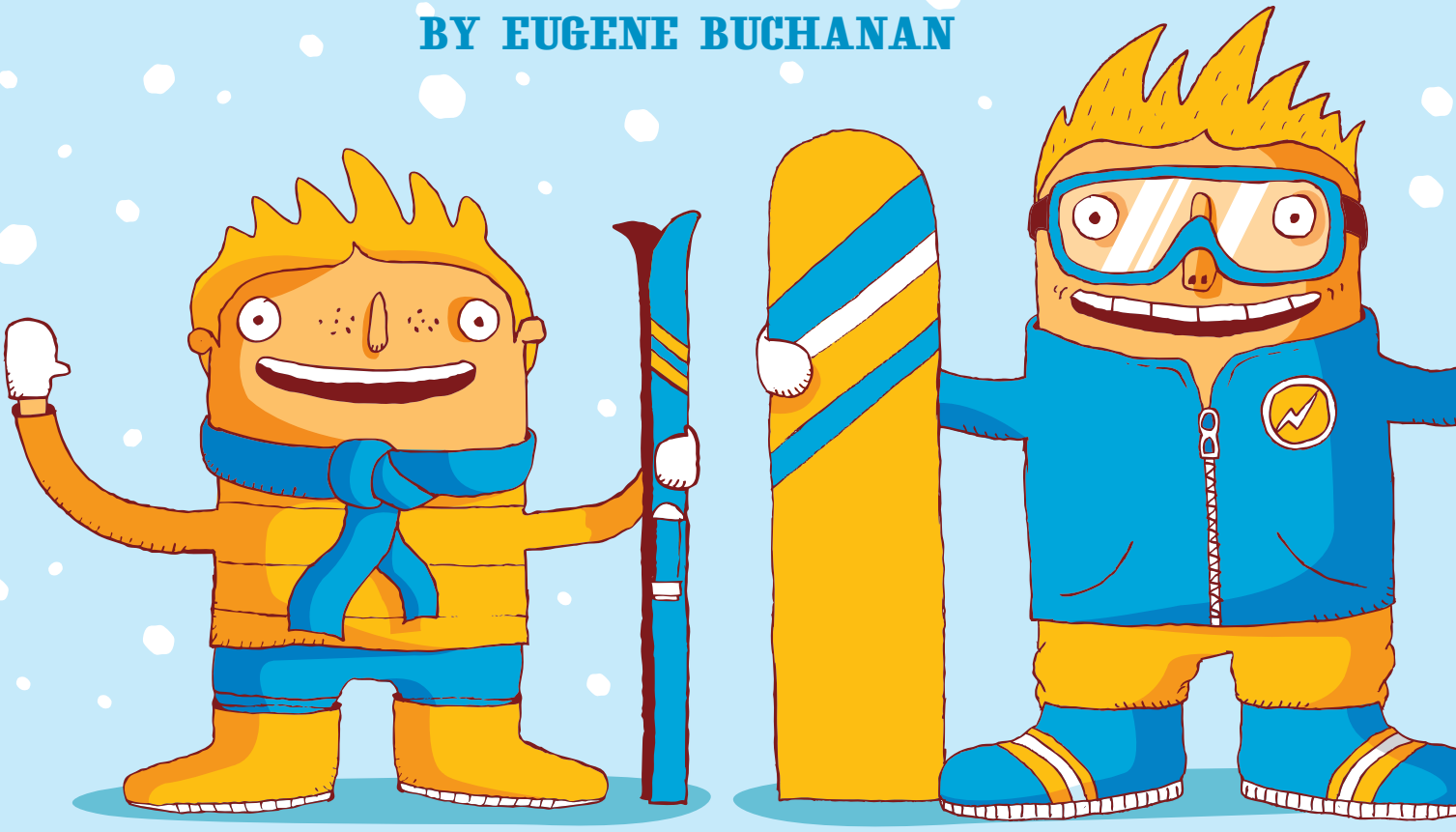
"Big time," according to PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline, "Without a doubt."

The biggest impact, Saline said, is the element of freestyle, which is inherent the moment someone decides to strap a board to their feet. That sense of possibility—and freedom of expression—just seems to snowball the moment gravity starts pulling them down the slope. Saline summed it up this way: "In a beginner ski class, if you accidentally spin a 360, the impulse would be to correct that. If a student accidentally spins a 360 in a snowboard class, everyone would celebrate."

By emphasizing the positives rather than nitpicking mistakes, Saline said, instructors can quickly create a more rewarding experience, as well as more opportunities for fun. So thanks, snowboarding. — *Peter Kray*

Cesar Piotto

BY EUGENE BUCHANAN



All Together Now

MAKING THE MOST OF THE FAMILY CLASS

There's a movement underfoot—or under ski or snowboard—that's seeing more and more families take lessons together so they can bond in their boots. While that's great for the sport and instruction programs' bottom lines, it also raises new teaching issues that had previously never surfaced.

Such as: How do you best accommodate the different age brackets, and oftentimes disciplines, involved with such parent/child packages?

In a typical family lesson, it's not uncommon for dad to be rocking alpine skis, mom to show up on telemark equipment, and the tykes and teens to be on snowboards. Throw in the occasional SledDogs and it's enough to make instructors end the day in exasperation. Yet the burden is squarely on them to appease everyone and make sure everyone benefits from the experience.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

"More and more families want to stay together in their lessons," said Earl Saline, professional development manager for PSIA-AASI. "In the past, schools had more rigid programs in place and families weren't given much of a choice. Now resorts are becoming much more flexible in their offerings."

Another reason for the growth, added Scott Anfang—a member of the PSIA-AASI Snowboard Team, a 16-year snowboard instructor for Colorado's Steamboat Ski & Resort, and an examiner/educator for PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division—is that families relish spending time together on the slopes. "They're bringing the on-snow experience into the family aspect of their vacations. And I think that's healthy," he said.

For instructors, the good news out of all this is that because they're staying together, most families are willing to be flexible in their expectations, said Saline. They might not get all the technical details dad desires, or hit all the jumps that junior wants, but if they're having a great time together as a family they are much more likely to call the experience a success.

This is why the onus is on instructors to come up with a game plan that satisfies everyone. "It certainly takes a new skill set for the instructor," said Saline. "They need to be well-versed in every discipline and understand the dynamics of working with different ages. It requires knowing more about each sport than it did before."

First, instructors need to discern exactly what each family member wants to get out the lesson beforehand, and then make a plan to incorporate as much of those individual needs into a true family experience. "They need to ask themselves what they can do to make it the most fun for the whole family," Saline said. "They need to connect with each family member, at the same time that they are working with the entire group."

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This holds especially true if everyone's on different gear. Saline said focusing on the similarities in the dynamics of skiing and snowboarding will allow instructors to reinforce basic skills for the benefit of everyone. "There's definitely crossover for all disciplines . . . how you put a ski or snowboard up on edge and how your body moves," he said. "It's also an issue of getting from point A to point B, just as it is in a mixed-ability group . . . you have to find something for everyone."

BENEFITS ABOUND

Once you nail down the basics, the benefits of family lessons are numerous. According to Killington (Vermont) Snowsports Director Dave Beckwith, number one is that family lessons lock younger skiers and riders into the sport earlier, especially when they see mom and dad learning alongside them. The kids also realize that they have a good chance of eventually getting better than them, which creates a desire for improvement.

But it all comes back to qualifying everyone's expectations. While Beckwith admits it can get tricky mixing skiers and riders, his instructors strive to create "teaching for transfer" moments, those skills like edge control that are easily transferable among disciplines. He'll also ask if the group would rather have their instructor on skis or a snowboard, and then find a staff member suited for both. "Sometimes we'll focus more on mom and dad, and sometimes it's on the kids," he said. "It all depends on what they're looking for."

Toni Macri, a Level III snowboard and alpine instructor (with Children's Specialist 2 credentials) at Colorado's Copper Mountain, is seeing way more multi-discipline family lessons these days. Since the resort has a broad spectrum of clientele, he said guests often speak of combining value with a unique experience.

As for personal equipment preferences, when teaching a multi-discipline group, he finds it easier to be on his snowboard so he can demonstrate techniques to the other snowboarders, and then explain the movements to skiers. "Terrain choices are also important," said Macri. "Skiers can often build skills

John Atkinson/Sugarbush Resort

MORE AND MORE FAMILIES WANT TO STAY TOGETHER IN THEIR LESSONS.

Sandy Macys/Sugarbush Resort

ULTIMATELY, PARENTS WANT TO SEE TWO THINGS: THAT THEIR KIDS ARE SAFE, AND THAT THEY ARE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. KIDS WANT THEIR PARENTS TO SEE THAT THEY'RE HAVING FUN AS WELL.

before speed, but snowboarders need [a certain amount of] speed to build skills." This holds especially true when age differences enter the picture. "It's hard for kids to perfect a high edge angle at low speed," he said.

To mix things up and make sure the young ones are thoroughly entertained, he'll often take kids into a tree run on the side of a trail, while the parents stay within sight on the trail. "That way they can see their kids learning and having fun, and know that they're being safe," he said.

In addition, he finds that younger snowboarders need more hands-on instruction. "I'll often teach more to the kids, and then have mom and dad follow along," Macri said. He also stations the parents behind the kids, so if they crash the kids won't necessarily see it. "Sometimes parents want to feel like they're better than their kids," he said. "Plus, if their kids fall they can ski up behind them to help out."

Ultimately, parents want to see two things, he added: that their kids are safe, and that they are enjoying themselves. Kids want their parents to see that they're having fun as well. To that end, Macri often creates small competitions between parents and their children to help boost kids' confidence. When parents take lessons with their older kids, he treats the children more as peers instead of placing them on a stage in front of their parents.

NOT ALWAYS SMOOTH SAILING

But it's not always as easy as the proverbial pizza pie. "Teaching families is a challenge," said John Peppler, a PSIA-certified Level III alpine instructor (and vice chairman of PSIA-AASI's board of directors) who has taught skiing at Michigan's Boyne Highlands since 1974. "Mostly this is due to the 'family dynamic' that comes from being in the same lesson," Peppler said. "Everyone has different goals, which can impede learning to some degree."

Peppler said the best thing to do in this case is cater to the least-skilled student in the group. "You have to proceed at the speed of the slowest student regardless of each family member's individual goals," he added, citing a potential family lesson in which dad raced in high school, mom has little experience, the son is a hockey player, the daughter isn't athletic, and the youngest is locked in the "death wedge." "This type of situation occurs when unprepared instructors approach a high percentage of failure," said Peppler. "You have five different individuals with five very different ideas of what their expected outcome should be."

The trick, he believes, is to just make sure everyone has fun, while still meeting the needs of the group's least-experienced member. This can be done through games, contests, demonstrations, and more.

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Stephan Drake takes a turn for the better in the short and steep near Haines, Alaska. OSKAR ENANDER

WHEN DEALING WITH DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES, FOCUS ON A "MOVEMENT" OR CAUSE-AND-EFFECT PATTERN, THEN RELATE THAT TO EACH DISCIPLINE.

Sandy Macys/Sugarbush Resort

Peppler added that this dynamic can sometimes be a deterrent; while parents' intentions might be good, they often have counter-productive technical ideas than that of the instructor. Get kids away from their parents and things change, said Peppler, who noted that different-aged siblings are usually supportive of one another. But even that isn't always smooth sailing. "I taught a pair of identical twins once who were a walking battle," he recalled.

GOING FOR THE GOALS

For Steamboat's Anfang, it's all about assessing objectives. "The number one thing is establishing everyone's goals," he said. "Parents' goals can be very different from kids' goals, and parents' goals for their kids can be different from the kids' goals for themselves."

Anfang emphasizes that you have to be discreet in how you assess these goals. "You have to gather information indirectly," he said. "You have to feel it out. Once you have that assessment you can set up a lesson to meet everyone's expectations."

One technique Anfang uses is riding the chairlift with the parents, and spending time on the slopes with the kids. "This gives me a chance to explain to the parents what we're doing and why, while the kids can see and practice it on the slopes," he said.

This leads to an important difference in teaching approaches to both age groups. "Younger kids tend to gravitate more toward guided-discovery, exploratory approaches," he said. "With parents, you end up describing things more and getting technical. You don't break it down that much with kids."

Whether it's an edging skill or teaching how to be soft on their feet, Anfang has kids try something first and then asks them what they felt. Not so with mom and dad. "With parents, you explain it before you do it," he said. "With kids, you have them do it and then explain it."

When dealing with different disciplines, he focuses on a "movement" or cause-and-effect pattern, and then relates that to each discipline. "You try to get a visual with a result from somebody in the group, and then change it to a different movement pattern that yields the same result in the different discipline," he said. This works for both snowboarding and skiing, he said.

As more and more parents enroll in lessons with their kids, the bottom line is that everyone—instructors, parents, and kids alike—needs to work together to achieve common goals. And the good news is that done correctly, the slopes families learn on are far steeper than their learning curves. 32°

Eugene Buchanan's passion for the outdoors has taken him to 30 countries on six of the seven continents. When he's not roaming the world (and writing about it), he's with his family in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

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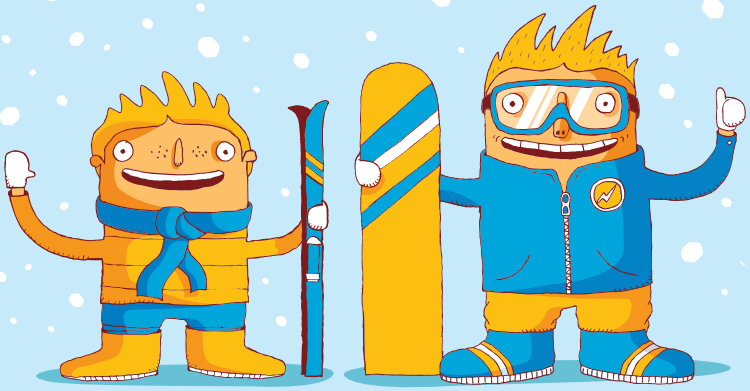

The Instructor Versus Parent Role

It's a question in the back of most parents' minds. ***In a family lesson, where does the teaching end and parenting begin?*** Deciphering roles can sometimes be difficult. If a child throws a tantrum, who should intervene; the instructor or parent?

Answering these questions depends on the circumstance. Often, a parent might try to push his or her child too hard, or in a direction contrary to what's being taught. "That's where the instructor needs to intervene," said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. "Parents need to let the instructor manage the lesson." He added that parents who try to coach also make things more difficult; parents shouldn't constantly interject their opinions or otherwise distract their children. "When that happens the child doesn't know who she's supposed to listen to," he said. "The parent needs to let go and support what the instructor is trying to do."

There is a role for parents, however, when it comes to discipline and respect. If a child is misbehaving and the instructor can't correct the behavior, it's fine for the parent to step in. "Parents need to give the instructor some parenting authority, but if it's not working it's okay for them to be that authority figure," he said. The same holds true for safety, he added. If the child is careening out of control, a parent can step in to mitigate matters.

But for the most part, he advises parents to leave the lesson up to the instructor. "It's like taking your child to Little League practice," he said. "You have to let the coach do his or her job."

—Eugene Buchanan

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10 Ways to Build a Connection with Beginners

BY ERIC LIPTON

As a professional snowsports instructor, you might think your job is to teach skiing or riding. Actually, it's imperative that we understand that our job is to *create experiences*, and we use ski or snowboard teaching as a medium.

Our guests come to the mountain for an experience, and the cool thing is that we get to spend more time with them than any other mountain employee. So, regardless of your students' age or skill set, make sure you take advantage of that extended opportunity to engage and communicate with them. Here's a handful of reminders for how to establish a connection with your never-ever clients (and, well, with *all* your clients)!

1 Build a Relationship

We are people first, and skiers and snowboarders second. Build a relationship with your students based on trust and partnership.

2 Have Fun

Display a sense of humor and enjoy yourself. Be the person that *you* would want to hang out with.

And smile. Of all the things you wear, your expression is the most important.

3 Address All Types of Learners

Remember to connect via visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK) cues to help the clients you're working with. Explain so they can *hear* it, show them so they can *see* it, and involve them so they can *feel* it. And, where appropriate, always introduce a movement or skill while they are standing still, before you have them try it in motion.

4 Teach For Transfer

Relate movements you are teaching to interests and activities they are familiar with outside of skiing or snowboarding.

5 Share The Sport

Share your excitement about the skiing and snowboarding culture, the environment, the outdoors, the mountains. Infect them with your enthusiasm. It's as much fun to *share* skiing/snowboarding, as to *teach* it!

Reference

"A Professional Touch" in *The Teaching Dimension*, a compilation of articles by former PSIA-AASI Eastern Division Education Committee Chairperson Joan E. Heaton, available at http://www.psia-e.org/ed/TeachingDimension.pdf (accessed November 3, 2011).

6 Take Them Skiing or Snowboarding

As soon as possible, move the students out of the beginner area. Once they can keep themselves and others safe, show them other parts of the mountain.

7 Be The Professional

Be prompt. Be courteous. Be neat and clean. Do the research, study, learn your craft, and practice it. You should have answers to students' equipment questions, solutions to their technical problems, and provide overall guidance and suggestions for all of their on-mountain needs.

8 Give a Taste of Tomorrow

Create excitement for their next adventure with you. Tell, show, and involve them in what they'll learn and what they'll do next time *when* they come back (not *if* they come back).

9 Recommend Another Lesson

Highly recommend that they return for another lesson. Remind them of the milestones they've reached, and assure them that having you guide their practice is much more productive than independent practice.

10 Book The Lesson Today

Go *with* them to the booking desk to set up your next session. Make it convenient for them: Be available. 32°

Eric Lipton is a member of the PSIA Alpine Team, and instructs at Blue Mountain in Pennsylvania and Beaver Creek in Colorado. He is also an examiner with PSIA-AASI's Eastern Division, and a guest coach at Montana's Yellowstone Club.

WEB EXTRA

Do you have your own suggestions for a "Top 10" list for connecting with beginners (or other topics, like surviving your first day as an instructor, keeping students engaged, covering safety tips, etc.)? Go to The PSIA-AASI Community at TheSnowPros.org—and get in on the "Top 10 Lists" discussion in the Member Community.

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Have Fun to *teach* Fun

If you're not having fun, your student isn't either. Here are ways to ignite your passion and inspire others.

By Krista Crabtree

An experienced instructor teaching in Portillo, Chile, had a first-timer ski lesson that started out like any other, with introductions and some exploratory sliding. After a while, though, the student, a man from Uruguay, sat down, picked up two handfuls of snow, and started rubbing his face with it.

The instructor found that a bit strange but sat with the man in the snow. As the time passed, the instructor asked if the student was ready to ski again. The man turned to him and said it was his first time back in snow for a long time.

"Turns out he was a part of the Uruguayan rugby team that crashed in the Andes in 1972 and is one of the survivors highlighted in the book and movie, *Alive*," says Michael Rogan, his instructor. "He never experienced snow in a positive way. He was in Portillo because his kids wanted to go skiing. I learned from him that everyone has an amazing story—you just have to make the opportunity to find it out."

You would think that, as captain of the PSIA Alpine Team, operations manager of Ski Portillo Chile, director of instruction for *SKI Magazine*, and ski teacher at Heavenly Ski Resort, Rogan has reached the pinnacle of his profession. But he does not rest on his laurels; he approaches instruction with a childlike excitement.

"I have learned so much from my students that it seems they sometimes teach me more than I teach them," he says. But how does someone who typically logs up to 325 days a year on snow retain energy and passion for teaching? It may sound like a quote from a tea bag, but many top-level instructors would agree with one very basic premise: you've got to *have* fun to *teach* fun.

When you think about it, there are only a handful of sports in which the teacher gets to participate in the sport with the student. Picture golf and tennis pros who spend their lesson time at the driving range or feeding balls from the net. Conversely, snowsports instructors get to ski or ride all day long and get paid for it *and* receive a season pass and often other perks.

"If I wake up and say 'Oh darn, I've got to go teach skiing,' that's not good," says Linda Guerrette, Western Region rep for PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division, a 30-year instructor, and a Beaver Creek instructor-trainer. "There are very few activities that people teach recreationally that they get to partake in all day long. How can you not have fun? But if you're not having fun, you're not going to make it fun."

Guerrette recommends that even if you've been teaching on the beginner lift for two weeks straight, tell yourself that when you've got your skis or snowboard on, you're skiing or riding. According to her, if your motivation to teach is to get in more skiing or become a better skier, then teaching skiing is not the best avenue. "But your skiing will potentially improve because of your hours on snow," says Guerrette. "I get paid to work on the basics every day so when I'm freeskiing I don't need to think about basics. When I go freeskiing, I feel secure with the foundation I've established and I can go explore terrain and have fun—and be thankful for all the practice time I got paid for."

Becoming a Great Teacher

Everyone can draw up vivid images of the best and worst teachers from their past, and those memories often come with strong emotions. On the positive end of the spectrum might be a coach who explained something to you just the right way that caused you to have an "aha" moment. Or a teacher who took the time to listen and empathize with you at a critical juncture. Most likely you remember the worst teachers as

being mean, unwilling to listen and connect with you, or, quite simply, were not having fun and neither were you.

"The best teachers have become master observers, listeners, and communicators," says Jennifer Simpson, PSIA Alpine Team member and a Vail instructor and examiner. "Becoming an exceptional teacher is not something you wake up with one day. Some people may be gifted in their ability to teach others, but they still have to fine-tune their gift."

Simpson observes that the best teachers are on a quest to communicate concepts in new, creative, and concise ways. This quest takes them to the cutting edge of a learning partnership—as they increase their knowledge, they become better at sharing it. And to her, this is the key: love your sport and love sharing it with others. "Don't be satisfied with a good lesson," she adds. "Ask how could it have been even better—how could it have been a *great* lesson—and then go in search of the answer."

Once you've reflected on past teachers, it's helpful to remember your introduction to the sport. "Take time to remember your first riding or skiing experience," says Jeff "JB" Brier, a Level III-certified snowboard instructor, Level I telemark instructor, and a clinic leader specializing in USASA competition training and rider improvement in Eastern Division. "How challenging was it? How many times did you crash? How many bad habits did you have to lose once you started coaching?" he asks. "Wouldn't it be cool to help someone avoid all that pain and suffering from the beginning?"

Brier emphasizes that rather than settle for isolated moments of success, instructors should help students develop skills for a *lifetime* of great snowboarding and skiing. "Think of it as a chance to help someone overcome a challenge and get an awesome introduction to our sport and the mountain lifestyle," he says.

When you think about teaching a beginner lesson not as a punishment but as an opportunity to change a life, you realize how important it is not only for the vitality of the sport, but to your client's overall well-being.

Cesar Piotto

"The best teachers have become master observers, listeners, and communicators."
— Jennifer Simpson

Julie Shipman

Stay Passionate

It takes tremendous empathy to, as the saying goes, "walk a mile in someone else's shoes." But when you do, your experience is often made richer in unexpected ways. That's why many trainers recommend that instructors try something new so they know how it feels to be a student again. "If you're not trying something new or not willing to understand what that feeling in your stomach is, you won't understand what your guest is going through," says Bobby Murphy, director of the Vail Ski and Snowboard School and a PSIA Alpine Team member.

He also advises instructors to enjoy the full measure of all the positives that come with the job. Murphy has logged in many days during the past decade in the role of director—a position that requires a lot of deskwork. He doesn't get stressed about the amount of time he gets on the hill. Instead he focuses on the quality—and not the quantity. "One thing I've witnessed is that when they don't get a lesson the first inclination of many instructors is to go get a cup of coffee." I get a lot of energy from getting a run in," he says. "Hopefully your school and training program includes early morning opportunities prior to your lesson or before the public is on the hill. If your group lesson starts at 10 a.m., you can take a few runs at 9."

It's easy to get tunnel vision after a long season of teaching. Reminding yourself to take time to smell the roses or to breathe in the fresh air can rekindle your appreciation for the mountains. "Take a second to soak in the environment that we're so lucky to be in—versus your friends who are working in some city," says Murphy. "Realize that you have the best job in the world."

A popular lesson from one of Aesop's children's fables translates to "you are known by the company you keep." One way to stay passionate and positive about teaching is to be surrounded with like-minded instructors. "Negativity is easy, staying passionate is much harder," says David Lawrence, a PSIA Nordic Team member and instructor for the Methow Valley Ski School in Winthrop, Washington. "The only person responsible for your passion is yourself so take responsibility," he adds. "Try hanging out with people who are up instead of downers and ski or ride with people who are better than you. Remember that anything worth having is worth working for."

Many instructors find that where skiing or riding is concerned, variety is the spice of life. "Something I've always found that really rejuvenates my passion for skiing is to ski at places I've never or seldom been to," says Ron LeMaster, a former technical advisor to the U.S. Ski Team and Vail Ski and Snowboard School. "It's easy for instructors to end up skiing at the same place all the time, and although coaches travel a lot, they hardly ever get to really ski the places they go to."

When you do go to a place you haven't been before, LeMaster recommends planning ahead by plugging into your professional network. "Find a local pro who can take you around," he says. "That way you'll get to ski or ride the good stuff."

Conversely, taking a break from riding or skiing can help instructors avoid burnout and retain their passion for the sport. "Try staying away from the mountain for one day a week and do other things," suggests Brier. "Work out, cook, take a daytrip—do something to get a breather from the routine and you'll feel recharged when you return."

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Improve Technique

It's true in most sports—and in life—that if you stop learning, you stop growing. For teachers, it's paramount to stay current with the latest technique—particularly in snowsports where technique has been changing rapidly to keep up with the changes in gear. (Think shaped skis, reverse-camber boards, rocker, and better boot designs.)

That said, with teaching and training commitments it's often a challenge for instructors to stay current. One of the best ways to improve technique is to watch a really accomplished skier or rider. "Go to some competitions—moguls, slalom, GS, whatever," says LeMaster. "Divisional races are great because you'll be blown away by the best skiers, and you'll see a real spread in abilities. Watch carefully and figure out why some competitors are better than others. This will really help sharpen your analysis skills."

Another way to improve technique is to get out of your comfort zone. "It's too easy to fall in the same trap of the same run every day," says Murphy. "But take a different exposure or aspect. The reason I feel that I'm adaptable in my skiing is that I mix it up for that quality run. Variety in that quality run keeps it fresh."

Murphy also recommends adding variety to your gear choices. "Think about grabbing your fatter, rockered skis during the slower times of the season," he advises. "Or stop by your local shop and demo some new skis."

Courtesy of Jeff "JB" Brier

"Take time to remember your first riding or skiing experience." —Jeff "JB" Brier

Many successful instructors have found a mentor, someone who will share their passion for the sport. For Michael Rogan, it is Henry Purcell, owner of Portillo. "It doesn't matter the time of day or condition of the snow, he is always up for a ski," says Rogan. "Every year I find myself with Henry watching the best racers in the world train. We talk about technique, equipment, and tactics. Then we take off down the run trying to imitate the world's best. Henry reminds me to keep learning."

Cesar Piotto

Any musician knows that practice makes perfect. For instructors, practicing can make you a better skier or rider—and a better teacher. "The best way to be a great teacher is to truly be able to feel change and the movements in your personal skiing that you are trying to describe to your students," says Nick Herrin, PSIA Alpine team member and director of resort services at the Ski and Ride School at Crested Butte. "To do this you have to continue your personal education whether that is through certification or educational clinics."

Overcome Obstacles, Rekindle the Love

One major restriction on instructors comes from the feeling of what's commonly referred to as burnout. After numerous days, months, or years on snow, some instructors find they have lost their passion for the sport and for teaching. "There are many who teach the same progressions that they have for years, regardless of who their student is, or what they want to learn," says Kipp Ertl, lead trainer at Aspen Highlands. "Many of them have achieved their gold pin and, upon reaching the level of fully certified, close their books, stop attending clinics, and then their skiing and teaching suffers," he says. "Many of them now are looking for the desk to provide work for them, when they have created their own clientele in the past."

Ertl challenges instructors to brainstorm ways to gain excellence in their snowsports schools. "All of the best

Wendy Schnupp

"All of the best instructors that I know ask a lot of questions."
—Kipp Ertl

Cesar Piotto

instructors that I know ask a lot of questions . . . questions about skiing, about teaching, about learning philosophies, and about teaching theories," he says.

There's no doubt that staying current with annual dues, clinic registration fees, and ever-changing equipment costs money and therefore creates another restriction for some instructors. "Many people use the financial aspect as an excuse not to educate themselves, but I always thought that since I was making myself better as an instructor, more people would want to ski with me and therefore it was an investment in my success," says Dave Schuiling, director of education for PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division. There are avenues to help instructors in need. Pros can look into options for financial help, such as scholarships and procedures at each individual snowsports school.

According to Schuiling, instructors should look at a variety of clinics to expand their education, much like a student looks at a college curriculum. Instead of picking the same clinic to fulfill a continuing education requirement, branch out. "PSIA-AASI has clinics that inspire personal growth as well as teach knowledge and creativity," he says. Some of his favorites cover such things as communication and relationship building, strength-based learning concepts, teaching theory, technical foundations, and movement analysis.

Just as relationships have peaks and valleys, so too does any teaching career. Pros who stay fresh and passionate about the sport all have a few things in common—they share an almost childlike joy in sliding on snow and continually find ways to retain that joy.

Anyone who has skied with two-term PSIA Alpine Team member Nick Herrin knows his enthusiasm for the sport is infectious and that he inspires others to challenge themselves on the hill. When asked to explain this, he says, "I love the sport and love being out there on the hill. It's my passion, so it's easy to have fun because I enjoy doing it so much." That is a simple-sounding answer, to be sure, but one that requires the willingness to discover and express your inner joy.

Summing Up on Fun and Focus

There's a lot that goes into providing quality snowsports lessons, and much of it has more to do with how you interact with students and your environment than it does with how skis and snowboards interact with the snow. As many of PSIA-AASI's top pros will tell you, it's all about having fun in a wondrous environment and embracing opportunities to learn—from clients as well as colleagues. If this is part of your persona, you're on the right road to sharing your passion and thus reaching your full potential as an instructor. 32°

Colorado-based Krista Crabtree is a former ski coach and current part-time instructor at Vail, specializing in women's ski clinics. She also runs the women's program at Eldora Mountain Resort. When off the slopes, she spends her time writing for publications such as Vail's PEAKS Magazine, 32 Degrees, *and various trade publications. But most of all, she and her husband have fun teaching—and learning from—their daughter.*

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MICHAEL ROGAN AND KATIE ERTL

THE STAMP OF Freshness

Katie Ertl, PSIA-AASI Teams manager and managing director for the Ski & Snowboard Schools of Aspen/Snowmass, thinks that if instructors can ask themselves what will make every day a better experience—for themselves and for their guest—then teaching will remain a fun and interesting challenge.

Here are her tips for how to keep teaching fresh:

- Ask questions and be curious.
- Play with drills and skills that will challenge you to get better. Try skiing on one ski, ski bumps without poles, or ride switch all day.
- Try a new way of filtering information. We do not all learn the same way, so see if you can try on a new way of learning. For example, if you're a visual learner find out what it's like to learn something by being told how to do it (auditory) or by experiencing the sensations associated with the task (kinesthetic).
- Try a new sport. Learn to kayak or try something new—maybe telemarking, snowboarding, or mono-skiing if those aren't your current specialty—to get back in the learner's chair and gain empathy for your guests. This also puts you solidly in a new realm of curiosity (see tip #1).
- Teach other instructors. Working toward becoming a trainer challenges you on pedagogy and teaches you to teach.
- Find a new mentor. Look for someone who can support you in some way and then go to his or her training sessions and ski or ride with them whenever possible.

"If instructors ask themselves what will make every day a better experience—for themselves and for the guest—teaching can remain a fun and interesting challenge," says Ertl. "We all go through cycles of being teachers or being learners, so be aware of where you are in that cycle and try not to stay in one place all the time. There is a time to share and give, and a time to take and replenish."

—Krista Crabtree

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INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH: THE LEGACY OF KID'S INSTRUCTION KEEPS GROWING

By **PETER KRAY**

It may seem obvious to say something like, "Kids are our future," in this day and age. That's especially true according to the *2011 SIA SnowSports Participation Report*, a recent publication by SnowSports Industries America (SIA) and the Physical Activity Council. The report notes that kids and teens between the ages of 6 and 17 already account for nearly one-quarter of the total U.S. population that is active on snow.

More precisely, according to the report, 6- to 17-year-olds account for 21 percent of the alpine skiing market, 31 percent of the snowboarding market, and 17 percent of the cross-country skiing market. And as anyone who teaches kids knows, you can also add 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds into that equation and watch the numbers grow.

"The biggest part of our business is children's lessons, and then private lessons. And most of the private lessons have a child in them," said Stacey Gerrish, who is the instructor training manager at Colorado's Beaver Creek Ski & Snowboard School. She is also the co-author of the *Children's Alpine Teaching Handbook*, which was produced in partnership with PSIA. She admits that saying "Kids are our future," may seem cliché with regard to snowsports, but still does so because she has seen the impact so clearly for herself.

"I have had so many kids who just keep coming back year after year, and it has been a joy to watch how their skills and their passion for the sport have grown," said Gerrish. "In several cases, I've been invited to their graduations, or weddings, and now have some of them coming back with kids of their own."

Earl Saline

Children's instruction still emphasizes safety, and freestyle is now in play.

Like Gerrish and Beaver Creek, many ski and snowboard schools are reporting that kids lessons represent the majority of their business—sometimes as much as 65 to 80 percent of the total annual lessons on the slope. But it wasn't so long ago that kids' lessons were treated as an afterthought, with instructors and the very methodologies that they brought to each lesson focused almost exclusively on adults.

So much so that when PSIA created the National Children's Committee in 1987 some instructors may have thought

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it was just one more specially tasked group of on-snow experts focusing on one more portion of the rapidly expanding number of opportunities in instruction. In addition to developments on the alpine scene, the scope of opportunities included the introduction of snowboarding, innovations in adaptive skiing, and a cross-country skiing resurgence. But with the creation of the National Children's Symposium that followed, as well as the Junior Education Team—more fondly and popularly known as the JETs—the children's initiative did begin to create real breakthroughs, with innovations that were applicable to every level of instruction, and even now are creating new innovations of their own.

"At the time, children's instruction was always kind of on the back burner," recalls Chris Katzenberger, a former coach of the JETs and the recruiting and adult program manager for Utah's Deer Valley Ski School. "The majority of instructors seemed to think that working with kids was a downgrade, and not as important as working with adults. But my sense was that a lot of mountain managers started asking for more information about kids programs, because they could see how important it was to their business."

Photo by SharpShooter/Beaver Creek

Beaver Creek's Stacey Gerrish knows first-hand that kids are the future of snowsports.

Prior to the formation of the JETs, in the late 1970s, *SKI Magazine* had begun building a national kids-focused instruction effort with its own SKIwee program. And there were innovators across the country who were experimenting with ways to help kids learn faster, and, especially, have more fun at their own home mountains. But according to Grant Nakamura, who worked with SKIwee and was also a member of the JETs from 1996 to 2000, it wasn't until PSIA gave those instructors a national forum that the level of innovation really began to pick up pace, and create noticeable results.

The children's initiative did begin to create real breakthroughs, with innovations that were applicable to every level of instruction.

"When SKIwee was created it was certainly because there was a need that they were trying to address. But as part of that clinic team, I felt underutilized. My platform always was that I wanted to work on something that would really be able to influence the national agenda from the line instructor's point of view," Nakamura said. "The fact that the JETs brought such an awareness of diversity at the national level into the same room together was instrumental in creating that."

Most notably, Nakamura said, for kids' instruction in particular, the JETs reinforced the understanding of the vast physical and mental differences children have at each age and stage of development. They also helped

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bring Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational domains to the slopes. Focusing on the cognitive, affective and physical needs of each student—or how they think, feel and move—the CAP model presented a new level of shorthand for assessing the learning requirements of everyone in a class. And for an association already focused on student-centered learning, it presented a powerful new tool in how an instructor might actually go about doing that.

"I think as far as student-centered learning was concerned, especially with regard to kids, the CAP model really put all of that under the magnifying glass," Nakamura said.

"I really do think the JETs were 10 years before our time," said Alison Clayton-Cummings of some of the initiatives the team developed. A former team member who is now the assistant director of Vermont's Stratton Mountain Snowsports School, she said that, "Yes, everybody was saying back then that kids are our future, but it's really only been in the past four or five years that I think anyone has really believed that."

Clayton-Cummings said some of the first "solutions" the team came up with were as simple as encouraging snowsports schools to separate kids' lessons according to specific age differences, rather than dumping everyone under the age of 12 into the same class. But those conversations quickly accelerated, and when developmental theory, the importance of terrain (including separate teaching centers and specific games for learning), and especially proper training for kids instructors (outlined in the *Children's Skiing Handbook* and *Children's Development* manual) were included in the mix, the members of the team could begin to point to actual benchmarks in the progression of their work.

The result, Clayton-Cummings said, was not just a new focus on "teaching the whole child," but also on "highlighting the importance of the kids instructor, and what kind of impact they can have on the sport for all of us."

As for the most tangible—and perhaps long lasting—result of all of the JETs work, Clayton-Cummings points to the new Children's Specialist 1 (CS1) and Children's Specialist 2 (CS2) credentials, which, she said, "best represent the national methodology we were working on."

"I think it's one of the most powerful innovations that really helps instructors all across the country," said Brundage Mountain (Idaho) Snowsports School Director Seth Jacobsen of the CS1 and CS2 credentials PSIA-AASI introduced in 2010. "Not only does it expand an instructor's ability to offer outstanding children's lessons, but it provides vastly different tools for mastering the presentation of all kinds of useful information."

Jacobsen said he thinks the CS1 and CS2 credential process has become so fine-tuned, and so easily applicable to all kinds of instructional situations, that he recommends it to anyone. He especially thinks instructors seeking advanced levels of certification would be well-served in their careers if they got their CS1 credential after their Level I certification, and their CS2 credential after their Level II certification.

"It really helps you focus on how to keep a lesson interesting, and interactive, and especially fun," Jacobsen said.

Which may be the longest lasting legacy of the JETs overall, that every great lesson must meet the needs of the student first, and that every snowsports school's most important product is fun.

"The legacy of the JETs to me is that they really put kids instruction on at the forefront on a national scale," said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. "I think it helped focus a lot of energy from all of the divisions in a way that set the stage for where we are now with a true national credential. And also with the current *Children's Instruction Manual*, which built off what they began."

All of it, Saline said, has helped prepare instructors across the country for a kids market "that really has taken on a life of its own." 32°

Karin Kirk

The really good children's instructors know how to keep a lesson interesting, interactive, and fun.

Pete Kray skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is the founder of Shred White and Blue (www.shredwhiteandblue.com), a media and apparel company celebrating American boardsports.

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SnowSports 360

MULTIPLE LEVELS IN ONE LESSON? OH MY!

By **MARK AIKEN;** photos by SHERRI HARKIN

What two words inspire fear in new instructors, give experienced instructors headaches, and keep managers and supervisors awake at night? Hint: The words represent a situation that nobody wants; yet all snowsports professionals have experienced.

Give up? The answer, of course, is the dreaded "ability split."

We've all been there. For example, in a never-ever group some students inevitably pick skills up faster than others. Or in a class of parallel skiers half the group will ski aggressively and the other half as timidly as mice. Splits even happen in private lessons; a family of five will book one instructor even though all five of them ski at different levels. Whatever the situation, all snowsports professionals run into ability splits at one time or another—and if you haven't yet, you will.

Thinking back to my first season as an instructor, I recall a trainer going over a beginner progression. You teach them this, then this, then this, she said. They gave me my first lesson and everything was just like training—except that only half my students could do what I taught. Already in my very first lesson, I had a split. What was I supposed to do now?

As my career has progressed I am sad to report that I continue to see ability splits in my lessons, and—woe is us—in the lessons of colleagues. In fact, I have seen more lessons with splits than without.

Some students learn faster than others.

"Everyone is different. And you want to allow people to progress at their own rate," says Alison Clayton-Cummings. She's the assistant director of the snowsports school at Stratton, Vermont, as well as an examiner and member of the Eastern Division Advanced Children's Educator (ACE) team.

What is this? An examiner *advocating* for ability splits? To some extent, she is—at least in that she sees nothing wrong with individuals progressing at their own rates. "You'll often end up teaching mini-clinics within a lesson," she says. This way, students are challenged but not held up. Those that aren't as skilled don't get pushed too much. Lessons that are truly student-centered will require multi-tasking.

Ability splits do not emerge in lessons, says Clayton-Cummings; they exist before we start. And they are not unique to snowsports; schoolteachers and coaches in other sports suffer just as much as we do. Thinking about ability splits, I wondered why people progress differently—even when presented the same material. I wondered *"What's the best way to handle splits in lessons?"* And I wondered when it's best to balance a split in a lesson—and when it's time to go to


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a supervisor for support. In search of answers to these questions, I spoke with three highly experienced instructors (two of them examiners), a classroom teacher, and an NCAA Division I soccer coach.

WHY PEOPLE PROGRESS DIFFERENTLY

"We teach movements, but not everyone executes," says Maureen Drummey, staff trainer and supervisor of the program for 7- to14-year-olds at Mount Snow and a member of the Eastern Division ACE team. Students progress depending on their athletic ability, fear factors, maturity, social skills, independence, coordination, and genetics. Referring to the CAP model, which traditionally refers to children, Clayton-Cummings suggests that adults, too, are at different developmental levels. In addition to the learning profiles you begin to envision for students as you initially get to know them, any information you gather will also help you get an idea of how they might progress—and the directions your lesson might take.

Elementary school teacher Erin Mallory spends literally weeks assessing students in her classroom at the beginning of a school year. The group-lesson instructor heading out on a two-hour lesson doesn't have that kind of time, but we can take note of what schoolteachers look for.

"I watch how they interact and how they problem-solve," Mallory says. "We also assess reading ability, math skills, and so forth, in order to figure out where we need to meet them. But watching some of these other things potentially shows me *how* to meet them." Do students express confidence when she introduces a task? Fear? Anxiety? Excitement? Anticipation?

Mallory takes note of those subjects and activities where individual students display confidence—or not. "I find that when a student struggles with a task in the early going, they are often more likely to resist it in the future," she says. Not only will they be less willing to participate, says Mallory, they may also be less open to her instruction. Imagine that, lack of confidence or low self-esteem can result in avoidance—even when we're there to help. "Once you recognize these areas, try to make them feel comfortable," Mallory says. "Build a sense of support and community."

Jesse Cormier coaches varsity men's soccer at the University of Vermont. During the summer, in addition to planning his season and recruiting new players, he runs soccer camps for local youth players and elite high school athletes. With a variance of skill levels in athletes coming to his camps, he sees a wide range of progress throughout the week. "The ones that really take off are the ones that come *looking* for instruction," Cormier says.

Some athletes, he says, spend extra

Students progress depending on their athletic ability, fear factors, maturity, social skills, independence, coordination, and genetics.

Even in a group lesson, individualized feedback can work wonders.

time listening, learning, and asking questions. Being open to learning, says Cormier, makes a huge difference. "It's really fun to watch," he says. On the flip side, he sees highly skilled athletes who think they have all the answers. "They tend to stagnate as players, and they don't get as much out of camp," he says.

Remember to consider a student's background and equipment. When you have exhausted your bag of tricks and they still can't perform a particular movement, is it because their boots are too big—or too loose? Meanwhile, what was the student's prior lesson experience? You can't control what instructor had them last—or what that person taught them (although I hope it was within the scope of good, sound skiing or riding!). Maybe they taught themselves on their front yard. Or maybe (gasp) they learned from a friend.

DEALING WITH SPLITS

"Expect splits. Plan for them," says Clayton-Cummings. They are as common as the number of skiers and riders on the hill. What is different is how we as instructors handle them, and here are some recommended approaches:

Multi-tasking

The instructor who expects to multi-task within lessons, who anticipates differences from student to student, and who plans to offer individualized feedback will be prepared for a lesson with multiple ability levels.

Classroom teachers deal with the ultimate in ability splits—20 or 30 students, each with their own column in the grade book. In collecting assignments, teachers return individual feedback in the form of grades, comments in margins, or other recognition (e.g., a gold star on the whiteboard, an emergency parent conference). In her classroom, Mallory tries to offer as much personalized feedback as possible. "Focus on what each student is good at, and what they have to work on," she says. "This way, they know you are paying attention to what they are doing and that it matters." Feedback should address strengths and weaknesses. Individualized feedback shows that we, as instructors, care and it makes them feel that they are getting their money's worth—always a plus.

Grouping

Schoolteachers use group work as a means of reaching multiple ability levels. One obvious approach to grouping is to put stronger students in one group and weaker ones in another. "You end up with several 'mini-lessons,'" says Maureen Drummey. One way to address groups-within-a-group is to assign the same task, but have them perform it on different terrain. For example, at Mount Snow Drummey may opt for trails that are half groomed and half bumped. Another way is to assign two completely separate tasks. "Sometimes you just have to jump from one mini-group to the next," says Drummey. "I look like a nut when I'm out there."

Mallory sometimes uses another approach to grouping in her classroom: putting different ability levels in the same group. Students at a lower comprehension level can learn from peers; meanwhile, those who play a mentoring role gain better ownership of a topic or skill. Take note: Mallory doesn't necessarily assign roles of "tutor" and "tutee"; students naturally teach—and learn from—one another during group tasks. For example, a slower reader may have higher comprehension than a faster reader and can therefore share comprehension pieces. Having partners discuss how a certain movement "feels" and then reporting back to the main group may produce the same result in our lessons.

Students can learn from their peers as well as their instructor.

With different ability levels within groups, Mallory still teaches the same subject by asking higher and lower level questions to different students. Why not use this approach in our lessons? For example, say you have two parallel skiing students. Ask the higher-performing student to make turns on the *inside* ski and a lower-level student to make turns on the *outside* ski. While both students will eventually need to develop skills on inside *and* outside edges, the difficulty of these two different one-ski exercises could challenge different ability levels on like terrain.

Simulation

Cormier breaks down different aspects of a soccer game with both his varsity players and in his summer camps. By shrinking the playing area and playing 1-on-1 and 2-on-2, rather than 11-on-11 on a huge soccer field, players are forced to make decisions and choices more frequently and quickly than in a real game. "A lot of learning happens," says Cormier.

Similarly, we can limit terrain for students, forcing them to make decisions and moves. On a sunny day, use the shadows cast by lift cables under chairlifts to create a corridor within which students have to ski or ride. Or put one or two skiers inside the shadow of a descending gondola car and have them control their speed so that they stay inside the shadow (keeping one eye out for other traffic on the trail, of course). Different ability-level students can work on different skills within tasks like these. For example, some may concentrate on making rounded turns, while others may concentrate on upper and lower body separation in short-radius turns. (Note: Sun not shining? Use groomer lines. Corduroy all skied

off? Send two students ahead to draw boundary lines with poles.)

Whatever situations we create for students they must be realistic, adds Cormier. "You want them to see the correlation between whatever fundamental skill you're working on and how it applies to the game," he says. "Otherwise they don't see it as relating."

WHEN TO CALL FOR HELP

Kim Petram, training director for the Fiorini Ski School at Washington's Snoqualmie Pass and a Northwest Division examiner, sees the need for strong supervisory support—especially for the newest instructors. "Knowing when to call for help comes with experience," she says.

In most cases, because groups that are actually moving have an opportunity to take a warm-up lap or two—in which instructors can assess students to make sure groups are cohesive and copasetic—the most marked ability splits generally occur in the lowest level or beginner groups. Therefore, says Petram, supervisors should be positioned in beginner corrals at least until groups are moving.

When should instructors call for help? "You ask for help," says Clayton-Cummings, "if you just can't manage it, and someone is always waiting or the rest of the group is always waiting." Adds Drummey, "If the whole group is ready for the chair, and one student is not, make a transition." These decisions become easier with experience, so talk about situations with supervisors or experienced colleagues. Listen to how they say they might handle them."

Whether you decide to make a switch or juggle will depend on the situation. "Coaches have a responsibility to deliver the same thing regardless of level, regardless of experience," Cormier says. "Put energy into coaching every athlete." We might use different exercises or tasks to develop more fundamental skills with less experienced skiers and riders, but the effort we put into less skilled people doesn't change.

This applies to teaching soccer and reading as much as skiing and riding—which is why we can learn from Mallory and Cormier's examples in the classroom and on the soccer pitch. "The demand should be there," Cormier says. "This can be a defining trait for a coach: are you only coaching the high-performing athletes that make you look good? Or are you putting the same effort into developing new players because of your passion for the sport?"

When you go to lineup knowing you might have an ability split, coaching every student becomes that much easier. 32°

Mark Aiken's PSIA-AASI credentials include Alpine III, Snowboard I, Telemark 1, and Children's Specialist 2. When he isn't supervising classes at Stowe or skiing in Vermont's backcountry, he is at his writing desk working on articles for Vermont *magazine, the* New York Times, *and others.*

SnowSports 360

SELF-EFFICACY: DO YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN BE SUCCESSFUL?

By **KARIN KIRK**

So there you are at the top of a steep bump run. The light is flat, your legs are tired, and the snow is less than ideal. Oh, and you're right under the lift so lots of people are watching you. What's that voice in your head telling you? Most likely, that voice is a reflection of your *self-efficacy*—your belief in your ability to be successful. When you enter a demanding situation with a feeling that you'll be able to achieve the desired outcome, you most likely will. And at those unfortunate moments when you become doubtful that you'll pull it off, you often don't.

So what's with that? Can simply believing that we'll be successful make it so? Are there certain things we can do or say that will help raise our own performances and that of our students? In short, yes. By boosting your understanding of self-efficacy you can build upon this important aspect of your students' skiing and riding. Moreover, you can gain insights about how to improve your own performances too.

BOUND BY BELIEFS

Self-efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. People with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These people will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments and goals, and attribute failure to things that are within their control, rather than blame external factors. Self-efficacious people also recover quickly from setbacks and, ultimately, are likely to achieve their personal goals. As you read that description, I bet you can imagine people who fit this pattern. Perhaps this describes you (and if so, congratulations!). But what about the other end of the spectrum?

Poised at the top of a tough run, what goes through your mind at moments like this?

Kurt Blunck

Karin Kirk

The entrance to a run is often the most intimidating part, as illustrated here by Bridger Bowl's "Northwest Direct."

Self-efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome.

Those with low self-efficacy believe they cannot be successful. They are less likely to make a concerted, extended effort and may consider challenging tasks as threats that are to be avoided. Thus, students with poor self-efficacy may find themselves in the midst of a self-fulfilling feedback cycle, with low aspirations leading to disappointing performances. I'm sure you've heard discouraged students exclaim, "I knew I couldn't do it." And of course, they were right.

Many aspects of self-efficacy are intuitive. If you have been teaching awhile, you are already familiar with both ends of this spectrum and you've observed that emotions play an important role in people's performances. Raising your awareness of the nuances of self-efficacy will help you recognize how this affects student performances and will allow you to use specific strategies to boost self-efficacy.

BUILDING SELF-EFFICACY

In part, the degree of self-efficacy students bring to your lesson is a reflection of their overall outlook from other aspects of their life. But their on-snow experiences will directly affect their self-efficacy as a skier or rider. Teaching strategies can have a direct impact on students' self-efficacy (Fencl and Scheel 2005).

There are four sources of self-efficacy. These strategies are drawn from research in educational psychology, are backed up by experimental data, and have clear applications for snowsports (Bandura 1994, Margolis and McCabe 2006).

Mastery Experiences

Successful experiences boost self-efficacy, while failures erode it. This is the most robust source of self-efficacy and is a key tactic to keep in mind both while coaching students and while pushing your own skills. The trick is to build a series of successful experiences, such that each new step is supported by previous successes (Bandura 1994).

This approach is summed up nicely by Ashley Coe, an instructor at Montana's Bridger Bowl. As we hiked our way over to a 50-degree couloir (pictured above), I asked her what gave her the confidence to drop into intimidating runs. "I grew up skiing in New Hampshire and we didn't have terrain like this," she said. "But after living here and spending a few years just getting used to it and doing it more often, it's gotten easier."

Mastery experiences most commonly stem from successes at a similar task, but many different types of mastery can be relevant to snowsports. The idea of "teaching for transfer" can help students realize that skills they've mastered

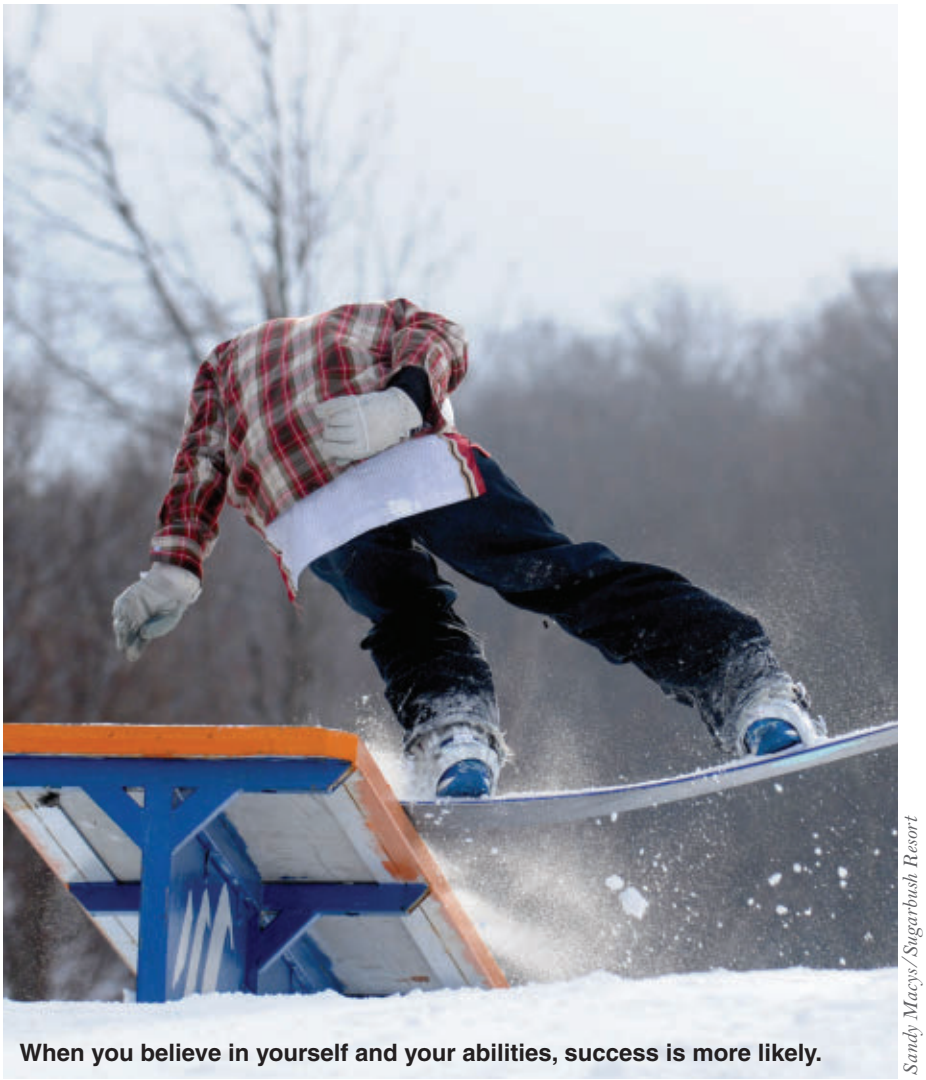
in other areas of their lives can be transferred to skiing and riding, and you can leverage these successes as you coach a student.

From the coaching point of view, it's important to recognize that mastery experiences have a powerful effect. Whether it's for your own goals or those of your students, make it a priority to set up a series of good experiences such that each step can build on the previous one. Remind students how their prior experiences tie in to their present challenge and do what you can to ensure success rather than push too far and encounter a failed experience.

Vicarious Experiences

While one's own experiences are the most powerful element in building self-efficacy, observing a peer succeed at a task can strengthen beliefs in one's own abilities. You've no doubt experienced this in a clinic when, say, at first you're not sure you can ride switch through the bumps. After watching your friends do it, however, your mental state shifts and you realize it's not so impossible after all.

A key aspect of this is that it's the success of a peer that builds self-efficacy. When an examiner executes perfect arcs across frozen corduroy, a common response is "well, of course *they* can do it," and it almost lowers the efficacy of the mere mortals in the group. You may have this same effect on your students when you demonstrate a silky smooth open parallel to a group of persistent wedge-turners.



When you believe in yourself and your abilities, success is more likely.

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So capitalize on the power of peers. Set up situations for your students in which they can build off each others' successes or follow each other through demanding terrain. For your own skiing and riding—and that of your colleagues—find a group of partners that mutually push each other toward goals and increased levels of skill.

Social Persuasion

Instructors can boost self-efficacy with credible communication and specific feedback to guide students through the task or motivate them to make their best effort. Note that your feedback should include both verbal and non-verbal cues, so make sure that your body language and the words you choose are both on the same page.

An essential point to remember is that your encouragement will have the most benefit when it is credible and specific. For example, since we know that mastery experiences are the most powerful way to build self-efficacy, an effective form of social persuasion is to remind students that they have been successful at similar tasks, and to provide specific cues for the movements they'll need for that particular situation.

It's also important to note that social persuasion can work in either direction. In fact, it's easier to discourage someone with negative comments than it is to boost their self-efficacy with positive feedback (Pajares 2002). So be especially careful to not let a wayward comment throw your students off track.

Emotional State

When you reflect on your best runs, you may find they are accompanied by a sense of high energy and a positive mood. That's because a positive emotional state can boost one's self-efficacy, while anxiety can undermine it (Bandura 1994). A certain level of emotional stimulation creates an energizing feeling that contributes to strong performances.

Instructors can help by trying to avoid stressful situations and by lowering anxiety related to poor conditions. You can do this by changing your students' focus away from the conditions themselves and instead coach them on

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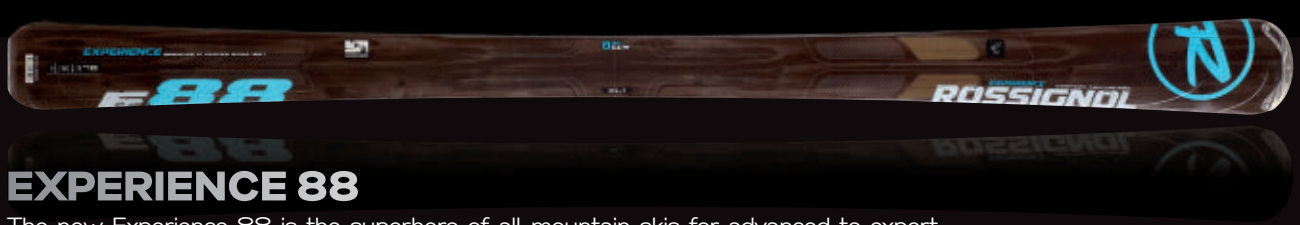

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specific tactics they'll need to use to be successful. You can also point out that adapting to new and challenging conditions will raise their game overall and make them stronger athletes.

Lastly, you can use some cheerleading, real-time praise, and positive energy to create an elevated emotional state within your class to raise their self-efficacy and bring out strong performances.

STRATEGIES FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS

While athletic, confident, and coachable students make our jobs easy, you'll want to be more attentive to the self-efficacy of students for whom snowsports do not come naturally. When assessing student performance, keep in mind that attitude and emotional state may be obstacles to learning. In these cases, here are some techniques that can help: (from Margolis and McCabe 2006)

- Strategize with struggling students to let them know that you are willing to work with them on an individual basis and can tailor the skiing and riding tasks to their needs. This is true even within a group lesson. For example, take a chairlift ride with a student who is falling behind or is having a bad day. During the lift ride you can check in, see what may be behind the difficulties, and help come up with a plan for success that is specifically tailored to that student. The extra time and attention from you, plus added information about how the student can be successful can go a long way toward improving the outcome.
- Use moderately difficult tasks. If the task is too easy it will be boring or embarrassing and may communicate the feeling that you doubt their abilities. A too-difficult task will likely result in failure, which re-enforces low self-efficacy. The target for difficulty is slightly above the students' current ability level.
- As students work toward their goal, have them verbalize the next step in their plan. As they proceed through the task, ask them to note their progress and verbalize the next steps. Be sure to let the students do the talking, so they

BUILDING HIGH SELF-EFFICACY IN INSTRUCTORS

Snowsports instructors with a high sense of efficacy about their teaching capabilities may have an easier time motivating their students and helping them accomplish their goals. These instructors are generally able to rebound from setbacks and are more willing to experiment with new ideas or techniques. Instructors with low self-efficacy may rely more on a controlling teaching style and be more critical of students (Woolfolk-Hoy 2003–04, Bandura 1994). So how can snowsports school managers and trainers help instructors build their self-efficacy and, thus, become more effective in their jobs? Here are seven useful tips (drawn from Margolis and McCabe 2006).

1. **Create mastery experiences for instructors.** Instructor training clinics should be designed to produce positive outcomes, not, for example, to embarrass instructors into realizing they can't do short-swing turns. Similarly, the most appropriate lesson assignments will keep instructors within their comfort zone yet allow them to take small steps toward raising their game.
2. **Leverage peer models for maximum benefit.** Sometimes trainers or supervisors don't have as much influence as they might like. In part, this is because people in these positions are not necessarily peers. But a peer can improve self-efficacy in different ways than a trainer or supervisor can, and you can put peer-modeling to good use. It's important to recognize the power of peer learning and to allow instructors to learn by watching each other's successes. You can set up training partnerships and encourage instructors to work together for mutual benefit. Peers may be drawn from groups defined by gender, age, certification level, social circles, or professional focus (such as children's instruction or freestyle).
3. **Teach specific strategies.** Give instructors a concrete plan of attack for various aspects of their jobs, rather than simply turn them loose. For common situations an instructor is likely to encounter, lay out each step of what the instructor

Karin Kirk

can clarify exactly what they intend to do next (Schunk and Pajares 2002).

- If a student is not successful at a given task, point out that this does not mean that he or she is hopeless or suffers from a lack of ability. Keep failures in context and adjust the challenge so that the next endeavor is a successful one.
- Compare student performance to the goals set for that student, rather than to the rest of the class.
- Keep in mind that mastery experiences are the most powerful way to raise self-efficacy. Structure the lesson to deliberately bring out a series of successes, and be sure to point those out along the way. For example, partway through the warm-up run, make a point of describing the best aspects of your student's riding. This will immediately provide a self-efficacy boost and will reassure the student about what he or she is doing right. From there, raise the level of difficulty gradually and break complicated tasks into manageable components so that the student is likely to be successful each time.

TEACHING PRACTICES TO AVOID

In his chapter on self-efficacy in 1994's *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, Albert Bandura notes that certain well-worn teaching practices may have the unintended effect of diminishing the self-efficacy of students who aren't at the top of the class. These include:

- Generalized, "lock-step" instruction, which is inflexible and is not tailored to individual student performances. Formulaic instruction makes it harder for students to ask questions, get individualized feedback, or learn at a pace that is different from that set by the instructor. The result may be that students who become discouraged, confused, or bored are likely to remain so.
- Excessively goal-driven instruction, which can put pressure on students and emphasize extrinsic outcomes rather than intrinsic skill development. Pushing students toward a goal like a particular run, trick, or park feature creates a situation in which the students' needs are secondary to the achievement of a certain goal. This is especially true if the instructor selects the goal, rather than the students.

should do, so that they can take comfort in having a plan to follow. This is especially important for new instructors who may be uncertain about how to handle various situations or for instructors who are taking on unfamiliar assignments.

4. **Allow instructors to make their own choices.** The ability to determine one's own path leads to high motivation, while dictating every step of the job can result in disenfranchised employees. Set up some areas of your instructor development program that allow instructors to make their own decisions and to be responsible for those outcomes. Encourage instructors to focus their development along paths that are the most desirable and relevant to them, and strategize with them to outline steps to help them achieve their professional goals. Pathways that allow instructors to develop specific skills include freestyle, big-mountain skiing and riding, children's development, race programs, women's programs, adaptive programs, and so on.
5. **Give frequent, focused feedback.** Getting feedback and encouragement is essential for every instructor. Use praise when earned; make it credible and avoid hyperbole. Make sure the feedback is accurate and meaningful and is more specific than a simple "nice job" type of comment. The more feedback you provide, the better your instructors will understand what you expect of them and what type of behavior they'll need to be successful. If corrective feedback is needed, do so earlier rather than later, so that the instructor has not had opportunity to veer far off course and has only small changes to make. When giving feedback on instructor performance, compare to past performances by that instructor; resist the temptation to make comparisons between instructors.
6. **Encourage accurate attributions.** Listening to how instructors attribute their successes and failures can provide insight to their motivation and efficacy. Attributions are particularly easy to spot after certification exams. Was a failure due to poor conditions, a biased examiner, or a bad advice from trainers? Or was it due to not spending enough time training, needing more practice, or making inopportune decisions in preparing for the exam? Help instructors understand that they don't fail because they lack ability or potential; they fail because their skills need further development.
7. **Help instructors rebound from setbacks.** A failed exam. A student injured in class. A yard sale under the lift. Obstacles and setbacks are part of life, and snowsports instruction has its share of pitfalls. In addition to attributing the causes accurately, instructors with high self-efficacy are more likely to get themselves back on track and working toward meeting their overall goals. But instructors with low self-efficacy may need help getting oriented after a failure. For these instructors, take time to help them chart a new course back to success. Set specific tasks and short-term goals rather than a large, looming goal. Set up teaching assignments and skiing goals to rebuild some all-important mastery experiences.

— Karin Kirk

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- Statements or teaching practices that compare students' performance against each other can ultimately backfire and lower the motivation within the group. A competitive environment may raise the self-efficacy of the top students, but is likely to lower the self-efficacy of the rest of the class.

APPLICATIONS FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT

So, back to that steep bump run that you were gazing down. Knowing a few things about self-efficacy can help you formulate the following plan for your own performance: draw on successful experiences you've had on similar runs; pick a favorite peer to watch or follow; give yourself a pep talk and pick up on the high-energy, athletic vibe that helps you perform at your best. At the bottom of the run, reflect on how it went and which factors were in your control and which were not.

And what's next? After the success of that run, plot your course for new challenges that will propel you toward your overall goals. By being attentive to self-efficacy in yourself and in your students, you are more likely to achieve those goals and have fun doing so. 32°

Karin Kirk is a PSIA-certified Level III alpine instructor and staff trainer at Montana's Bridger Bowl, and is a former president of the Northern Rocky Mountain Division. When she's not out hiking and skiing with her clients, Karin works with college science faculty to improve their teaching and their understanding of student learning. Fortunately, these two careers intersect nicely!

Karin Kirk

Instructors working together to improve their skiing is one example of peer modeling.

Karin Kirk

The single most important thing you can do for your students is create mastery experiences, which build self-efficacy.

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HOW TO BECOME A MASTER INSTRUCTOR

By **CODY MALLORY**

Let's kick this off with a little exercise. Take a second and envision a teacher or mentor who had a positive impact on you. What characteristics about this person stand out most to you? What made him or her a great teacher?

When I ask this question during clinics, most people mention how that person was able to relate to their students, how they were able to connect to their students, or that the teacher truly cared about their student's success. Interestingly, when people list their master teacher's strengths, it is typically not until after they have listed relationship-building skills that they mention anything about that person's grasp for the technical aspects of the subject.

EXAMPLES OF MASTERY

Mastery is comprised of a set of behaviors, attitudes, practices and processes that increase our ability to be effective and efficient. And as shown by the opening exercise, the first step to becoming a master teacher is to be relationship driven. In his book, *The Talent Code*, Daniel Coyle interviews renowned quarterbacks coach Tom Martinez, who is likened to Yoda. Martinez describes how he approaches meeting a student for the first time.

Stacey Gerrish

Relationship-building is a forté of the master instructor.

"With a new kid, it's no different from meeting a girl you might want to go on a date with. You make eye contact, and there's something there, underneath. Something hits a nerve, something is transmitted through eye contact that tells you to say hello. That's what I look for first in a kid, something to take our connection to a different spot."

That last sentence is very important to the concept of being relationship driven. The ability to find and build upon a connection within the first moments of meeting a student will strengthen the relationship and take learning to the next level. As snowsports instructors, we need to learn to observe and listen more than we speak. It's all about peeling back the cover and picking up on students' body language and the subtext of what they say. It is crucial to the success of the lesson to discover your student's motivations and goals early on in the lesson and structure the learning experience around those clues.

Two examples of reading body language (to pick up on the subtext) are reading the eyes and watching posture. Many emotions can be expressed through our eyes. Snowsports instructors, in particular, are well served by being able to recognize fear, anxiety, boredom, and confusion. Posture is another subtle key to understanding the mindset of our students. Rigidity and a lack of flexion and extension can hint toward a moderate level of fear or anxiety. The ability to recognize and adjust your approach to these subliminal emotions can go a long way toward making your lessons highly effective.

Another foundation of becoming a master teacher is the way in which we deliver feedback. Simply put, it is the ability to exhibit *the knowledge of process rather than knowledge of result.* A study conducted in 1974 by two UCLA educational psychologists, Ron Gallimore and Roland Tharp, provides us with a model for delivering highly effective feedback. For the study, Gallimore and Tharp performed an up-close case study of the university's legendary basketball coach, John Wooden. At the time of the study, Wooden had led the Bruins to a national championship nine out of the previous

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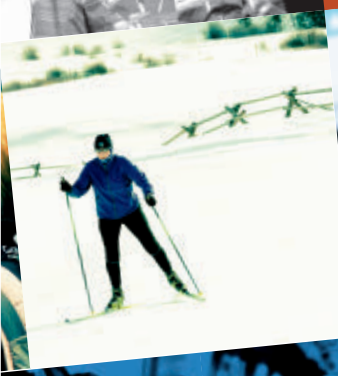

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10 years. Of the 2,326 discrete acts of coaching observed by the researchers, only 6.9% were compliments and 6.6% were expressions of displeasure. The vast majority (roughly 75%) of all of Wooden's coaching acts were categorized as pure information, such as the timing, intensity, rate, or duration at which to perform a task or movement. It all comes back to the idea of knowledge of process over knowledge of result. Another striking feature of Wooden's method of coaching, Gallimore and Tharp found, was an absence of long-winded explanations or lectures.

Skiing and snowboarding, just like basketball, are continuous-action sports that rely heavily on spontaneity, reaction, and improvisation. To interrupt this continuous action with harangues about skiing or snowboarding technique is a detriment to the learning process. Capitalizing on natural breaks in the action to provide feedback or explain the next task in a concise and informative manner will pave the way to providing our students with a valuable lesson.

The last component for becoming a master instructor is to be inspirational, both visually and vocally (fig. 1). Master instructors give their students a vision of greatness. They are able to notice their student's strengths and bring these strengths to the attention of their student.

This vision of greatness, or impending greatness, is important to the development of skill because psychology and self-talk play a large role in a person's ability to strive toward higher levels of performance. Gary Mack, a leading sports psychology consultant and author of *Mind Gym: An Athlete's Guide to Inner Excellence*, describes the critical need for athletes to believe that they are capable of higher performance. "Beliefs drive behaviors and self-limiting beliefs lead to self-defeating behaviors," he writes. "Believe in yourself and abilities." (For more on this topic, see "Self-Efficacy: Do You Believe You Can Be Successful?" on page 72.)

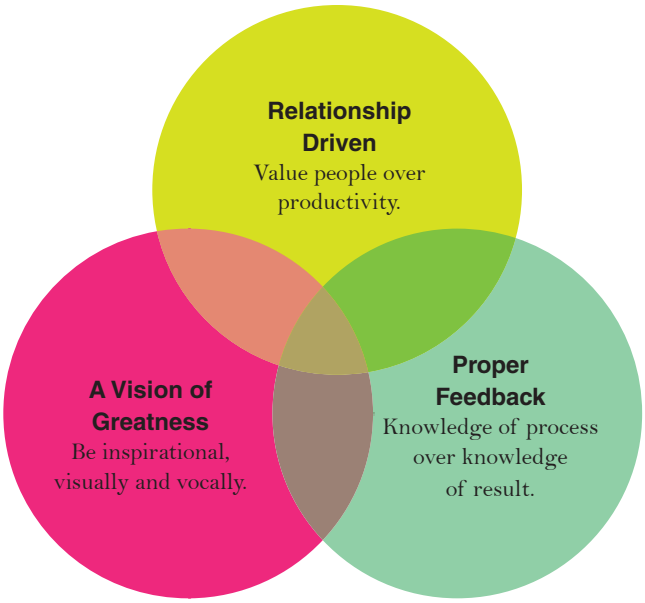

Figure 1: Foundations of a Master Instructor

It is our role as instructors to facilitate the formation and strengthening of these beliefs in our students. The ability for instructors to inspire their students and give them a vision of their own impending greatness is a highly valued and deeply rewarding skill. Like a "hook-filled" reality TV show that convinces you to stick around after the commercial break, we must be able to pick out and focus on our student's strengths, rather than their weaknesses, and build upon them; all the while hinting at the greatness that they will achieve.

Sherri Harkin

Capitalize on natural breaks to provide feedback or explain the next task.

FACILITATING THE OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE

Think back to a perfect park lap or bluebird powder day filled with face shots. What were you feeling? If the hair on the back of your neck is standing up right now while you think about it, then you experienced what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a noted psychologist at Claremont Graduate University, defines as flow, or the optimal experience. According to Csikszentmihalyi, "The best moments occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limit in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen."

For skiers and snowboarders, being in flow is what brings us back every winter and it is the key to the retention of our clients. So the question is, how do we provide our students with a flow experience? Says Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow tends to occur when goals are clear, feedback relevant, challenges and skills are in balance, and attention becomes ordered and fully invested." Sounds a lot like an ideal ski or snowboard lesson, right? Instructors develop clear student-directed goals; provide timely, constructive feedback; and have students perform a task that flirts with the edge of their ability. The concept of flow and its components provide us with a great model for teaching and inspiring lifelong snowboarders and skiers.

Flow is the Holy Grail of snowsports. Flow (technically speaking) is the state of optimal arousal where a person is fully immersed in a task. Oftentimes, the flow that represents a zone of optimal engagement and learning gives rise to athletic flow achieved through a series of fluid movements. These types of flow aren't synonymous, but they can complement each other.

Think back to your perfect turn, run, or day. You were in flow. Helping our students attain flow in their skiing or riding can be a very rewarding experience; however it cannot be the

Perfect runs are all about flow. Help your students attain it!

Sandy Macys/Sugarbush Resort

goal of the lesson. When you were experiencing your own flow moment were you thinking "I am going to be in flow"? Probably not. The reason for this is because flow is not a destination, but rather a by-product of the process. Csikszentmihalyi describes this further (the brackets are mine):

"It should be stressed that the body does not produce flow merely by its movements. The mind is always involved as well . . . . Without the relevant thoughts, motives, and feelings it would be impossible to achieve the discipline necessary to learn to swim [or ski/ride] well enough to enjoy it. Moreover, because enjoyment takes place in the mind of the swimmer [or skier/rider], flow cannot be a purely physical process: muscles and brain must be equally involved."

While flow cannot be the goal of a lesson, it is possible to set the students up to experience it. This can be accomplished when the student is pushed to the edges of their skill sets in an effort to accomplish a goal that the student views as difficult and worthwhile. It is necessary to note that the phrase "difficult and worthwhile" will apply differently to each of your students, and your ability to find what the student views as worthwhile will make your lessons that much more effective.

Aside from giving immediate feedback and using student-centered goals, it's important that there is a balance between our student's skill level and the difficulty of the task we are asking him or her to perform. As you can see in figure 2, if this balance does not exist, students will drift into either a feeling of boredom or anxiety—both of which are detrimental to the learning environment. By keeping them near the edge of their skill set, our students will stay engaged in the lesson and achieve a high level of learning and skill development.

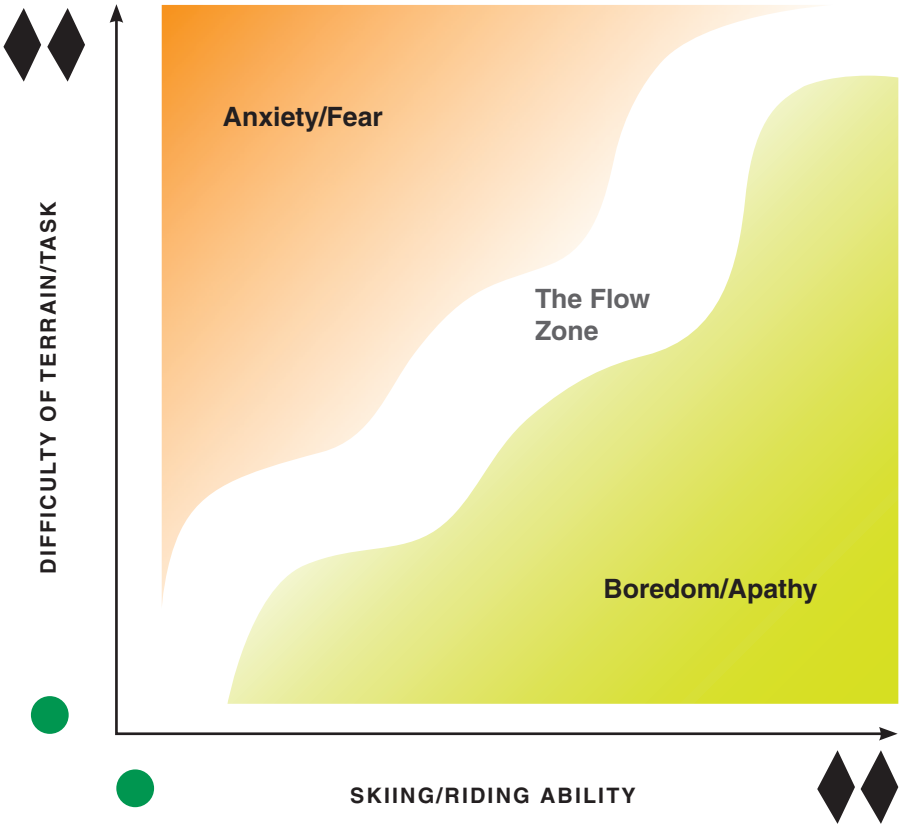

Figure 2: The balance between challenge and skill is essential to ensuring that students get the most out of their learning experience.

A good rule of thumb is to perform a new (or slightly more difficult) task on old terrain and an old task on new (or slightly more difficult) terrain. Referring to figure 2, combining new tasks on new terrain is a sure-fire recipe to incite fear and anxiety, while old tasks on old (familiar) terrain will probably result in boredom or apathy.

A WORTHWHILE QUEST

The pursuit of mastery is a very rewarding and lifelong process. In his best-selling book *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink describes the process of pursuing mastery in any field.

"Mastery is an asymptote," he writes. "You can approach it. You can hone in on it. You can get really, really close to it. But . . . you can never touch it. Mastery is impossible to realize fully. The joy is in the pursuit more than the realization. In the end, mastery attracts precisely because mastery eludes."

It is in the pursuit for perfection, or mastery, that we will refine our skills and provide our students with an excellent learning experience. As John Wooden says, "It's what you learn after you know it all that separates the great coaches from the average ones." 32°

Cody Mallory is an instructor and lead snowboard trainer at Michigan's Crystal Mountain Resort and Spa. He is also a member of the education staff in PSIA-AASI's Central Division.

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PSIA-AASI REMAINS COMMITTED TO MEMBER SERVICES

By ED YOUNGLOVE, PSIA-AASI TREASURER

What a remarkable year 2010–11 proved to be for PSIA-AASI as we celebrated our first fifty years—and fifty years (at least!) to come. Never was our vision more apparent and alive than in the faces, smiles, and personalities of those 50-year members attending the 50/50 anniversary event this past April in Snowmass, Colorado. These members are a testament to our collective passion for the mountain experience.

This past year reaffirmed the hard work and dedication of the national board of directors, our volunteers, our professional staff, and our remarkable members as we realized new milestones for the organization:

- PSIA-AASI membership at a record high of 31,576
- Launch of online registration for divisional events, resulting in a 37% increase in web portal usage and greater ease of registration for members
- Strong and comprehensive representation of PSIA-AASI at Interski 2011 in Austria, which helped solidify international respect for American snowsports instructors and created a conduit for sharing here at home the teaching perspectives of other skiing and riding nations.
- A successful 50/50, which, with 722 attendees, was the largest event in PSIA-AASI history.

The primary goal of PSIA-AASI is get people excited about snowsports, enabling you to develop both professionally and personally so that you can offer your best experience to your guests. We do this by ensuring we are the first place you come for information about snowsports, teaching, and the industry. We provide your connection and access to people, resources, and ideas that fuel your passion for teaching skiing or snowboarding.

DUES INCREASE ON THE HORIZON

No association lasts 50 years without strong leadership, nor can an association hope to serve its members for another 50 years without purposeful guidance and vision. As reported in the past few treasurer's reports, your association has made significant investments in its future and weathered some extreme organizational challenges, spending money out of savings to address these issues. Throughout, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors has done its level best to focus on member needs, services, and resources—for the long-range future as well as the short term. To keep costs to the member as low as possible while still enhancing services, we've developed resources wisely, cut programs deemed optional, and raised non-dues revenue in the form of sponsorships, donations, and grants.

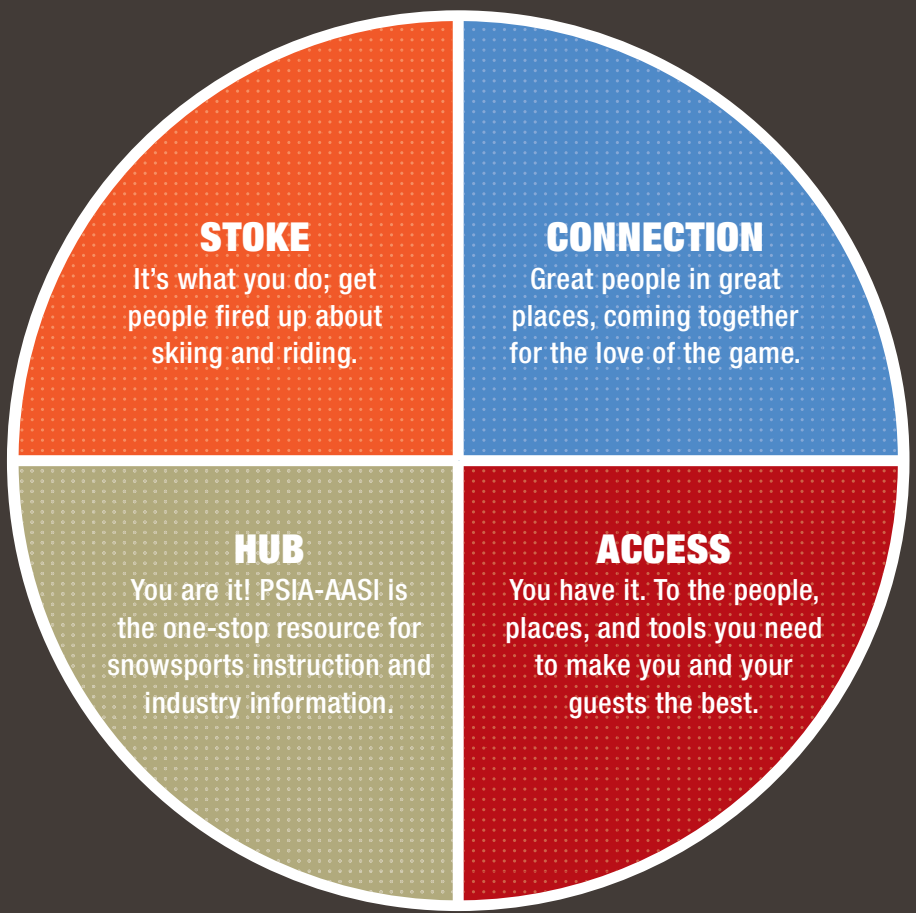
But we now stand at a crossroads. After carefully analyzing expectations and assessing the need for continued growth of opportunity for members and the association itself, the board has decided to increase membership dues by $11 in July 2012 and stop cutting programs. This decision was not taken lightly, but was determined necessary to not only continue, but improve, the level of service offered to PSIA-AASI members. Of course, as fellow members of PSIA-AASI, the board would not pass on to you an increase we would not be willing to pay ourselves. In addition, we're committed to not seeking one cent more in dues than is needed to support you, your education, certification, and association with skiing and snowboarding.

Like all businesses (and let's not forget that PSIA-AASI is in business to drive benefits to you), we have certain responsibilities to meet in exchange for your member dues. Among the most obvious are providing membership cards; *32 Degrees*; web services; and the training, publications, video resources, and other educational programs/materials that support your employment and professional development.

And then there are those responsibilities tied to the necessary cost of doing business, such as complying with legal requirements, providing insurance coverage for the association and its many components, and paying accounting fees and bank charges, to name a few. Also on that list is overhead we need to accept—manage and reduce where possible, and, in the end, accept as part of our business. (It's important to note that, like many employers these days, PSIA-AASI has reduced the headcount in its offices over the past few years, relying more on contractors and volunteer effort to get things done.)

As you would imagine, each year the staff must manage a substantial cash flow and budget as we purchase gear, produce the *Accessories Catalog*, ready systems for your orders, and work to ensure the product and services you seek are available and timely. We need to buy theses goods up front to have them ready for you. A slip in our cash flow may interrupt that supply chain—a member service issue we neither want nor can afford.

PSIA-AASI MEMBERSHIP.
THE BENEFITS ADD UP.



Sure, you get the world's most recognized certification and the best training available—along with killer deals on gear—but as a member of PSIA-AASI, you are also a part of the best toolkit available to ski and snowboard instructors. Membership provides the connections and access to the people, places, and resources you need to be great at fueling the snow stoke for your students. With your dedication and expertise, PSIA-AASI is the hub of information for skiing and riding education. Thanks! We couldn't do it without you. TheSnowPros.org

SnowSports 360

MORE PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Consider, too, the unseen and subtle ways both the PSIA-AASI national office and your division work for you. We know that divisions are your personal contact to the association, as well as being the source for events and services that enable your professional and personal development. At the national level, PSIA-AASI funds the PSIA-AASI Teams; conducts research, development, and production of education materials; provides grants to help underwrite division events; adds division insurance premiums and bank fees to its own to get lower rates; creates and distributes photography, images, and recruiting materials; and more, all to provide better service to you.

Consumer initiatives are another critical component of what we do. For a relatively modest sum, and with the support of our sponsors, PSIA-AASI communicates the "Go With A Pro" message to at least 41 million households each year through professionally produced television and video programming—now available on The Snow Pros YouTube Channel. This—combined with participation with NSAA and SIA in Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, partnership with Subaru to make Tip of the Day cards available to you free of charge through the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*, and, our involvement with the Your Mountain website—speak to how PSIA-AASI promotes you as a professional and the value of lessons to consumers.

When one looks at the amazing amount of services and products available through PSIA-AASI membership, the modest dues increase of $11 is easily justified. And I've not even mentioned the pro offers available to PSIA-AASI members—one of our more popular member benefits. If, as an active member, you buy one pair of skis, a snowboard, or a Patagonia jacket, you have more than paid for your year's dues in savings. Even after these benefits, the non-financial areas of prestige and publicity present growing opportunities for PSIA-AASI members valued way beyond annual dues.

It's incumbent upon the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors to give association members the best possible services with the resources available. In addition, we review what we did right or wrong last year and develop a program and budget for moving forward that increases the wins and lessens the losses.

I hope I've affirmed the value your PSIA-AASI dues provide. But many of you are likely wondering if the dues increase will go toward something specific. The answer is yes. During the coming years, members will notice a more concentrated effort in the refinement and expansion of the association's education programs. Education programs, the heart of what we offer, have been a victim of cuts in recent years. The board is unwilling to compromise the high level of service provided to PSIA-AASI members or the strength of the organization's education and professional development programs. Additionally, you will see continued service improvements. Whether it's national marketing campaigns, additional online services, or pro form availability, the value of a PSIA-AASI membership will continue to rise.

A FINER POINT ON FINANCES

So there you have it; the upcoming dues increase in a nutshell. All this talk of PSIA-AASI-oriented value, benefits, opportunities, and responsibilities might prompt a few of you to inquire further of the association's finances. The following summarizes information available to me as the association's treasurer and, thus, I pass it on to you.

It is drawn from an independent auditor's consolidated report of PSIA-AASI and the PSIA-AASI Education Foundation (the Foundation) for the 2010–11 fiscal year that began July 1, 2010, and ended June 30, 2011. All figures show combined gross income and expenses for PSIA-AASI and the Foundation. The accompanying financial charts may help you understand the discussion that follows about how revenue is generated and distributed.

Revenue

Revenue for the 2010–11 fiscal year was up 12.9% from the previous year: $3,386,468 in 2010–11, compared to $3,000,006 in 2009–10. These figures reflect gross revenue to the association.

Record membership, Interski-related income, and the 50/50 event drove revenue to new heights. Membership dues last year accounted for less than half—45 percent—of PSIA-AASI's total income. This means that the membership contributed 45 cents for every dollar of the associations' income. The remaining 55 cents was generated through sales of catalog items (19 cents), sponsorship revenue (15 cents), advertising (3 cents), and education seminars (12 cents). Interest, miscellaneous revenue, and grant funds released from restriction represented the remaining 6 cents.

The board of directors feels it is important that the organization's income activities reflect our values and that non-dues income remains tied to the activities of the membership. Some examples of the sources of that income include specially priced merchandise available through partnership programs and the *Accessories Catalog*, educational materials, and activities such as PSIA National Academy, AASI Rider Rally, and the promotion of the value of membership to area management, suppliers, and the public. Because of the value we offer, catalog sales outpaced those of the prior year despite a sluggish economy, and interest income continued to be low because of economic conditions.

Expenses

Expenses in 2010–11 included general operating costs as well as the costs of publications, marketing, the cost of catalog goods sold, insurance, the 50/50 event, committees and education programs, training programs, teams (to include attendance at Interski 2011), research and development, legal and accounting activities, and member services. Those expenses totaled $3,562,442 in 2010–11, compared to $3,063,958 the year before.

All PSIA-AASI expenditures support the association's overall educational and promotional goals—and our

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fundamental commitment to serve members—by carefully directing those expenditures to address membership needs at the divisional, national, and snowsports area levels. One of our primary goals is to enhance educational products and support education programs as well as the work of our committees and teams. This commitment was illustrated by the fact that during the 2010–11 fiscal year, 24 percent of total expenditures, i.e., 24 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 76 of each dollar spent roughly broke down into: personnel (39 cents), cost of catalog sales (14 cents), marketing and meetings (4 cents), general and administrative expenses (13 cents), and depreciation/miscellaneous (6 cents). It's worth noting that depreciation is a *non-cash* expense, which makes the proportion spent on education even higher.

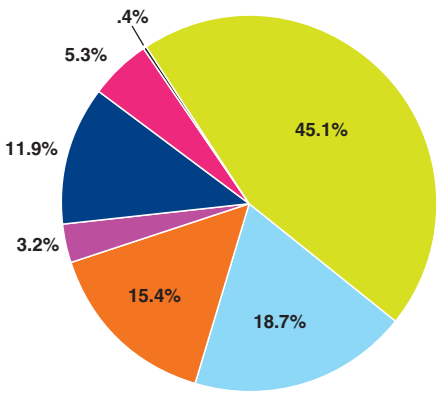
PSIA-AASI ended the 2010–11 fiscal year with cash losses of $58,117. Overall, the association's operations finished the fiscal year with a loss of $175,974, the majority of which was due to depreciation (which impacts *assets* more than cash flow).

Total assets—otherwise known as member equity—decreased from $3,422,803 in 2009–10 to $3,377,683 in 2010–11, primarily due to non-cash items such as depreciation and amortized technology costs.

The associations' continued stable financial health is due largely to the efforts of volunteers, and the hard work of your board of directors and staff, keeping PSIA-AASI moving in the right direction. As the cost of doing business continues to increase, we must remain vigilant to maintain our balance and structure in support of you, the member, and our mission as professionals to all stakeholders in the snowsports industry.

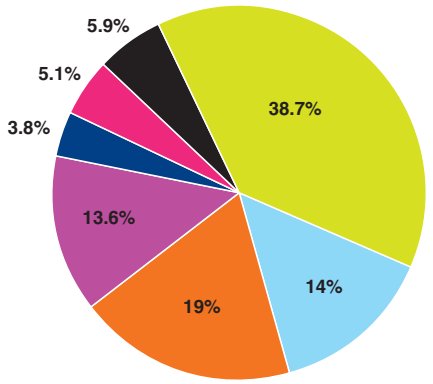
If you have questions or would like a copy of the 2010–11 independent audit, please write to:
Ed Younglove
Treasurer
PSIA-AASI
133 South Van Gordon Street, Suite 200
Lakewood, CO 80228

Alternatively, you can send an e-mail to: treasurer@thesnowpros.org.



INCOME

Dues	$1,528,802
Catalog sales	633,462
Sponsorships	522,351
Publications	107,012
Courses/seminars	402,061
Interest/Misc.	178,085
Grant funds released from restriction	14,695
Total	**$3,386,468**



EXPENSE

Personnel	$1,377,105
Cost of goods sold	498,888
Education seminars/Projects	677,581
General/Administrative	482,752
Marketing/Meetings	134,719
Magazine	182,195
Depreciation/Misc.	209,202
Total	**$3,562,442**

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INTERSKI TEAM TIP 2011

Jonathan Selkowitz

‘Tanulj Meg Érezni’ (Hungarian for ‘Learn to Feel It’)

By **JENNIFER SIMPSON**

In a small conference room under the towering heights of St. Anton, Austria, representatives of the Hungarian Alpine Skiing Demonstration Team made the following assertion: Students learn by watching grossly visible movements in skiing, and seek to ski in a manner that mimics these movements.

The Hungarians further proposed that instructors, conversely, teach the invisible, tiny, or subtle movements that result in visible movement outcomes. In skiing, many of the invisible movements are subtle changes in muscle tension and body-part alignment used to manage the forces of skiing and maintain balance.

While reflecting on this Hungarian lecture from Interski, I was reminded of the challenge instructors face as we work to teach our students the subtle elements of skiing that are difficult to see, and often difficult to demonstrate or describe. To meet this challenge, it can be effective to create experiences where our students learn to *feel* the small movements we teach, or as our Hungarian colleagues would say, “tanulj meg érezni” (learn to feel it).

In principle, teaching small movements seems an easily accomplished goal. Yet these subtleties are not mastered solely through strength or fitness. They require the athlete to have heightened awareness of the position of his or her own body (proprioception), and awareness of the body’s position within space (kinesthetic awareness). Expert skiers must rely on kinesthetic awareness to actively adjust body movements to both anticipate and react to the mountain environment while maintaining balance over their base of support. For the true expert skier, the process of sensing and reacting to internal and external sensations is fluid and allows for the precision, grace, and agility that exemplify great skiing.

As instructors, coaches, and learners, we often encounter situations in which sensations and movements are not easily felt or understood in the mind or body of the learner. Is this because of an inherit limit in the learner’s kinesthetic or proprioceptive awareness? My literature review of this topic shows no definitive answer to this question. Experience and intuition, however, lead me to believe that body awareness, spacial awareness, and balance can be developed, just as we develop other aspects of our skiing.

Here are some suggestions for methods of improving kinesthetic and proprioceptive awareness.

USE NON-SKIING EXPERIENCES

Creatively draw on the student’s prior life experiences to find a situation in which the body may have felt or experienced a sensation similar to the sensations or movements you are working on with the student. For example, when focusing on how to use the muscles of the core and torso to manage the forces experienced throughout the shaping and finishing phases of the turn, consider the following non-skiing experience.

Imagine that you are riding in the middle of a car’s back seat, restrained only by a lap seat belt. The car is headed up a mountain switchback at a moderate speed. Instead of letting your upper body sway toward the outside of the turn, you engage some of the muscles of your core and torso to remain sitting upright. What did your body sense as the car drove around the corner? Which muscle groups did you use to remain upright? Can you imagine where in the ski turn you may feel similar sensations? Repeat the scenario in your mind, then head for the snow and try it in a turn!

NOT JUST SMOKE AND MIRRORS

If a student is practicing a static drill to learn a new movement, but is unable to sense when he or she is accurately facilitating a change, consider using a visual reference to promote bodily awareness.

Search for a large mirror, reflective surface, or a safe, backlit area where the student can watch his or her shadow or


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PROFESSIONAL SKI INSTRUCTORS OF AMERICA
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reflection while practicing the movement. Stand beside your student and practice the movement so the student can compare and contrast images. Consider physically moving the student's body to make the movement change (always ask permission first).

Once the student gains proficiency, alternate practicing with open and closed eyes until the learner begins to understand what the movement feels like. Practice this in both directions if possible. Take this on snow and practice in motion—with eyes open.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Sensations of muscle tension and relaxation are subjective and are affected by many factors, including speed, turn shape, body mass, and proportion. This makes it difficult to describe or tell someone what to feel during any given moment in skiing. Consider leading students through an experience where they can safely explore a range of sensation extremes while trying to become aware of new sensations.

For example, if you and the student are refining upper-body movements to enhance balance in medium-sized carved turns, ask the student to try the following extremes of hand and arm tension to find what works for them.

On safe learning terrain, have students ski through a separate series of turns—focusing on apex through completion—for each the following drills:

1. Tightly squeeze both pole grips,
2. Ski with both arms limp and loose,
3. Tightly squeeze only the outside ski pole grip, and
4. Tightly squeeze only the inside pole grip.

Compare and contrast each variation. Spend enough time in each scenario for the student to consider the impact on balance and the skis' performance in the snow. Work with the student to find the mix of movements and sensations that are personally meaningful, and helpful.

Physically move the student's body (after first asking permission) to reinforce desired movement.

Wendy Schrupp

CREATIVE CROSS-TRAINING

For the student who wishes to utilize non-skiing activities to develop his or her kinesthetic or proprioceptive awareness, cross-training with yoga or Pilates may be effective. While the practices of yoga and Pilates differ greatly, both are known to develop mind and body awareness. As with any other sports-training situation, finding the right coach to partner with, and practicing diligently will help the student achieve the desired results.

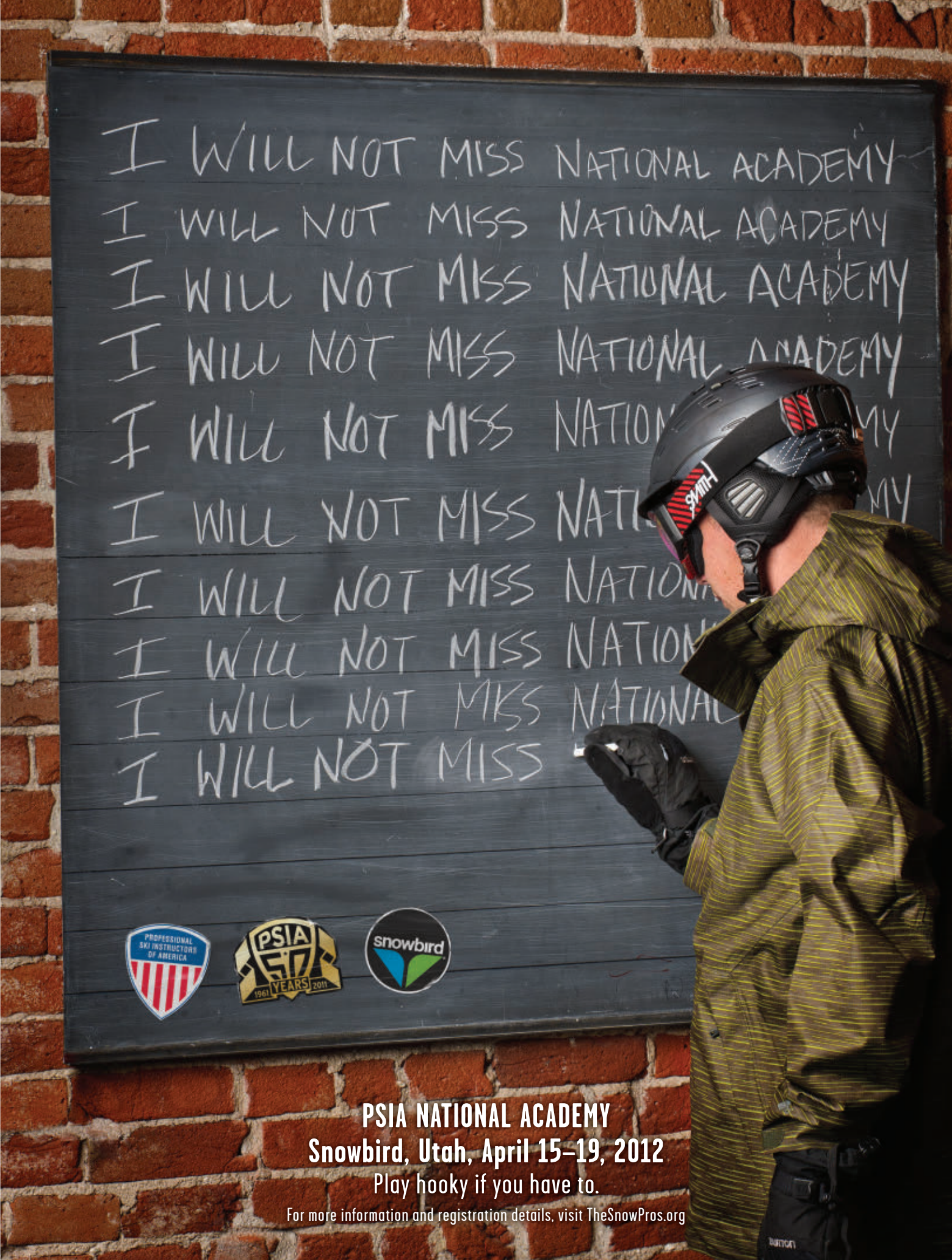
Working with a trusted athletic trainer or physical therapist can also be an effective way to cross-train for skiing. Advise your student to discuss his or her goals of enhancing body awareness, spatial awareness, or balance. Suggest or be open to activities that involve one-legged balance. Try doing these activities with the eyes closed, since limiting one body sense requires others to become more dominant. When first doing exercises with the eyes closed, limit fear and maximize safety by clearing the practice area of harmful items.

A SENSATIONAL APPROACH

These suggestions for expanding kinesthetic and proprioceptive awareness are intended to give you some basic ideas from which to work. Identifying the need for enhanced body awareness, spatial awareness, and balance is essential to developing skill in these areas. Recognize that anxiety and fear are both likely to inhibit the learner's ability to explore and consider new sensations. Creating a safe, non-judgmental, and open learning environment may encourage the student to explore non-dominant learning preferences.

As you teach students the subtle, tiny, and invisible aspects of skiing, challenge yourself one step further: take a cue from the Hungarians and teach them not only how to make a subtle movement, but also how to *feel* it. 32°

A member of the PSIA Alpine Team, Jennifer Simpson teaches skiing in Colorado at the Vail Snowsports School. She was an examiner for PSIA-AASI's Central Division from 2001 to 2011.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Bump Lessons
Made Easy . . . or at Least Easier

Text and photos by **JOSH MONDRY**

A goal of many intermediate skiers is to improve their bump skiing. Some think it's the ultimate measure of strong skiing. Some don't want to be embarrassed or left behind when they head into a mogul field with their friends. ¶ Some want to ski bumps more "stylishly" or effortlessly. And some want to conquer the fear and sense of danger that skiing over bumpy and often steep terrain seems to guarantee.

Whatever your guests' motivations may be, teaching them how to ski the bumps can be among the most satisfying endeavors if done well. Breaking down a lesson plan into techniques and tactics can help produce a rewarding experience for you and your guest.

TECHNIQUE

I think of techniques as the various positions we put our body into when we are skiing, and the various movement patterns we use—depending upon the terrain we are on, the snow conditions we are in, and how aggressively or conservatively we want to ski that terrain. Two important areas of technique include stance and movements. Stance, which is not static and changes as the terrain changes, can involve posture, hand position, and leg position. Movements can involve flexion and extension, leg rotation, upper/lower body separation, and pole use.

Stance

While a skier's stance can change from one moment to the next, depending on conditions and terrain, the basic foundational stance is an athletic position in which the person is balanced and slightly forward over the skis. For students familiar with other sports, you can equate it to a golfer's position at address, a tennis player's stance when preparing to return serve, or a basketball player's body position when covering an opponent on defense.

In all these cases the athletes are balanced on the center to front of their feet, their hands are out in front of their body, their legs are flexed to some degree at the ankles, knees, and waist, and they have a functional and ready "bounce" throughout their entire frame. Two quick and easy tricks to help your guest experience a forward stance are: 1) skiing backward "across" a very gentle slope, which almost always moves skiers to the front of their boots and ahead of their bindings, and 2) jumping straight up from a standing position on skis, which usually ends with the person landing in an athletic stance.

Movements

Ski/Snow Contact

Maintaining ski/snow contact—which represents one of the movement patterns that support good bump skiing—can be an important point of focus for intermediate skiers. It is largely a result of maintaining a forward stance or posture, as well as employing flexion and extension movements. Maintaining ski/snow contact can also be taught as a method of controlling speed when combined with the technique of slipping through the shaping phase of the turn. This presents a very concrete vision and focus for a guest and when achieved provides an instant feeling of added control.

One of the most common mistakes an intermediate skier makes when skiing into or up a bump is to sit back on the heels and lift the inside ski to force the turn. Once that ski is in the air it encourages a fuller body rotation and tends to speed up the skier as the skis "slip" out from underneath, propelling the skier forward with no friction to help slow him or her down.

Ultimately, the goal is to achieve greater control of speed and turn shape.

One cue that helps encourage ski/snow contact is to have the skier think about "diving" or pressing the ski tips down into the trough once the skier turns over the bump, even if it involves lifting the tail of the inside ski in the process. Have students stand on top of the mogul, open their ankles, shift

AN IMPRESSIVE VIEW.

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their entire frame forward, and ski down the backside while pressing their ski tips into the snow.

Thinking in terms of ankle, knee, and hip extension movements into the trough is another way to teach the concept. And the idea of "slipping" through the shaping phase—only possible by maintaining ski/snow contact—can be taught either on a groomer or by practicing slipping down the back side of individual moguls. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve greater control of speed and turn shape, both of which are made easier by learning to maintain ski/snow contact.

Pole Planting

Strong and active pole planting is a critical, but often underemphasized, aspect of bump skiing. It's useful to make sure your guest understands why proper pole planting technique is important—it promotes forward movement of the center of mass (CM), assists with speed control, aids balance, and provides a fulcrum around which to turn. Skillful skiers get in the habit of planting on every turn, even subtly, no matter how easy the terrain, so it becomes second nature when they enter the bumps or steeper terrain. It's also important to develop an efficient and effective plant, one that minimizes wasted motion and continues to move the skier's CM forward through each turn. If your guest's pole use seems to be lacking it might be helpful to practice on the groomers prior to entering the bumps.

Effective pole work in the bumps addresses two primary considerations: where to plant and how to plant. If you prefer, as I do, to teach intermediate skiers to ski *over* the bumps rather *around* them as a way to better control speed, it makes sense to teach your guest to plant somewhere on top of the mogul, and to extend the planting arm forward, down the hill, to keep the CM moving in the same direction. A strong, forward plant with conviction into the top of the mogul can also provide the braking action that's helpful in controlling speed (photo 1).

If your students are having trouble planting consistently, it may also be helpful to have them visualize the top of every bump as a dart board or archery target and have them try to plant as near to the bull's-eye as possible at each turn initiation. Pole planting serves many important purposes in the bumps and deserves adequate attention in every lesson.

Upper/Lower Body Separation

The ability to separate the upper and lower body in the bumps is crucial because the legs need to turn quickly to manage the terrain while the torso and head need to be focused down the hill, allowing the skier to visualize the next two to three turns. The skier whose torso follows the length of his or her skis across the hill will find it too difficult to react to the varied and

quickly changing terrain (photo 2).

An excellent way to promote upper/lower body separation is to work on pivot slips, which also help skiers develop balance, slipping and edging skills, and leg rotation skills, all of which are important when skiing the bumps. As with pole planting, it's helpful to practice pivot slips early in the lesson as well as throughout the day. Another good way to foster a quiet and forward-facing upper body, usually on a groomer to start, is to have the skier focus on a landmark far down the hill (a sign, a tree or a lift pole) while making his or her turns. This tends to keep the shoulders more square down the hill as opposed to turning with the skis across the hill in a full body rotation.

TACTICS

Tactics can be every bit as important as technique in teaching guests how to manage their way through a mogul field at a safe speed and in complete control (usually their primary goal.) An impactful and comforting way to start this discussion with students is to assure them that your number-one objective is to teach them how to ski the bumps at a comfortable, controlled speed that will reduce or eliminate their fear, stress

Photo 1

Photo 2

their bodies the least, and enable them to focus more on their technique and ski performance than on survival!

It often puts the guest at ease to emphasize that there is no right or

wrong way to ski the bumps and that some people like to ski them fast, and some slow. Some prefer to ski around the bumps through the troughs, while others opt to ski over the tops of the bumps. Again, you may find it easier to teach intermediate skiers to ski over the bumps rather than around them, to enhance their safety, control their speed, and minimize the physical impact on their bodies.

Use the Snow at the Top

It's useful to point out to your students—while standing at the top of a mogul field looking down—that most of the snow is piled up on top of the bumps and that the troughs look like the slickest and fastest areas in which to ski. From there you can describe how skiers can use the snow on top to their advantage by allowing it to help them slow down. First, skiing through the snow provides natural friction. Second, applying some amount of slipping through the initiation phase of the turn (as described earlier) is easier in piled-up snow than in slicker, more skied-off troughs.

You can demonstrate the braking effect of skiing through more snow by taking the guest from a groomer through the transitional edge into an ungroomed patch. And students can practice slipping through turns on the same groomer, or starting from the top of a mogul and slipping down the backside.

Use the Slope of the Mogul

A mogul can be viewed as a mini ski slope, and just as the ski hill can be used to control speed by skiing across or up the hill, so too can a mogul be used in this way. This concept ties in nicely with the idea of using gravity to control speed as opposed to friction. Try guiding your guests across the mogul field to experience the change in speed, decelerating as they ski "up" the mogul, and accelerating as they ski "down" the mogul.

Next, introduce the concept of using flexion and extension to control speed and maintain ski/snow contact. This is a nice progression from simply skiing across the mogul field. You may want to first practice some full-range-of-motion flexion and extension across a groomer, having skiers alternate full flexion and full extension of the ankles, knees, and hips. Then have students ski back across the mogul field, but this time flex heavily into and up the mogul, coming to a near stop on top, while extending out of and down the other side to regain some speed (photos 3, 4).

The power of flexing to "absorb" speed and impact can be compared to the way a car's shock absorbers work when driving over a bump. Skiers are often amazed at how powerful this one move can be in quickly reducing speed.

Pivot on Top of the Mogul

Once your students have become comfortable skiing up and across a mogul to control speed, you can show them how easy it can be to initiate their turn from


Photo 3


Photo 4

A mogul can be viewed as a mini ski slope, and just as the ski hill can be used to control speed by skiing across or up the hill, so too can a mogul be used in this way.

the top of the mogul by "pivoting" at the point of least resistance. When we are positioned on top of the bump with our ski tips and tails hanging off each side of the bump, speed in check, there is a moment of limited friction that allows for easier leg rotation (photo 5).

This concept can be demonstrated by first asking your guests to try rotating their legs (twisting their skis) while standing on flat ground. Then have them position themselves on top of a mogul so their ski tips and tails are dangling off the edges, and try again. The difference can be stark.

ONE BUMP AT A TIME

Each of these tactics individually can serve as a powerful method of controlling speed or facilitating turns in the bumps—and done in any combination work even better. One helpful thought is that one of the keys to controlling speed in the bumps is to control it right at the bump, one bump at a time. If your students' speed is under control at the moment they are ready to turn their skis over the bump and down into the trough, they will be able to more confidently point their bodies and ski tips down the hill and guide them down the backside of the mogul, ready for the next bump in line.

One last strategy you may find helpful in teaching bumps to intermediate skiers is something I like to call "one bump at a time." Find a mogul field that is adjacent to a groomed run to offer your students a safe "out" if they find themselves having second thoughts about working in the moguls. You want them to have a sense of safety and confidence and minimize their trepidation (photo 6).

Practice some of the techniques and tactics you will be teaching where the bump run meets the groomed run, and work on one bump at a time where the skier can ski into the bump run but "exit" onto the groomer. This is not only a safe and gradual way for students to learn in the bumps, but it is easier for them to "feel" the bump and their movements up, over, and around it when they know they only have one bump to manage and will end up on flat terrain.

Once your guests have demonstrated a certain level of progress and proficiency (and seem eager to take the next step), try hitting two bumps at a time

Photo 5

Photo 6

and stop, and then three, and then four, and so on. Before you know it, they are skiing seamlessly down the hill in control and with reduced anxiety!

Sometimes, as the lesson progresses and your students' confidence builds, they may begin to speed up and try to ski the bumps more aggressively, sometimes with success and sometimes not. If they seem to be trying to ski too fast or experiencing a loss of control, it always helps to take them back to the starting point of skiing one, two, or a handful of bumps at a time and then stopping in order to slow everything down.

Each of these tactics individually can act as a powerful method of controlling speed or facilitating turns in the bumps—and done in any combination work even better.

BUMP IT UP!

As I like to tell my guests, there are many different ways to ski the bumps, and I know there are many different ways to teach them as well. I have found a method that seems to work well for me, and has rarely failed to help willing and eager skiers quickly improve their bump skiing, reduce their fear, and have a ball doing it. I hope it does the same for you and your mogul-minded students. 32°

Josh Mondry has been teaching skiing in Aspen, Colorado, for seven seasons. He has completed most of his Level III certification and hopes to complete the rest this season. Mondry enjoys teaching all levels of skiers and finds teaching bumps to intermediate skiers particularly rewarding.

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INTERSKI TEAM TIP 2011

Jonathan Selkowitz

Stepping Back in Time: A Contrast in Tele Tactics

By **ROSS MATLOCK**

The pressure and excitement for Interski was running high for the nords. Eight years had passed since our presentations at the 2003 Interski Congress in Switzerland. ¶ We were fueled and ready. We were proud to show the rest of the world what we had to offer and to learn, to ski, and mix it up with our fellow pinheads.

We knew there would be differences in teaching and technical approaches between nations and the opportunity to compare and contrast—for me the most vivid example can be found in comparing Norway's approach to telemark with ours.

As we prepared for Interski our team discussions were intense; we were driven to hit it out of the park. What could we present to the rest of the world that would show the best of what we do? As the discussion came to a head, we decided that our student-centered approach to teaching great lessons and clinics would be the best focus for our presentation. There was no question that it had to be a little cutting edge. With the development of rockered skis and their specific application to telemark skiing, it seemed an obvious fit that we should connect the two. Teaching to technology was our Interski topic.

Rocker technology presents great advantages for tele skiers. Skiing on these skis requires us to adjust our skill blend of rotary, edging, pressure control, and lead-change movements. In past years we have seen this when sidecut became the dominant technology and our focus in skill blending was heavily weighted toward edging. Rockered skis allow a more balanced blend of skills, and enhance the ability to adjust the skill blend when the skiing situation (bumps, hardpack) and or the snow conditions change. By allowing the blend to change—depending on the situation, ski type, and snow conditions—we have many more options, and the more options available to a skier the better.

Due to language differences we had to keep our presentation simple. Rather than lecturing our presentation, we set out to create a learning environment right from the start. Using our student-centered approach helped me balance the demands of presenting both teaching methodology and technical concepts and keep things simple. We skied through the four skills of rotary movements, edging movements, pressure control movements, and lead-change movements. By skiing and exploring different terrain we were able to look at what skills we would focus on, given the situation we were in, and how we would tailor both the technical content and delivery of the lesson to the needs and style of each student.

It was obvious during our presentation that the concept of rockered technology delivering real benefits was a new idea, and there were many discussions around the benefits of rockered skis. Session participants were skiing on everything from short-shape skis to my fat rockered skis. It was great to know we were fueling thought and discussion within other telemark nations. (*For more about technical elements of tele and rocker see* "Tele Bindings and Rocker: Complimentary Designs" *in the Spring 2011 edition of* 32 Degrees —*Ed.*)

NORWAY'S DAY

The team from Norway was scheduled to deliver its presentations the day before ours. We knew they would be a tough act to follow and I was excited to attend

Cesar Piotto

Comparing tactics and techniques is what Interski is all about.

their presentation. The indoor lecture (before the on-snow presentations) gave us the outline as to what was going to be presented. The technical structure for the Norwegian telemark workshop focused on these four points:

- **Dynamic position and balance.** Focus on the position, which is constantly moving in all directions. Skiers are seeking a position that is optimal to cope with any given situation.
- **Good turn transition.** Focus on unweighting the inner ski to get a good transition between turns and to gain early control of the new turn.
- **Orientation/Projection.** Focus on orientation and projection to get a good transition between turns and to be able to gain early control of the new turn.
- **Step forward exchange.** Have a stable dynamic position the fall line; in this way skiers can attack the turn. It's one of the most important things to enable us to get the early edge/power and steer into the turn.

As I walked to the on-snow presentation I thought about the Norwegian technical structure. Its focus on the turn transition and the stepping-forward exchange seemed very on-piste oriented. My focus would be to learn more about their approach and how their system balanced on-piste and off-piste skills. In particular I wanted to learn more about their focus on "good turn transition" and "stepping-forward exchange."

The Norwegians started their on-snow presentation with some strong statements from their workshop handouts:

"The carving ski is one of the best things that has happened for us to be able to master skiing. The carving ski has not contributed as much to dynamics as the understanding of dynamics."

"NTN Binding (New Telemark Norm) is the newest and most groundbreaking thing that has happened to telemark skiing for many years. It gives us the possibilities to extend telemark skiing more toward the alpine discipline."

The large group then proceeded to be

led through the Norwegian progression from beginning to end. It seems that all beginner telemark skiers in Norway get plugged into this progression and it's very linear by nature:

- Start by making alpine turns
- Distribute the weight more towards the balls of the feet
- Lead change by falling forward, stepping forward
- Use up and down movements to assist with the lead change
- Have constant forward motion
- As on stairs, step over and forward (see photo on page 107)
- "Open the door" to start turning, using whole body rotation
- Fall into the turn and look where you want to go

The Norwegian on-snow workshop did not go off-piste and participants remained on blue terrain for the session. The majority of the attendants were on short skinny skis and stiff boots while fellow Nordic Team member Charlie MacArthur and I showed up on Rossignol S3 rockered skis. The occasional sideways glance at our feet from other participants was dispelled when MacArthur tipped them on edge and railed turns.

With regard to "good turn transitions" the Norwegians unweight the inner ski in order to thrust it forward during the transition. In the U.S. we would put this into the lead-change skill area. The Scandinavian's approach is essentially pushing the rear ski forward as your lead change move. It's an appropriate move on hardpack and medium- to longer-radius turns, and is taught to telemark racers.

The "stepping-forward exchange" refers to what happens after the lead change, where the skier steps forward onto the new front ski. It isn't a great move in soft snow but if your focus is to carve turns on groomed terrain this move makes total sense. It allows you to stand against the forces created in the turn on

The Norwegians spell out their progression as PSIA Nordic Team member Charlie MacArthur soaks it in.

Cesar Piotto

Cesar Piotto

The Norwegians spell out their progression as PSIA Nordic Team member Charlie MacArthur soaks it in.

the mechanically stronger front leg. The Norwegians were railing awesome turns and clearly have a passion for it.

The next day MacArthur and I stood at the bottom of a steep powder run in the Rendl area of St. Anton. We were wrapping up our workshops and were observing our group as they descended through the chopped powder. Representatives from many nations skied down to meet us and we stood and watched as the Norwegian delegates star-fish-turned the entire slope.

With snow packed into the inside of his goggles, one Norwegian commented, "We don't ski much of that stuff."

Before Interski began I wondered what if the country you lived in had limited snow conditions and terrain? Would this affect how you skied and looked at skiing? What if it didn't snow much and the terrain wasn't that challenging? Would you worry about skiing or teaching powder lessons? After Norway's presentations and seeing a Norwegian colleague tumbling through the powder the answer was obvious. 32°

Ross Matlock is a two-term member of the PSIA Nordic Team and has launched a children's telemark program at Crested Butte Ski School, where he instructs.

Web Extra

For more information on Interski 2011, including overviews on the teaching methodology of other nations, log on to TheSnowPros.org and check out the "Web Extras" for *32 Degrees* and the Interski 2011 section of The PSIA-AASI Community.

INTERSKI TEAM TIP 2011

Jonathan Selkowitz

The Rhyme and Reason of Sweden's New Teaching Model

By **GREGG DAVIS**

We were riding up the gondola at St. Anton, Austria, a small group of seven led by Kristofer Olsson, a member of Sweden's snowboarding delegation at the 2011 Interski. "In Sweden we've been working with combining three concepts to create a really fun learning environment that meets everyone's goals, no matter what they are," he said.

We were on our way to ride the terrain park and get some insights into some of Sweden's new snowsports teaching ideas.

"There's no problem motivating someone who already has motivations coming from inside them," said Olsson. "From a teacher's or clinic leader's perspective, simple is better . . . use someone's internal goals to direct the lesson or clinic topics and activities . . . use that to make them a 'snowboarder' right away . . . part of the club, feeling like they're on the inside," he said.

As we were strapping in at the top, Olsson asked us three questions. Each of us used the next chairlift ride to think about and answer the questions for ourselves. We did a couple runs, shared our answers, and discussed how the questions relate to the three-part model of teaching they've been working on—a model known as "Will, Skill, Hill."

What are your dreams, or what do you dream about in snowboarding?

The first question corresponds to the first of those three words in the teaching model: Will. What is your will, or desire, in this learning situation? As instructors, if we can get our students thinking and sharing ideas around the topic of their own will, goals, and desires in snowboarding, we'll come much closer to actually meeting their goals easily. And we can use that information to direct our lesson topics.

What are your strengths in snowboarding?

The second question has to do with what students bring to the table in terms of their already-learned skills. It refers to the second word in the model: Hill. Finding out what our students already know how to do can direct our decisions as instructors about what drills, exercises, and riding activities to focus on. We're building on what the student knows to make connections we wouldn't be able to make without knowing that information about them.

What can you bring to this workshop to contribute?

This question relates to Skill in the model and gets more specific. In other words, what are the new movements and feelings riders will be experiencing and learning to perform? For students, considering and thinking about the new skills that they're trying to learn gives them a more concrete goal, and helps them to get there.

Olsson connected the dots on the topic when we reached the top of the terrain park. He set up a specific task—to choose any three features, and do any three tricks we wanted. But then he asked us three questions again:

1. What do you want to try?
2. What will you focus on to accomplish that?
3. What will it feel like to do it perfectly, just like you imagine it?

The same three parts of the model are present in these three questions posed to a group of students. Olsson established some internal goals for us by asking us to think of some specific things we wanted to do. That's our Will. Then he brought out some of our already-learned ideas relating to that goal. We had to try to think of how we would accomplish it, without getting direction from the instructor yet. That's the Hill. And by imagining what it will feel like to do it perfectly we're already exploring Skill, feeling the successful accomplishment before it actually happens.

We took our run through the park, met at the top, and rated our current level of Will, and our level of Skill, from one to 10. Olsson said our level of Will could be

defined as "how stoked we are." Our level of Skill could be defined as "how well we felt we did at our goal."

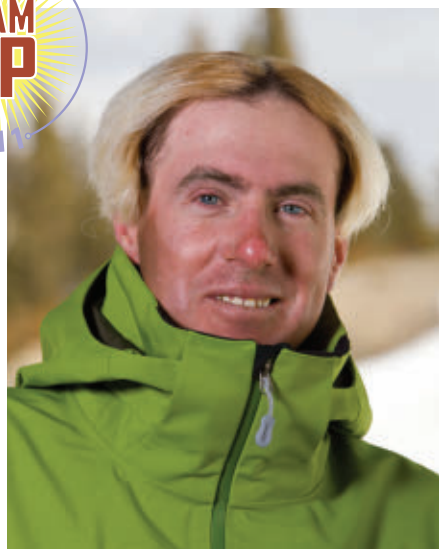
This whole process led to a self-made high-energy dynamic. The session was going! As the leader of the group, Olsson was able to get us working on appropriate skills without having to direct our activities specifically. He was a facilitator, not just a teacher.

Olsson summarized the ideas and results in the model like this, "Your will can be high when you choose it yourself. Then, if it's a new skill you're trying to learn, it can be a little lower but you can still be happy with it." By letting the learning experience unfold in this way, you'll be encouraging the session-energy to develop, making students real and active participants in their own learning, and having a better time yourself as a more creative instructor. 32°

A member of the AASI Snowboard Team since 2000, Gregg Davis has been an instructor at Colorado's Breckenridge Ski and Ride School for the past 15 years.

Cesar Piotto

INTERSKI TEAM TIP 2011



Jonathan Selkowitz

Explore, Play… And Get Out of the Way!

By **DAVID A. OLIVER**

We all have our toolbox filled with fix-it progressions and we all can spin stories of how this tool worked or how that tool changed the lesson. After 20-plus years of teaching skiing to kids I would like to think my toolbox is overflowing for every situation. ¶ Sometimes the tools and the tech take over, and we lose touch with our audience—the kids. But tools are just tools. What happens when our tool box just isn't enough?

Cesar Piotto

The author prepares to plunge a group of Austrian kids into exploration of the mountain.

Never was this more apparent than in a kid's group lesson I taught at Interski. I was assigned a group of nine children—ages 10 to 18 years old—with skiing abilities from intermediate to racer. This was a group of local Austrian kids that I was to teach on unfamiliar terrain, while providing them with a lesson that was the best the U.S. could offer. This lesson completely took me outside of my comfort zone as I realized the standard tools just wouldn't cut it.

What next? How about mechanics? Instructors always love fixing the base mechanics. However, wanting to represent the U.S. as well as I knew how, I realized that getting technical is something *anyone* can do.

I needed to get out of my own way and remember *who* was important. This situation was not about me or my skills. I wasn't here to be scored or examined. I was here for this group of kids. They didn't care who I was or where I was from. They had just one question on their mind: Is this going to be fun or not? It was time to go back to the basics of kid's instruction. Fun. Let the kids have some fun and see where it takes us.

By generating a scenario where we became explorers of our environment, we found a common ground. Using the exploration of terrain and discovering teachable moments, we bonded. We explored parts of the mountain and movement patterns that we had never seen or done. From falling leafs and pivot

Let the kids have some fun and see where it takes us.

slips to switch skiing and Polish donuts, to stem christies and tail press slow-dog-noodles. We played with so many different tricks and games that I still can't remember all the things we did. I was having so much fun I forgot to write all my notes down.

Taking the kids to the mountain to explore and giving them a chance to steer the lesson—not only in content but location—put the group in the driver's seat. Sure I was a facilitator of the content, but even *I* didn't know what was going to happen. I had a very rough, underlying idea of a rotary focus for the day, but I had no specific location or timetable for learning. Exploration of the concepts on the mountain was my lead for the day. It soon became clear that no one had ever done this type of teaching with these kids. Feedback like "You're not a ski instructor, you're way too cool to be a ski instructor!" and "Yeah you're more like a friend than an instructor," meant that, in their eyes, we had done more than take a ski lesson.

After an exhausting day of mountain exploration and playing with tricks, I posed a question to the group, "Did we learn anything today?" What came out was unexpected.

They enjoyed learning without getting taught with the standard drills or follow-the-leader format. And, most importantly, they said, "You taught us by not teaching us as if we were in a classroom."

It's simple and yet so profound.

If I had gone with my first instincts and tools that we all have as instructors, this day would have turned out very differently. I learned that sometimes instructors need to get out of our own way, and become more involved in the fun that is evolving in front of us. Be a partner in the lesson, not the dictator. We are not in a classroom, we are in the mountains, yet because of our depth of knowledge or our egotistical superiority complex we sometimes forget to get on the same level of our students. We were all kids at one time. If we can tune into what made us laugh or smile back in grade school, we will find that the kids we teach enjoy the same types of things.

After all, it's about *their* experience, not ours. And the more fun they find on the mountain means that we will have turned the kids on to a sport that they can be passionate about for life. The next time you are about to reach into your toolbox for some tricks, just close it—and open your eyes to fun. 32°

David A. Oliver and his tool box can be found in the Breckenridge Ski & Ride School's Village Kids location, or generally exploring the resorts of the U.S. and beyond as a member of the PSIA Alpine Team.

Real Fun, Real Results: New Techniques for Teaching Kids

By **EUGENE BUCHANAN**

If you see a bunch of kids at Sugarbush laying on their backs and windshield-wipering their skis back and forth, don't assume it's a mass tantrum. It's just the children's ski school's latest way to make skiing fun while imparting skills. ¶ "We had one four-year old who skipped the wedge completely," Sugarbush Blazers Program Supervisor Mickey Stone said in describing where the exercise can lead. "He went straight from that right into parallel turns."

Sugarbush's "whirlybirds" underscore a growing movement in children's instruction, one that uses fun to teach concrete skills with far-reaching applications. "With these and other techniques, you can get them two-footed steering right away," Stone said. "It's all about getting them to utilize a ski and be in balance."

Indeed, with up to 55 percent of resorts' ski school profits coming from children ages 12 and under, teaching

Just another fun-filled day of kid's instruction at Vermont's Sugarbush Resort.

Sandy Macys/Sugarbush Resort

Sherri Harkin

Today's kids get a more exciting mountain environment, complete with props.

kids has never been more important—and never with such an onus on being the linchpin in how the sport grows.

"Children's instruction is a huge priority for resorts," said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. "Kids represent the sport's future, and the emphasis on them enjoying themselves is huge. We want to support these programs with the right education and education format."

To that end, in 2008 PSIA-AASI revised its popular *Children's Instruction Manual* to provide even more support at the on-snow level. As well as offering new techniques, the book also breaks down information into easy-to-follow components designed to lead to measurable results. "It's been received really well," Saline said, adding that the newer format makes it far easier to digest updated information as well.

An even more recent testament to PSIA-AASI's increased focus on children's instruction is last year's *Children's Alpine Teaching Handbook*, published in conjunction with the ski and snowboard schools at Vail and Beaver Creek. The book addresses all levels of skiing and snowboarding for kids, and includes everything from introductory information to a breakdown of skills, games, and exercises. It also includes an element of freestyle at every level of instruction. Many instructors do that naturally, said Saline, but PSIA-AASI now vigorously promotes the fact that freestyle is good for a child's skills and should be promoted from the beginning.

Examples of techniques the handbook endorses on the alpine side include having kids ski backwards, practice flat-spin 360s, and work on hops and jump turns. Even Stone's whirlybirds fit this mold. "All of it has an application," Saline said. "We're showing instructors how these skills transfer to overall skiing skills."

PSIA-AASI is also in the process of creating a new snowboarding handbook, which will include an emphasis on the freestyle component as well—especially because snowboarders gravitate toward freestyle-type movements even earlier than skiers do, Saline said.

THE POWER OF PLAY

Central Division children's educator Ned Pinske of the Otto Hollaus Ski & Ride School, which annually tours three resorts in Minnesota, puts components of freestyle and play into all of his snowsports school's lessons, precisely because he thinks it speeds retention. "Kids learn through play," said Pinske, who first gained his inspiration from the book *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul* by Stuart Brown.

Pinske said that the biggest takeaway was that, "Through play, kids pick up such skills as critical thinking and problem solving—skills that they need in everyday life."

The overall theme at Pinske's school is mastering through play. "The idea is to come up with a play activity that teaches a specific skill," he said. "That way, the kids don't know that they're learning . . . they think they're just playing."

For instance, he'll have kids go on a "jump hunt," which teaches fore and aft balance, or imagine sliding their skis through a box filled with their favorite color of paint. Then he says he only wants to see two lines of that color wherever they ski. "It's very effective," he said of how the act of visualization transfers to the snow. "It teaches them to both edge and feel the bottom of their skis."

Pinske also uses terrain features to keep lessons fun and practical, including skiing along the sidewall of a halfpipe to impart edging skills, and sliding onto boxes to teach fore/aft balance. "Park and pipe and freestyle is what turns them on, and it's also play," he added. "And it can be a great teaching tool."

GETTING AN EDGE FROM EQUIPMENT

New equipment designs have also helped shape today's lessons. To address more widths, profiles, and sidecuts in kids' lines, instructors are introducing skills such as edging earlier in the process than ever. "Today's equipment makes people learn faster and easier," said Sugarbush's Stone, citing increased ski width and sidecut as leading factors. "In the old days kids could be in a wedge for two to three years. Now, with new shapes and new teaching technologies, many of them pass right through the wedge phase."

More responsive skis, added Saline, spell more immediate feedback. "Today's skis react a lot quicker," he said. "Kids feel what they can do a lot easier than they could before."

The same holds true for kids snowboard equipment and instruction, where new designs have penetrated even faster than they have in the ski industry. "New convex shapes mean instructors have to teach how to best use those designs," Saline said. "The slightest weight shift now gets a board to react dramatically."

Gone are the days when instructors had to walk around holding students' hands to get them to turn. Kids are now doing more of the work on their own.

PROCLIVITY FOR ACTIVITIES

Activities are also appearing more in kids' lessons, bringing with them an increased use of props such as cones, archways, kids' trails and even Hula Hoops. Many resorts are also building specific kid-teaching areas, with activities built in. Beaver Creek

has developed its Buckaroo Bowl, with its rollers, banks, and even a kid's race course, specifically with kids instruction in mind. "It's using terrain sculpted to development movement patterns," Saline said.

Instructors are introducing edging skills earlier than ever, thanks to advances in equipment.

Sherri Harkin

Jim Kercher, the vice president of ski and snowboard operations for Vail Resorts—who was instrumental in the kids-area design—added: "It is terrain designed specifically to promote learning, including pressure and edge control, turning, positioning on skis, and fore/aft balance, with the ultimate goal of learning correct habitual movements. It's designed to create a better 'feel' on skis."

The resort's children's lessons are also themed for fun. "Kids keep coming back because they want to participate in the next theme day," said Stacey Gerrish, Beaver Creek training manager and co-author of PSIA-AASI's *Children's Instruction Manual*. "Morning lessons are geared toward learning the necessary skills to participate, and the events are arranged so a variety of ability levels can participate."

THE FUNDAMENTAL CORE

Play, fun, and activities might be changing the instruction game, but at the core still lie the fundamentals. "Good instruction

is good instruction," said Kim Petram, technical team member and a clinic leader for PSIA-AASI's Northwest Division. "It should be based on the fundamental skills of efficient skiing or riding.

"Sometimes children's instructors get caught up in the mystique that you have to know a lot of games and be creative," she added. "But games are a sidebar tool to help incorporate learning and movement skills based upon age and cognitive function. Kids' teaching progressions should be skilled-based—balance, pressure, rotary, and edging should be the foundation of any movement pattern the instructor is trying to address. New designs don't change the fundamental movement patterns that still need to be taught."

She added that you can't discount the learning partnership. If a lesson is going south, it can usually be traced back to a missed student profile assessment, with the subsequent instructor behavior off target. Even Stone, with his whirlybirds, recognizes this. "Instructors need to connect with their kids and learn their style and how they each best learn," he said.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU LEARNED

A lot of today's revamped interest in kids' instruction revolves around new ideas coming to the forefront about how people learn. While PSIA-AASI has addressed this with its CAP model (emphasizing cognitive, affective, and physical development), Stone said that adults can also learn a lot from this approach themselves.

"A lot of higher-educated parents want to know what's going on," he said. "And a lot of this theory applies to them as well."

Pinske said that any time an instructor can help parents understand that skiing or riding can be both a lifelong and family sport, it's good for skiing and snowboarding overall. He said that if they see that their kids are both learning and having fun, they'll be back for more.

For everyone, the focus on fun includes being able to demonstrate measurable results as well.

"We're trying to bring all these ideas out to our instructors so they have the newest tools to use when teaching kids," said Saline. "At the end of the day, parents are going to ask what their kids learned. And we want the kids to be able to answer that question instead of the instructor." 32°

A former reporter for the Denver Business Journal and member of New York's Explorer Club, Eugene Buchanan has a wide-ranging media career, from working the Olympics for NBC to writing for ESPN.com.

He is also a long-time writer for such publications as Outside, Men's Journal, Skiing, Powder, *and other magazines. His second book,* Outdoor Parents, Outdoor Kids *is available at www.recreatingwithkids.com.*

For more insights on teaching children, including tips for riding chairlifts and allaying fears, log on to TheSnowPros.org and check out the "Web Extras" for *32 Degrees*.

COUNTER ROTATION

WHICH COMES FIRST, THE WEDGE OR PARALLEL SKIS?

Sherri Harkin

Getting first-time skiers, regardless of age or agility, to ease into turning a ski is often an instructor's dilemma. So this issue's Counter-Rotation query is: "Pizza or french fries for new skiers?"

"When I instruct beginners I seldom talk about edge or direct-to-parallel. I use boot drills and one-ski exercises to ensure my students are able to direct their ski tips by turning their legs in their hip sockets. When it is time to make the first turn, I simply tell them to guide both ski tips where they want to go.

Some students don't direct enough pressure to the new outside ski, while flattening the inside ski, so the inside ski turns more slowly and a wedge is formed. Other students are able to make these movements and guide both ski tips in parallel. Whatever the outcome, I celebrate their first turns! As the lesson continues, I casually identify the differences, explain the terminology, use various activities to develop their new skills, and help each student set their own goals for improvement."

— Kathy Brennan, Alpine III, Children's Specialist 2
Waterville Valley, New Hampshire

"Both. As instructors, we assess our student's goals, abilities (skiing and non-skiing), equipment, and learning environment and then make customized decisions about what learning activities are most appropriate for each situation. By having both wedge and direct parallel movement options to select from, the instructor has more tools and options to help the guest achieve his or her skiing goals."

— Jennifer Simpson, Alpine III, Children's Specialist 2, PSIA Alpine Team Member, Vail Ski & Snowboard School, Colorado

"I'm sure the variables with terrain, equipment, and fear will be well covered here. But if you make the right decisions it really doesn't matter because in a couple of days you won't be able to tell the 'pizza' guy from the 'french fry' guy. Whichever way you choose, new skiers need to learn to look where they are going and stand like athletes. They need to be able to shift their balance from outside ski to outside ski. And they need to be able to turn their feet and legs—as well as tip their skis—to shape a round turn."

— Rob Sogard, Alpine III, PSIA Alpine Team Coach, Snowbird, Utah

"If my student is a well-balanced individual with crossover skills from another sport I may go direct-to-parallel. If they have been flying the sofa/desk a bit more frequently I likely will introduce the wedge, but only after performing a paddle turn to a stop. I want them to realize that getting the skis across the fall line is a far more effective and comfortable way of controlling speed. I do introduce the wedge to all my students so they can stop in the lift line without taking others out."

— Rick Lyons, Alpine III, Alpine Examiner, Northwest Division Tech Team, Mt. Hood Meadows, Oregon

Tell us what *you* think in The PSIA- AASI Community at TheSnowPros.org.

MAGAZINE INDEX

This index is a partial listing of articles published in *32 Degrees* in the past two years. PSIA-AASI members may access full digital editions of each issue since the magazine's launch in fall 2008 at www.TheSnowPros.org.

Give the Edge to *Brilliant Skiing, Every Day*

By Mark Aiken

144 pages; Available at edgechange.com/bro

People often ask Weems Westfeldt about the *one* thing they should work on in their skiing. Under his breath, his muttered answer is "Work on finding more than one thing to work on."

However, as a professional, he knows he can't say that out loud. And he does have an out-loud answer, and he has put pen to paper in an attempt to explain it. The new and revised edition of *Brilliant Skiing, Every Day* addresses his answer: "Work on making a perfect edge change."

In the preface of *Brilliant Skiing, Every Day*, Westfeldt, a Rocky Mountain Division examiner from Aspen, describes the work as "a short book with a lot of stuff in it." It's true. The book covers Westfeldt's philosophies regarding learning sports in general, his ideas about teaching, learning, and self-teaching, and a collection of his best pointers and tips—things you can try out on the hill.

The book is a worthwhile read—particularly if you are a passionate ski instructor or looking to re-invigorate your teaching. Westfeldt writes that the book is for the consumption of all sports people and all skiers. Even the beginners and non-skiers, he says, will find it useful in combination with lessons. "Take no less than three full days of class lessons," he writes to the newbies. While we appreciate the plug, the reality is that the majority of Westfeldt's readers will probably be professional instructors and a handful of the most ardent students—you know, the one or two who simply soak up every tip, article, and reference you give them. Other than them, who else will cuddle up with 144 pages about the perfect edge change?

Westfeldt's passion for skiing, mountains, and playing outdoors shines through on every page of *Brilliant Skiing, Every Day*. And sharing this passion is equally enthralling to him—this much is clear. I recommend actually trying Westfeldt's pointers and approaches on the hill; many helped me—and they'll also help our students. "I've had many days when I've skied very badly," Westfeldt writes. "However, I've *never* had a bad day on skis."

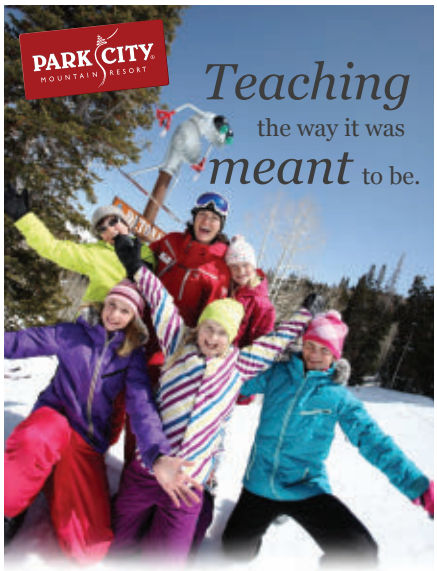
Never a bad day? How is this possible? He attributes it to his attention to a concept that he, along with co-developers Ahmed Yehia and Peter Koestenbaum, Ph.D, has called the Sports Diamond. The Diamond is an approach to learning and executing movements in sports, whereby each corner represents a specific and different perspective. Westfeldt dedicates much of the book to explaining this concept. The Diamond approach certainly contains takeaways for instructors reading to keep their lessons fresh, or those whose students are stuck or whose skiing has plateaued. Westfeldt advocates moving from point to point on the Diamond in order to keep students (and ourselves) moving forward.

While the Sports Diamond is a central theme in the book, there is one problem. I assume that he is legally obligated to attach the little trademark symbol to every occurrence of the words "Sports Diamond." In the six-page Chapter 2, for example, readers are reminded nine times that Sports Diamond is trademarked. In Chapter 3, we see "™" 11 times. I can't fault Westfeldt for encouraging readers to come out to Aspen and take a lesson with him to explore the Diamond (that's what ski instructors do—we peddle lessons!). But the trademark notations over every page are distracting; is this an infomercial or a book on skiing?

Get past the slew of trademark symbols, however, and the book is full of gems—personal anecdotes, technical pointers to try on the snow (with students or in our own skiing), and brief discussions about the philosophy of learning and self-coaching from a lifelong ski instructor and lover of mountains and snow. Like the good instructor he is, Westfeldt pulls examples from other sports (tennis, mountain biking, and snowboarding, among others), guitar playing, and business. And weaved throughout are classic Westfeldt one-liners and humorous asides that make the book very readable.

Most snowsports professionals—like Weems Westfeldt—do what they do out of their passion and love for snowsports, snowsports culture, and the outdoors. Too many skiing manuals and books would make the perfect edge change tedious and dull. Westfeldt is neither tedious nor dull, and his *Brilliant Skiing, Every Day* reads the way a book about learning, and improving, one's skiing ought to read. 32°

Mark Aiken holds numerous PSIA-AASI certifications (Alpine III, Children's Specialist 2, Snowboard I, and Telemark I) and is a member of the Advanced Children's Educator Team in PSIA-AASI's Eastern Division. When he's not on the slopes, he is either at his writing desk (his work has appeared in the New York Times, EatingWell, *and* Frommer's Budget Travel*) or training for his next marathon.*



WINTER 2012 AD INDEX

Through the lens

Young ripper Izzy Gillis enjoys her run as she competes in the J5/J4 division at Stratton Mountain Ski Resort in Vermont. You go, Grrl! Photo by Nancy Cook

INQUIRING MINDS

In our Fall 2011 edition we asked members what their personal strategy was to keep anxiety at bay as they prep for or participate in exams. Mike J. Reil, a PSIA-AASI-certified Telemark III, Alpine III, and Snowboard ll instructor at Sunburst Ski Area at Kewaskum, Wisconsin, shared his thoughts on relaxing as you face upcoming exams.

"Just go into it as prepped as you can be. If you make it, you make it. If you fail the exam, you know what to work on next time. It's just a learning experience if you do fail one, and you'll drive yourself nuts if you feel like you *have* to pass, you know?" Reil said. He believes that flopping an exam shouldn't be viewed as a failure. "If I go away from a clinic with one 'aha' moment, then it has been a good weekend."

Our next "Inquiring Minds" question is:

You rub elbows with resort or nordic center guests every day. How do you help them understand the value of taking lessons (especially lessons with you)?

Send your submissions to 32Degrees@thesnowpros.org, with "Last Chair" in the subject line. If your contributions show up on this page in a future issue you'll win a $25 gift certificate to the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*.

Bring it on!

Are we yakking about lame NFL insights, somebody's experience scouting for the NBA (fantasy league), or the tears your brother-in-law is still dabbing because his fave MLS club froze in the first playoff bracket? No. As Ullr is our witness!

We're way above those namby-pamby pastimes. We're talking about the snow skills that saved royalty, the activity that seemingly lets us float through feathers, the sport that keeps us grounded and defying gravity, the skills we help clients gain—along with the skills they teach us. That's what we're talkin' about! And we want to hear your thoughts about snowsports, and about the people you've supported—and those who've supported you. Send us an anecdote or photo (high-resolution, 300 dpi please) that perfectly captures the snowsports or teaching experience.

BORN TO LOSE. LIVE TO WIN. – MOTÖRHEAD

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Visit the Member Center at TheSnowPros.org to access your Pro offer.

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January is SKI & SNOWBOARD MONTH

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