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# 32 DEGREES

THE JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONAL SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTION | SPRING 2012



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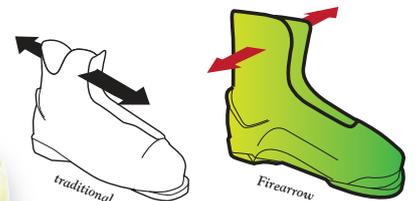
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**COVER SHOT:**  
AASI Snowboard Team Member Eric Rolls airs it out at Colorado's Winter Park Resort. Photo by Brian W. Robb.

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 Pete Wurster, owner of Unity Snowboards, becoming one with his creation. Gore Range, Colorado. JEFF CRICCO

# Survey Will Help Shape the Future

By Eric Sheckleton

PSIA-AASI Chairman of the Board



Winter may have been slow out of the starting blocks this season, but not PSIA-AASI. In fact, your association has kept a strong and steady pace all year long. After all, there are division events to produce, educational programs to develop, catalog sales to fulfill, and magazines to publish.

Over the past year I have personally participated in several division board meetings, as well as many snowsports school and member events. I have spoken with division presidents, board members, executive directors, education staff members, snowsports school directors, and members across the country. There are certainly a variety of perspectives on the needs of members and the view of success for our organization. However, two things seem constant—there is tremendous amount of passion for the association at all levels, and there is a strong desire to do what is best for members and their ability to provide the best experience for the ski/snowboard area guest.

To bring the bigger picture into sharper focus, PSIA-AASI conducted a survey last fall in which it formally assessed current perceptions, motivations, and satisfaction of members. We know that you have a choice in whether or not to maintain your membership and that you must feel that there is sufficient value for the money you spend with the association. This survey is a step toward understanding what you value and how we can continue to improve as an association to better meet your needs. The full report about the survey is in this issue of *32 Degrees* and online at [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org).

One gratifying finding is that a majority of the members feel there is value in being a member of PSIA-AASI.

A majority of members, nearly two-thirds, feel their expectations are being met or exceeded. In other words, two out of three members surveyed rated the value and/or quality of their affiliation with PSIA-AASI either as “good” or “great.” This is a reason to celebrate, but your association leaders realize that there is always room to improve.

While lower scoring does not necessarily equate to “extremely negative” perceptions, this does leave one-third of the membership feeling that their expectations are not being fully met. In other categories, lower scoring simply meant that certain ratings emerged as performing lower than counterparts in other subgroups. In fact, most lower-scoring items were still in positive territory on a particular scale. For example, only 8.7% of members surveyed rated value and/or quality of membership as “poor” or “very poor.”

The aspects of PSIA-AASI that members seemed to like most related to education, the sense of community, certification, and the professionalism of the association. Members liked specific benefits such as education materials, member events, and pro deals.

The aspects of PSIA-AASI that members seemed to like least related to the certification process and the web-based learning modules, though these ratings were still in positive territory. It is worth noting that we are continuing efforts to improve the certification process

for PSIA-AASI members. All divisions are currently participating in the implementation of the Strategic Education Plan which will lead to improved consistency nationwide and increased recognition of the value of certification by snowsports school management. In addition, the new *Entry-Level Instructor's Guide*—available at [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) in the “Go Pro” section—is the first step toward a new generation of web-based learning modules.

The question of value is complex. To some members, value is in education programs and certification. For others, value is in the tangible discounts or the intangible relationships, including being part of something bigger that feeds the need to be engaged in the ski/snowboard industry. Cost influences the perception of value, and not just the cost of dues. Members also make investments through event fees and time. Why? Primarily to improve personally and professionally.

Whatever the cost/benefit is, we know two things. The perception of value is strongly influenced by the division in which you are a member, and value is determined by you as an individual. The leadership of the national association and the divisions is committed to understanding your needs and those of all members, and working together to develop tools and programs to meet the wide variety of needs—all with the goal of exceeding the expectations of even more of our members. There is tremendous diversity in the needs of 31,500 members and we will only succeed in this endeavor if we understand that each level of the organization plays a different role in meeting the needs of the member and providing value for membership.

*continued on page 94*

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PHOTO: FRANK SHINE, ATHLETE: PAT SEWELL



# BLIZZARD HAS TURNED THE FREERIDE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN



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## Second-Chance Snowboarder

By Jason Shields

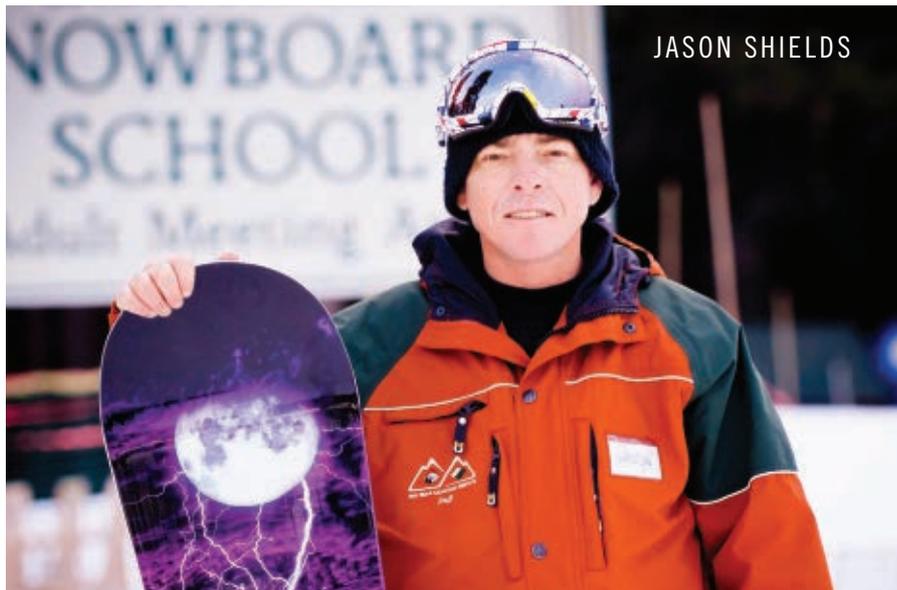
I started as an instructor in 1998 and became an AASI member the same year. In four years I achieved my Level III AASI certification and went on to be a supervisor at Snow Summit. But in the 2001–02 season, I had to retire at the age of 25 because of cystic fibrosis. I was born with this genetic disease and by my mid 20s the infection had deteriorated my lungs to the point that I couldn't continue teaching. I was instructing students at 7,000 feet while I had only 30 percent lung function. I had to retire, but I hoped one day I'd be back.

For the next eight years I avoided the sight of snowboarding, skiing, and even rain because I knew it would be turning to snow in the mountains. My one exception was watching the Olympics and cheering for the guys that I grew up riding with.

### What PSIA-AASI Has Done For Me

What has PSIA-AASI done for me? Now there's a question you hear in a ski school locker room all the time, right? But here's my honest answer . . . my involvement with PSIA-AASI has been life changing, not only in my development as an instructor but in my advancement as a skier. Being surrounded by professionals who take pride in what they do inspires me to continue to learn and stay current; to remain a contemporary of my sport.

Moreover, the skills I've developed as a PSIA-certified alpine instructor opened an avenue I would never have foreseen. Over the past five years I have coached alpine snowboarding at the World Cup level. In that time two of my athletes earned U.S. Alpine championships; Lindsay Lloyd earned her fifth U.S. Alpine Championship last year and Mike Trapp his first.



JASON SHIELDS

Imulsion Imagery, Joel Natarro

Although I couldn't snowboard I was still very capable of working. I earned a four-year degree in accounting and for eight years I lived in a cubicle. Nine months into my job I received promising news from a new doctor who asked if I had ever considered lung transplant. I didn't think that was an option with my disease, but I said I would try anything.

My doctor referred me to a transplant hospital in San Diego, and the medical team thought I would make a good candidate for a dual lung transplant—but at the time they deemed me too healthy. Three years passed and my

doctor actually took me off the list because they changed how they decided to give lungs to people. I was off the list for 18 months and then my health worsened and I was re-listed in 2008. My health had deteriorated and I was on oxygen 24 hours a day and too sick to work. I was bummed because in June of that year I had received my bachelor's degree in accounting and was to start my career as a public accountant. In September 2008 I received a call for the transplant. The time had finally come.

I went to the hospital and said goodbye to my Mom, Dad, and best friends. The staff took me to the prep room for surgery, the anesthesiologist inserted the lines, and they put me out. When I woke up the nurse looked at me and said, "You didn't get them."

The lungs were bruised and swollen when the transplant team received them and they didn't want to risk it. I was disappointed, but looked at the experience as a positive. I now knew what to expect when I woke up, less the pain of having your lungs ripped out of you!

I assumed it wouldn't be long until the right pair of lungs came for me, so I decided not to cut my hair until I got new lungs. Well, 18 months later I received a call on April 22, 2010. They reached me at noon and said the surgery would go down around midnight.

Once again I was back at the hospital, saying goodbye to friends and family. There's no guarantee that I would make



Courtesy of Nathan Emerson

Simply stated, the understanding PSIA imbued in me was readily transferable beyond the narrow scope of skiing to the sport of alpine snowboarding, and a new career emerged!

Nathan Emerson  
Jackson Hole, WY



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it, so I just wanted everyone to know I loved them. Under I went with the anesthesia, but this time when they woke me up I felt something a tad different! I don't recall much pain but I remember being able to take a breath, even with the ventilator down my throat. I worked hard for hours, breathing past the vent so that when my doctor came back to check on me I could have that thing taken off.

Finally I could breathe on my own with the new lungs.

I spent two weeks in the hospital recovering because my kidneys stopped working and I had swollen to 155 pounds—25 pounds more than my normal weight. They got my kidneys working and I was released from the hospital, but I had to live on campus for the next 45 days to make sure I was well enough to go back to my house, 90 miles away. While at the campus house I started walking and I had worked my way up to walking 2.5 miles a day. I convinced my doctor to let me go home early because I was doing so well.

I was living with my parents and still in recovery mode, but I got a gym membership and started going six or seven days a week. I wasn't sure if I'd be able to be an instructor again, but I did know I'd snowboard again. By August I was able to run five miles and had gained 20 pounds of muscle. I was stronger than I had been in 12 years. My doctor gave me a medical release to return to work, so I figured I'd become a CPA. However, all the openings were for experienced public accountants, which ruled me out. I looked into other jobs and figured I'd get a Monday-to-Friday job and head up to Big Bear and be an instructor on the weekends. I knew I wouldn't have issues



Imulsion Imagery, Joel Navarro

riding and teaching. When November came and I still hadn't found a job, I decided I would move back to Big Bear and start teaching full time again.

When I left Snow Summit I was a supervisor, and when I returned there were a few instructors that I had trained in my last season. They were now my supervisors.

Teaching again felt amazing. I smiled for two days and could finally say "I'm back!" I started the season with a bang, racked up tons of hours and tons of privates. My goal was to be employee of the month, one achievement I had never accomplished while at the resort. By January I was promoted to senior instructor, which allowed me to do more clinics with the newer instructors. I also got reinstated with PSIA-AASI and did my first snowboard clinic. It's weird how much has changed since I last taught. Board technology is different and so is the way people ride now. I still had my AASI *Snowboard Manual* from 1999 and I purchased the *Snowboard Instructor's Guide* in 2011. What a difference between the two!

All that I wanted then was to progress my riding to where it was in 2002, but I didn't quite make it there. But I pushed

myself to ride boxes and rails, which weren't my thing in 2001.

If I have time with students on the chairlift I'll tell them my story. The best response was when I taught a quadriplegic in his mid 30s. He was in a car accident at 17 and he had limited use of his legs and no use of his hands. He was able to sideslip and change direction on toeside, with my assistance helping him up. He was so happy to be able to do that. I told him my story during the lesson on one of our trips up the Magic Carpet. His reaction was that they couldn't have put him with a better instructor. That response made my year.

What I hope you guys and gals get from my story is that no matter what obstacles are in your way, keep looking to the goal. Sometimes life throws you curveballs and you might even swing and miss, but never let it stop you. Adjust your goals if you have to, but keep dreaming. Once you've had a second chance at life there are no bad days, just small inconveniences. ☺

*Jason Shields is a Level III-certified snowboard instructor at Snow Summit/Bear Mountain in Big Bear Lake, California.*

## 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](mailto: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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### MORE MU

In the Winter 2012 issue's "Tanulj Meg Érezni (Hungarian for 'Learn to Feel It'), it seems Jennifer Simpson savored the taste of the goulash served up at Interski by the Hungarians. While her recipe was palatable, I pushed away from her table with a mild case, maybe a "feeling," of neurological indigestion.

Why neurological? I have a ravenous appetite for continuing education (CE), especially CE relative to the minds, muscles, and skeletons of ski school students and race team athletes. My 50-plus years as an instructor in the U.S. and Canada, USSA and CSCF coach, and USSA national technical delegate have benefitted both my knowledge and understanding of what is between the lines of our pedagogy.

As outlined in the following letter of mine that was published in *Ski Racing*, here's what might have been added for those who have an inkling of neurological sequencing of skeletomuscular patterns:

#### Ghandi Neurons Vis-à-vis Demonstrations

The importance and significance of demonstrations of technical and tactical skills appears to have a sound neurological basis in the sequencing of skeletomuscular patterns. Dr. V.S. Ramachandran, a behavioral neurologist who is the director of the Center for Brain and Cognition at the University of California, San Diego, has conducted research on mu wave suppression which is instrumental in what are recognized as mirror neurons.

Ramachandran has wryly dubbed these neurons as Ghandi Neurons because his research shows that "they are dissolving the barrier between you and me." Simply stated, his research has validated mu wave activity when the subjects clenched and flexed their fists. Furthermore, these same mu waves lit up when the subject observed another person doing the fist routine.

Amazing! Ergo the "mirror neuron" phenomenon. And it is confirmed that people have several systems of mirror neurons which perform different functions.

I have made a leap of faith in coaching and have focused on a whole lot less talk and a lot more of demonstrations of technical and tactical skills by both myself and the athletes.

I am more in tune with the biomechanics of the athletes' skills performances for more precise feedback. And they are liberating their performances from being too step-by-step, mechanical and allowing the mu waves and mirror neurons to get their bodies in gear.

It may sound like a sci-fi mind-meld—and it is because we are all connected. Got mu?

Dean G. Tonkin  
Seattle, WA

### ON THE SKIDS

I was interested to read Alain Bertrand's claim (in "To Carve or Not to Carve," Winter 2012) that "The universe knows only one means to slow down motion: friction." In my universe, gravity will also perform that task. This is not to dismiss his point, which is that skidding turns is a good thing. It should be nobody's goal to carve every turn; our goal should be to have the capability to carve turns when we want to, in addition to our other skills.

In my own classes I have never found any reluctance to make skidded turns; in fact few students are even familiar with carving. Thus my emphasis is always on turn shape—and gravity—to control speed.

Steve Munden  
Westborough, MA



Dave Lidvall (left) and Tommy Moore

### THE BEST GIFT

Imagine you're 55 years old and have skied at the same mountain for the past 35 years of your life. You taught your children to ski and they love to be on the mountain as much as you. Ski season is anticipated as new memories are formed with family and friends.

Then a massive stroke takes away your ability to walk and talk. After almost two years of rehab and therapy in hospitals and at home, the doctors have said you can get back to the slopes. But your right leg is weak and you have no use of your right arm. How do you go back when so much has changed?

The stroke survivor is my husband Dave, and his Christmas gift from me this year was a ski lesson with Tommy Moore, an instructor with Winter Park's National Sports Center for the Disabled (NSCD). Moore is one of the numerous staff (and volunteers) dedicated to helping people with disabilities learn to ski. He has overcome incredible odds to recover from a severe allergic reaction and enjoys teaching in the NSCD program.

Once Dave, his family, and best friend arrived on the snow, the enthusiastic group filled the next three hours of Christmas Day with challenges, inspirational moments, and joy. Lives have been changed—but this time for the better!

This gift was given not only to him, his family and friends, but also to Moore, who was away from his family. New bonds were formed on the mountain, helping minimize the losses and struggles of the past two years.

Beth Lidvall  
Denver, CO

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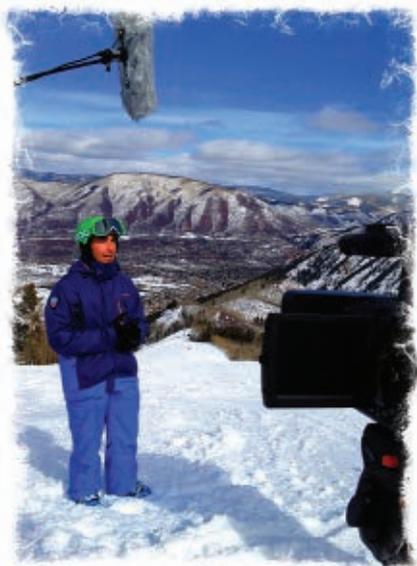
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## NEWS OF NOTE

### Go With a Pro Television Makes Stops in Cascades, Rocky Mountains, East

Now in the fourth season of high-definition production, PSIA-AASI's Go With a Pro (GWAP) television show has made successful stops this season in Stevens Pass, Washington, plus Aspen/Snowmass, Colorado, and New Hampshire's New England Disabled Sports. GWAP season four will air next fall on Outside Television Network, New England Sports Network,



and Altitude Sports, as well as other local cable and resort distribution points.

Additionally, shorter GWAP tips can be seen in the video section of [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) and are shared world-

wide via [YouTube.com/TheSnowPros](http://YouTube.com/TheSnowPros). GWAP is an education-focused program with a resort and lifestyle element that highlights the culture of snowsports instruction and the lives of those who make the profession their way of life.

This season's first stop was in Washington, where GWAP caught up with PSIA Alpine Team member Dave Lyon, his wife Tami, and their two sons. The Lyon's run Lyon Ski School as well as a local race program at Stevens Pass. In addition to racing and trying to qualify for the U.S. Ski Team, Dave's son Mac teaches for the school. He and brother Carson are both PSIA-AASI members, and will eventually represent the third generation of Lyons to run the school. Dave's mom, former Canadian Ski Team member Jean Lyon, started the school in 1963.

From there it was on to Colorado to immerse GWAP in the four-mountain training culture of The Ski & Snowboard Schools of Aspen/Snowmass. PSIA-AASI Teams Manager Katie Ertl and Alpine Team members Charlie MacArthur and Jim Schanzenbaker lead a powerhouse group of Aspen/Snowmass pros alongside former team members Megan Harvey and Andy Docken. The days started early and ran late, but the focus on training as a success factor for the guest experience was a powerful story to document.

The season-long tour wrapped up in New Hampshire with PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team member Geoff Krill. Geoff is the sports director for New England Disabled Sports (NESD),

and one ripping mono skier. NESD is an active supporter of the Wounded Warrior Project, a program developed to help severely injured military service members transition from active duty to civilian life. Each year NESD hosts dozens of Warriors, and has had the fortune of having some of those they have helped come back to teach in the program.

### Free AASI Adaptive Snowboard Guide Available Online

PSIA-AASI is proud to announce the free availability of the *AASI Adaptive Snowboard Guide*, a downloadable resource for instructors wanting to get into—or explore more fully—the rewarding pursuit of teaching adaptive snowboarding.

This new guide presents a diverse, creative, and unique collection of cross-over teaching techniques, represented by an array of talented instructors. It greatly increases and advances the possibilities and options for adaptive students to find success as snowboarders.

To download your free copy of the *AASI Adaptive Snowboard Guide*, go to [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) and click on the "Adaptive" link in the drop-down menu for the "Snow Day" navigation tab. On the Adaptive page, click on the "Education Resources" link and you'll find the download link under "Other Materials."

### Adaptive Programs Benefit From Grant

In 2009 the PSIA-AASI Education Foundation received grant funding to distribute copies of the *PSIA-AASI Adaptive Snowsports Instruction* manual to volunteers and instructors working with 501(c)(3) organizations. This adaptive outreach program is currently wrapping

## ↑ HOT

Earning your turns. PSIA-AASI Official Suppliers Atomic, Salomon, and Head will all introduce new alpine touring (AT) bindings next season, while Marker will offer an upgrade of its category changing Duke binding.



Heavy spring snows as La Niña finally gets her butt in gear and gives us all a strong finish to the season.



Learning a new snowsport. Whether it's snowshoeing, telemarking, snowboarding, skiing, or even ice climbing, it's great fun to extend your instructional expertise by going back to the start yourself.

Recycling old equipment. Ski fences are cool, but so is donating your used skis and snowboards to local kids' programs, or giving your used-but-still-usable parkas and hats to the underprivileged or homeless.

up its third and final year. The foundation is proud to have distributed 4,050 copies of *PSIA-AASI Adaptive Snowsports Instruction* in 2009–11, and in 2011–12 has reached its goal of distributing 2,000 manuals to adaptive snowsports and recreation programs across the US.

For this last year of the cycle, more

## ↓ NOT

Going into the backcountry without the proper equipment—including AT bindings, avalanche transceivers, probes, shovels, and first aid essentials.



Starting the season late as that same La Niña seemed to be so busy snowing on Europe that she temporarily forgot about the U.S.



Only riding on powder days (which are pretty sweet, we admit, but don't come around as regularly as all of us would like).

Keeping your own ski museum in your garage. Clearing that stuff out will make your significant other very happy, and may help introduce someone new to the sport.



than 3,600 volunteers and 250 adaptive staff members have received copies of the manual. PSIA-AASI has worked with 33 organizations in 18 different states, and these programs have reached more than 5,800 participants through approximately 19,500 individual adaptive ski and snowboard lessons.

According to Haakon Lang-Re, program director of Disabled Sports USA Far West, of Truckee, California, the PSIA-AASI Adaptive Outreach grant has “opened paths to certification” for his instructors and volunteers and “increased interest in becoming a good teacher with something tangible.” He said that he has seen an “increased quality of instruction and an increased quantity of committed volunteers spending more days on the hill.” The sentiments are echoed by Mike Hurchick, the program director of Challenge Mountain in Boyne City, Michigan, who said the books have provided “more insight into working with the disabled population, and serve as a great reference manual.”

### REI and PSIA-AASI Partner for Snowsports Education

National outdoor gear and clothing retailer REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.) has partnered with PSIA-AASI to offer joint introductory ski and snowboard classes through a pilot program launched in February.

The program—which entails a two-hour “Learn to Ski and Snowboard” class taught by REI Outdoor School instructors, followed by a half-day introductory lesson by a PSIA- or AASI-certified instructor—includes instruction, rental equipment, lift ticket, and transportation. It was launched in February at REI stores in Washington’s Puget Sound area and Reading, Massachusetts. The on-snow lessons by members of PSIA-AASI took place at Washington’s Stevens Pass and Massachusetts’s Wachusett Mountain.

As REI and PSIA-AASI learn more about consumer preferences, this beginner-focused program is expected to expand to other markets in 2012–13. “The organizations share common values and interest in the sustained growth of snowsports participation,” said PSIA-AASI Executive Director and CEO Mark Dorsey. “We anticipate sharing the lessons learned with other retailers, manufacturers, and resorts to support the various learn-to-ski-and-ride initiatives happening throughout the industry. This is a first step in an emerging long-term relationship and there’s a lot of excitement about what REI and PSIA-AASI can achieve over the coming years.” 



Courtesy of Geoff Krill

PRO FILE:

# GEOFF KRILL

## PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team Member

**Tell us about your path into instruction and your current position as the snowsports director at New England Disabled Sports (NEDS).**

It's always funny how things happen to you in your life that completely change your direction and focus. After I injured my spinal cord in a 1995 snowmobile accident I focused on getting back the pieces of my life that I was passionate about beforehand. Skiing was high on my priority list and became the catalyst to getting back my old life. Once I took my first lesson at New England Disabled Sports at Loon Mountain I was hooked. Pretty much as soon as I was able to monoski independently I was thrown into the mix as a volunteer instructor and began helping others get skiing back into their lives. I see versions of myself in those early years every time I go out on a lesson. Being able to teach a disabled individual how to ski goes way beyond the sport, it's a lifestyle and for many the first realization that so much more is possible. My PSIA education brought credibility and depth to my performance on the hill and became my "college

skiing degree." My passion for the sport and the love for my students with whom I work is why I rose to my current position as sports director at NEDS.

**What does it mean to you to be a PSIA-AASI member and, beyond that, a member of the PSIA-AASI Adaptive Team?**

Becoming involved with PSIA-AASI has been an incredible journey for me, and I just got hooked on the training and learning process from the very beginning. I have always been one of those people who, when they start something, like to see it through to the highest level. Even when I joined the Boy Scouts as a kid, I *had* to work my way up to becoming an Eagle Scout. PSIA gave me those same educational pieces and sense of accomplishment. I would say to this day that, even after having made the Adaptive Team, the day I put my bronze Level I pin on my jacket was the best achievement of all.

**What do you do in the summer?**

Because of my position as sports director, I have tons of access to athletic and outdoor activities. In some ways, I

have been able to develop programming that meets my own personal needs while helping the individuals that we serve. Some of my favorite summer events include the White Mountain Cycling Classic and weekly waterskiing on Little Squam Lake. Downhill mountain biking has always been a passion of mine, but always involves wrenching on the bike more than riding it. But when given the opportunity, it gives me that skiing rush in the summer.

**What's it like to work outside year-round, and mostly with beginners?**

I see myself in every beginner who took the courage to come out and try a sport despite their disability or impairments. I know what learning to do something that you thought was impossible can bring to your life, not just in sport but in everything.

**You're on the Adaptive Team, direct a snowsports school, and have two kids. How to you manage it all?**

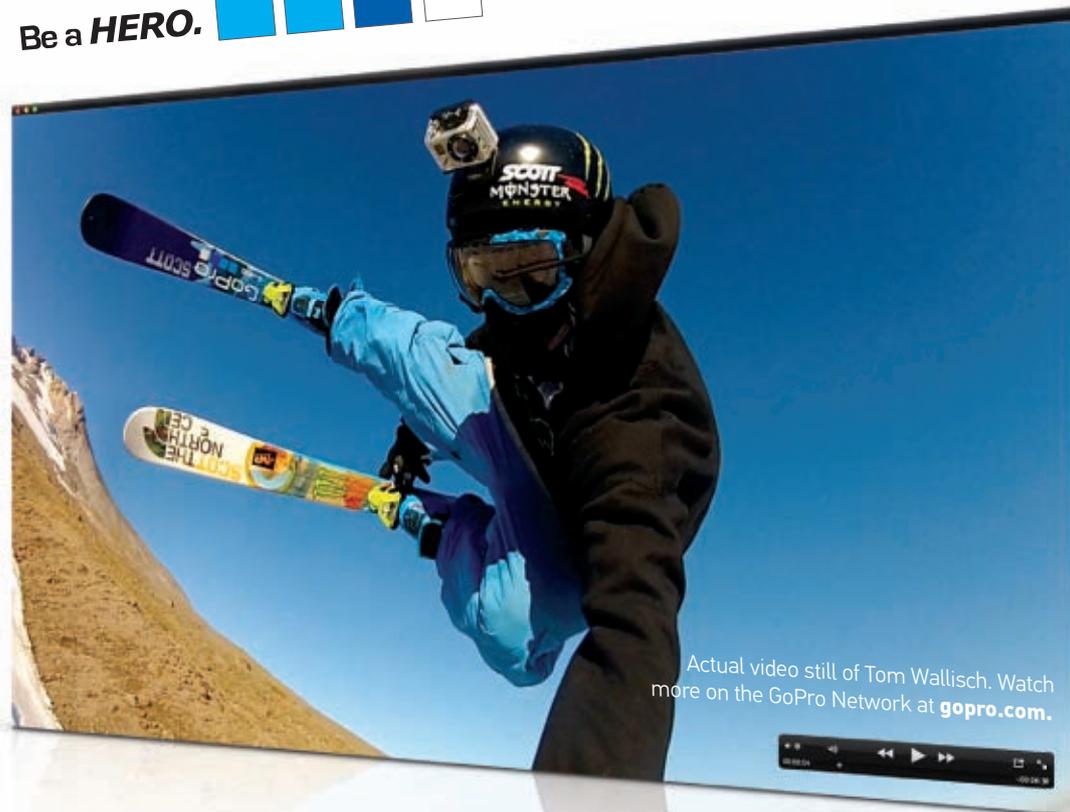
Greta is 8 months and Carver just turned 2, so my wife Heather and I are in the thick of it, and we don't manage anything very well. With both of us working full time, we rely on a lot of help from our families and friends. I can honestly say that chasing around a 2-year-old has made me feel more disabled than anything I've ever done. They love the outdoors already, and Carver likes to sit on the foot of my mono ski while I slide around the snow. Our kids are lucky to grow up in and around New England Disabled Sports and all that entails. The adaptive sports environment provides them with so many interesting experiences while surrounding them with the most persevering and confident people I know.

**Do you have any other favorite pastimes?**

"Land-yachting." That is, driving my '73 Chevy Caprice convertible with the family. I grew up in the back seat of that car, and my kids will do the same. I am not afraid to burn a lot of fuel when it comes to that car! ☺

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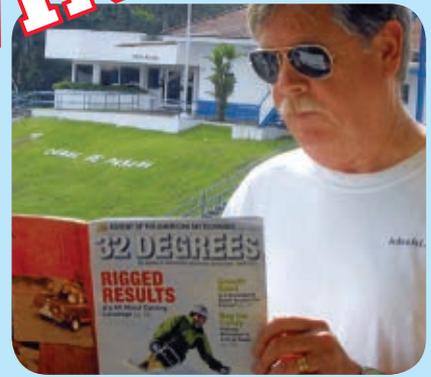


Handlebar Seatpost  
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Strap

WIN!



### Where Do You Read 32 Degrees?

Joe Carberry, a PSIA-certified Level I alpine instructor at New York's Kissing Bridge, took a cruise with his wife last year, traveling from New York City to Los Angeles. The journey took the couple through the Panama Canal, where he had a shot taken with his favorite snowsports instruction journal.

Now back on land—and snow—Carberry will receive a \$25 gift certificate to the PSIA-AASI *Accessories Catalog*. Have you traveled to far reaches of the earth with your trusty *32 Degrees* and a camera in tow? Send us the evidence—and the story details—to [lineup@thesnowpros.org](mailto:lineup@thesnowpros.org). You just might make it into the next issue!

### SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

## YAKIMA

**LOCATION:** Beaverton, Oregon

**YEARS IN THE BIZ:** 32

**WEBSITE:** [Yakima.com](http://Yakima.com), Yakima's pro purchase program can be accessed via the member login at [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org).

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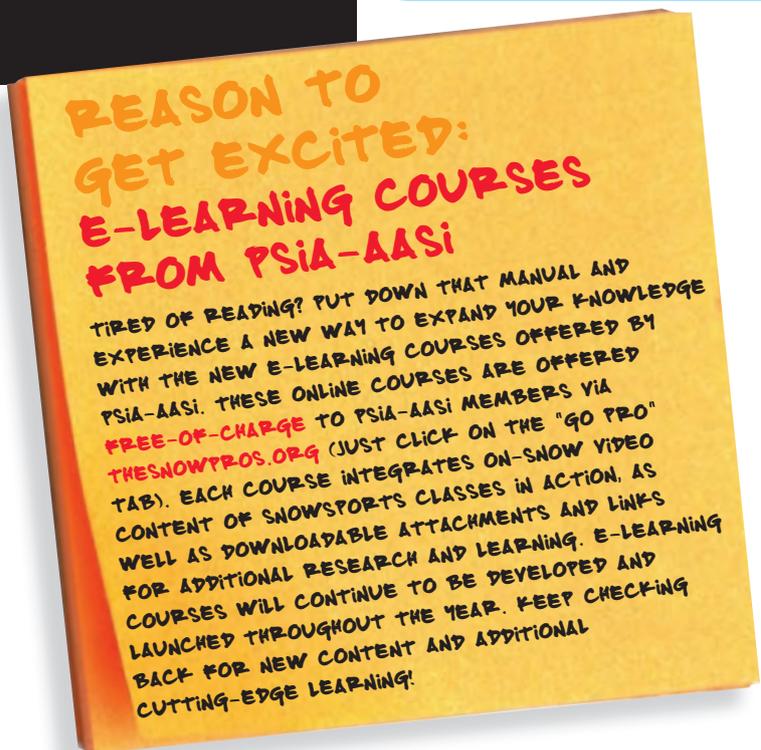
lives a little easier and a lot more fun. For more information, check out [Yakima.com](http://Yakima.com).

**WHAT YOU MAY NOT KNOW:** In 2011, Yakima Products introduced its sleeker side with the launch of Whipbar. Billed as the quietest and most fuel-efficient vehicle rack on the market, Whipbar by Yakima reduces wind drag by up to 70 percent while seamlessly blending into your car's natural design. Find out more at [Whipbar.com](http://Whipbar.com).

### ROAD TRIP WORTH TAKING

It's that time of year again! AASI Rider Rally (the annual snowboard member event, which also welcomes freeskiers) will be held April 4-7 in Breckenridge, Colorado, and PSIA National Academy (the annual ski member event) will take place April 15-19 in Snowbird, Utah.

Trust us, you don't want to miss these awesome events, where you can improve your skiing and riding, learn new teaching techniques, and hang with fellow PSIA-AASI members and Team members from across the country. Register for both events by visiting [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) and selecting the event you'd like to attend in the "Quick Links" section. But hurry, registration ends March 11 at midnight (Mountain Standard Time).



# USER FROM TALK

	NAME/ CREDENTIALS	MEMBER SINCE/ DIVISION	GOAL FOR THIS SEASON	ITEM YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT	BEST PSIA-AASI MEMORY	SKIING/ RIDING ON
	<b>Tim Ball</b> Sun Valley Snow- sports School, Sun Valley, ID Snowboard Level III, Adaptive Level I	2006 Northern Inter- mountain	Shadow every clinic I can to become a Division Clinic Leader and Level II Adap- tive.	Smith Goggles	Hearing students tell me they had their best lesson ever!	168 Volkl Selecta
	<b>Susan Travers</b> Heavenly Resort, South Lake Tahoe, CA Alpine Level II	2009 Western	To ski more and teach more than last year, which will be hard to beat!	Deep snow!	Passing <i>any</i> exam! Training with my friends. . . so many memories in such a short time. It's all awesome!	Salomon skis and boots
	<b>Beverly Vasseur</b> Afton Alps Ski School, Hastings, MN Alpine Level III	1984 Central	To get rid of old movement habits.	Patagonia Nano Puff & lip balm	Skiing behind Carol Levine at a women's seminar in Winter Park.	Blizzard 8.1



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# Dick Dorworth

## A LIFETIME OF LEARNING AND THE HALL OF FAME

**L**egendary ski instructor, coach, and speed skier Dick Dorworth will be inducted into the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame on April 14 in Seattle, joining a class that includes 2002 Winter Olympics silver medalist Joe Pack, 1985 World Championship bronze

medalist Eva Twardokens, pro skier Tyler Palmer, ski area operators Phil Gravink and the late Nick Badami, ski historian Mason Beekley, and consumer ski show pioneer Harry Leonard.

Dorworth, who worked as an instructor and coach in North America, South America, and France during his career, was also the former director of the Aspen Mountain Ski School, and a regular contributor to the *32 Degrees* magazine predecessor, *The Professional Skier*. In 1963, Dorworth set the then world record for speed skiing in Portillo, Chile, reaching a speed of 106 mph. Still climbing and skiing regularly at the age of 73, he sat still long enough to talk to *32 Degrees* about the honor of making it into the Hall of Fame.

**32 Degrees:** *First, congratulations. What was your reaction to the news?*

**Dick Dorworth:** I am certainly flattered, and it has been kind of cool. My kids are stoked, and I have had a lot of people walk up and say, “Congratulations.” It’s nice to realize that the way I have spent my life has meant something to people.

**32 Degrees:** *Your nomination mentions your career as a ski racer, speed skier, instructor, coach, and ski journalist. Does any one thing stand out more than the others?*

**DD:** That’s really hard to say right now, because I have been working on my speed running book—*The Straight Course: Speed Skiing in the ‘60s*—so that has been on my mind. But I can’t say what stands out more than anything else. I did ski this morning on Baldy, and that stands

out more than anything. It was great skiing. And I have been fortunate to have a great career. Also, touchingly to me, after the decision was announced, Tyler Palmer called me up, and he is someone who I coached and who is going to be inducted too. That kind of friendship and relationship is invaluable.

**32 Degrees:** *Even as a noted athlete, it seems that as an instructor and coach, you have spent even more time helping others improve. Why is that so important to you?*

**DD:** First of all, I think passing on what you know, and what you have experienced is totally natural. It’s part of the human condition. The other part is that at one point I went to grad school and decided I was going to be a professor. I have always been inclined to teach, but I realized I didn’t want to spend my life in a classroom. So teaching and coaching skiing kept me on skis and outside where I wanted to be. Teaching skiing and teaching English are not that different to me. That’s how I look at it. I think it is innate that we want to share what we know.

**32 Degrees:** *When you look back on your career, what are the innovations in teaching that made the biggest impressions, and what instructors inspired you?*

**DD:** In 1970 I went to Europe to work on a film, and I went to the French national ski school in Chamonix and spent five or six weeks working toward certification. I know this is totally outdated, but at the time the French technique was very different from that of the U.S. or the



Diiane Crist

Austrians in that it was very simple. It was focused on being functional rather than stylish, and the simplicity of that really stuck with me.

As a teacher, Stan Tomlinson, who is gone, was a big influence on me. He was director of the ski school in Squaw Valley and after I quit grad school he said, “Why don’t you come over to Squaw?” He was a great skier, one of the kindest individuals I have ever known, and he believed in the value of teaching skiing and how you went about it, and that it was about something more than just how to get a job and stay on skis. He had a huge impact on me.

**32 Degrees:** *What is it about snowsports that makes it so worth doing for an entire lifetime? Do you focus on the same sensations and satisfactions each year?*

**DD:** I think if I lived on the ocean, I would say there couldn’t be anything better than that. I grew up in the mountains though, and going outside and exercising and breathing clean air is what it’s all about for me. As for skiing, if you do it right, it requires your full attention, and I can’t think of anything better. The places I’ve skied have provided an all-encompassing experience for me. I’m 73 years old now, so my relationship and capabilities and interest in skiing are certainly different from when I was 25, but certainly the same dynamics are at play.

**32 Degrees:** *So what has it all meant?*

**DD:** When I look at the whole picture and my life and skiing, I’m quite happy with it. My motto is, “so far so good.” **32°**

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# *A Dream Lessons*

*By Peter Kraay*

*Illustrations by Kevin Howdeshell*





When we first started asking PSIA-AASI members to submit their Dream Lesson, telling us exactly who they would most like to teach, we really had no idea what we were going to get. There was certainly hope that someone might write in telling us how they wanted to teach a superhero like Batman how to ride the halfpipe, or a pop star like Lady Gaga how to telemark, and we weren't disappointed in the response. There was also some slight concern that we might get a bunch of e-mails describing non-stop powder privates, with stunningly beautiful clients who leave Ferraris for tips. But there was none of that.

Still, we were happily surprised by what was sent. Not

because of how many people told us how every day spent teaching was already a dream come true. But more because of how many actual dream lessons have been taught—with real people, real faces, and especially, real success. It seems that whether it's reaching a goal, transcending some mental or physical limitation, or just finding a new way to enjoy ourselves, every day dreams are coming true, all across America's many slopes.

Thanks so much to everyone who took the time to send in their Dream Lesson story. You can read more Dream Lessons in The

PSIA-AASI Community accessed at [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org)—and also share in the conversation with your own response. (And while you're there, weigh in with your insights on another topic: "The Best Lessons Students Have Taught YOU!")

*It seems that whether it's reaching a goal, transcending some mental or physical limitation, or just finding a new way to enjoy ourselves, every day dreams are coming true.*



### *Building From The Feet Up*

Last year, I had a student named Fred, who made it from the rental shop to the teaching hill, and quit. The year before, he also quit. You may ask, "How is this a dream lesson?" You see, Fred and his classmates are in a special needs school, and Fred's special need manifests itself by increased sensitivity in the feet. Just getting rental boots on is an accomplishment.

My dream lesson would consist of involving Fred's parents before the group comes up to ski. It would involve fitting Fred into a pair of boots, first putting on the liners to make sure the boots fit, then putting the boots on for a short time each day, lengthening the amount of time spent in the boot, walking around, adjusting to the feeling of the boot. Maybe Fred will enjoy skiing, maybe he won't. But at least he'll have the chance to succeed, and enjoy the opportunity his peers have for their day in the snow.

—Sue Pursel, *Alpine II, Roundtop Mountain Resort, Lewisberry, Pennsylvania*

### *Presidential Dreams*

In a dream lesson, I'd be teaching Barack Obama to fly through steep-and-deep powder in the trees. Why? Just to watch all those incredible pressures and tensions he must have melt away in the experience of floating, gliding, and flying through effortless light powder.

It would be such a gift to him to lose himself in the pure joy of the snow, the flight, the cold, the flow of movement. I would hope that he would get a sense of flow and effortlessness from the experience that he could carry over into the rest of his life. Plus, wouldn't it be funny to see the Secret Service guys trying to keep up?

—Daniel Silver, *Alpine II, (formerly of Northstar and Alpine Meadows)*





### *Wounded Warriors*

I have already given the “dream lesson,” and I am fortunate enough to relive the dream every year. A few years ago, Wounded Warriors (WW) from Camp Drum, New York, attended our annual Hannes Schneider Weekend at Cranmore Mountain. The first year there were about eight attendees; only one had skied before, and some had never seen snow. Thanks to Cranmore Mountain Resort Snowsports School Director Karen Dolan and her nephew (my son-in-law), Ray S. Gilmore, a retired Army captain and himself a Wounded Warrior, I was able focus on these hard chargers for the whole day.

After getting comfortable on our surface lift, these folks were ready to get on the hill . . . sort of. But there was no holding them back. On the first ride up the chair, I asked how my WW was doing, “Sir, my leg is shot” came the response.

As I tried to explain how the boots, the gliding wedge, and using unusual muscles can cause discomfort, he stopped me to explain that he still required three operations to repair his calf muscle, of which 50 percent had been “shot” off. The next chair ride resulted in a similar issue with a knee (“probably five more operations”). The young lady in the group, who could ski, requested a moment after getting off our novice chair to allow her ears to adjust. “She took some shrapnel in the neck, and has a perforated ear drum,” was the explanation provided by another WW.

In the five years I’ve worked with Wounded Warriors not once have I heard a complaint from any of these heroes. Just huge smiles, and “Thank you, sirs” at the end of day and the weekend. What a privilege.

Every year it seems a few more people make the road trip to Cranmore, and every year I have a line of fellow instructors chomping at the bit to ski with these young men and women. The only problem I have is being addressed as “Sir” during a ski lesson. My name is Dave, and I can’t wait for March 2012 for the next opportunity to give another “dream lesson.”

—*Capt. Dave Bartlett, Alpine II, Intervale, New Hampshire.*

### *New Snow*

I would like to teach a group of Somali children, recently arrived in Minnesota who have never seen snow, much less skied. I’d teach them the basic skills to begin skiing, to enjoy a lifetime of fun in the winter, and how to pass that love on to their children.

—*Thomas G. Sharv, Cross-Country II, Alpine I, Three Rivers Park District, Plymouth, Minnesota*



### *Back To The Start*

In the mid-1860’s, Sondre Nordheim walked on skis for three days from his home valley to Christiania (now Oslo, Norway) to demonstrate his skiing ability to an eager audience. Besides the Telemark turn, Nordheim also showed what was to be named (in 1901) the Christiania turn. He did this on his homemade shaped (!) skis with willow heel bindings, rather than the common toe bindings.

My dream lesson would be to go out on the hill with Nordheim, with today’s boots and skis, guide him into our present way of skiing, and show him what the “new old” Christiania turn has become. He might just get a kick out of it.

—*Ole Retlev, Alpine III, is a former supervisor at Deer Valley who plans to teach this season in Colorado and Utah.*



## Boarding For Breast Cancer

Every year there seems to be one lesson that stands out as the dream lesson for the season. Last season that dream lesson came during our Boarding for Breast Cancer event. During this event they generally prefer to have ladies teaching the ladies. However, they didn't have anyone available to give the park lesson, so they asked me if I wanted to do it. I would take out a group of ladies and girls and we would spend the day doing small park features. It sounded awesome. During registration I was able to talk to a couple of the women who were a little intimidated by the idea of a park lesson. I explained I would break down what was important and never put them in something they were not ready for. There were some younger, non-intimidated riders as well as some riders who had done this exact event before, so I had a broad group of women to work with.

We set forth on our adventure by making a couple runs down regular slopes and learning the basic moves necessary for small park features. We talked about reference alignments, speed, balance on a flat board, and why those things are important.

They were all having a great time but there was still some nervousness of the coming challenges for those who had not tried it before. We discussed things on the lift like the age of our bodies and the limitations that we set for ourselves in our minds. We discovered that the breast cancer survivors had dealt with fear and state of mind when dealing with their cancers and had overcome them. They started to understand that by learning the things they needed to do, having the right state of mind, and trusting that I was going to put them in situations that were appropriate for their skill level, they were in their best possible state for success and started to get excited.

We made our way to the park, did a couple dry runs, and the girls who had already done this sort of thing hit the boxes. I had the newer ladies watch as I gave feedback and pointed out what the people successfully riding the features were doing. After mustering up some bravery, the rest of the



women gave it a whirl. They were hugely successful and we spent the rest of the day experimenting with different features and hitting small jumps. Everyone was in high spirits, thrilled that they were able to do the things their kids could do and were actually feeling comfortable with it.

My favorite part of the day was when two teenage boys came over and sat down by a tree to watch. While hiking up the hill for the millionth time that day I heard one say to the other very enthusiastically, "Dude, your mom just hit that jump and nailed it!" His friend was speechless as mom hiked confidently up the hill in front of me with the biggest smile. They were all super thrilled with the progress they made and we all went on to the fundraiser part of the evening, swapping stories of success. This was easily my favorite lesson of the last eight years. Hopefully I get a chance to lady-up and do it again this year.

—Larry Selph, *Snowboard I, Holiday Valley, Ellicottville, NY*



## The Dream Never Dies

My dream lesson happened near the end of the season in the spring of 2010. I work at Bolton Valley, in Vermont. On this day I was assigned to teach a two-hour private lesson. When the lady arrived I saw that she was a small, slightly frail-looking woman who I would have guessed was somewhat older than the mid-fifties age that she later told me. She said she had skied some as a child but had not been on snow since she was 17.

As we walked over to the beginner's area she told me that she had undergone two cancer surgeries. She was not sure she would be able to do this but she wanted to give it a try.

She said she and her husband ran a small restaurant in New York City and that they had never taken a vacation. Her children had urged her to go do something fun and she had decided to try and ski again.

She asked if skiing was like riding a bicycle, asking, "Once you learn, does it always stay with you?" I said I didn't know but I would do my best to get her skiing again. For her, it *was* like riding a bicycle. She quickly went through the beginner

progression and was making decent parallel turns. I have never had a student who was more focused and more determined to succeed. Whenever I asked her to make changes to her stance or movements she seemed to immediately grasp what I was saying and make the needed corrections.

As she quickly improved we moved to more challenging terrain until, on our last run, we came down Cobrass, one of our most difficult blue trails.

Over the next two days whenever I saw her on the slopes she always came over and told me what a great time she was having. Two days later, she came back and requested me for another one-hour lesson, and said “I want to do black diamonds.”

I was a little skeptical, but I said, “OK, but first let’s do a blue run to see how you are doing.” After that run, which had some steep sections, I couldn’t see any reason she couldn’t do it, and so we made a trip down Hard Luck, one of our easiest

black trails. She followed me down, right in my tracks about two turns behind me, completely in control and without any hesitation. After, we had time for one more run, so I said “Do you want to do Spillway?” She answered with an emphatic “Yes.”

Spillway runs under the chairlift with a very steep section near the bottom. When we looked down that steep section she said, “Oh my god,” and then, “Let’s go.” Again she followed me down with no problems.

When we reached the bottom I told her that I had really enjoyed skiing with her. She said that she had enjoyed it too, and then she said, “Now I have to rethink the rest of my life,” adding, “If I die now, it’s OK.”

So my dream lesson was not teaching some famous person. It was to give a great deal of joy to a wonderful lady that had a lot of adversity in her life, and that’s why I love this job.

—Mike Storrs, *PSIA Alpine I, Bolton Valley Resort, Vermont*



### *Air Pizzas and Snow Smiles*

There is one “dream lesson” that stands out as the most challenging, rewarding, and fun lesson I have ever had the privilege of teaching. I still remember how nervous I was when my ski school director handed me my lesson card. I was assigned to teach a nine-year-old girl who had severe Down syndrome. I knew that of all the things I had learned through PSIA, keeping the lesson fun was going to be the most important goal of all!

When I introduced myself to the little girl, named Victoria, her father that she was an avid gymnast and could follow simple instructions, but she could not communicate very well verbally. During the lesson, I found that this beautiful little girl had almost no communication skills, but she was one of the most agile kids that I’ve ever worked with. She was also probably the happiest.

We started the lesson making snow angels. While she continued making snow angels, I asked her to feel what her legs were doing. We put our equipment on and lay back in the snow on our backs and stretched our legs up toward the sky

with our skis on and made “Air Pizza” with the same type of movement of our legs that we used with the snow angels—only this time we pointed our toes at each other. We practiced this for a short time until Victoria let out a loud laugh when the snow that I had not brushed off my own skis fell onto my face.

After we got back up, I pulled Victoria around on the bottom of the run, where the ground was flat, so that she could practice making pizzas again while feeling the resistance of the snow before heading up the Magic Carpet. Victoria loved riding on the Magic Carpet and was pretty excited about being on the top of the hill.

Thank God for Victoria’s gymnastic background, because on her first run down the hill she did the splits as soon as her skis started to slide down the slope. However, unlike anything I had ever seen before, she slid her feet back together and was standing again without missing a beat—or losing the amazing smile on her face. Before long, Victoria had mastered the pizza and was having fun playing “Red Light, Green Light” with me. It was time to start making some turns.

I told Victoria that we were going to make smiles in the snow with our skis and I made a few “C” shaped turns. Then I showed Victoria how the turns looked like a giant smile in the snow. To my amazement, Victoria was making “snow smiles” as beautiful as the one on her face as she followed me to the bottom of the hill. We spent the rest of the lesson playing “Follow the Leader,” taking turns on who would be the leader. It was great seeing her laughing and smiling and looking very proud of her newly acquired skills. She was now officially a gymnast and a skier!

During the entire 90 minutes that I spent with Victoria, she never said a word, but her smile spoke volumes.

—Anne Mattack, *Alpine III, Alpine Valley and Mt. Brighton, Michigan* ❧

*Dream On*

Have your own dream lesson to share? Add it to the “Dream Lessons” discussion in The PSIA-AASI Community (accessible at [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org)).



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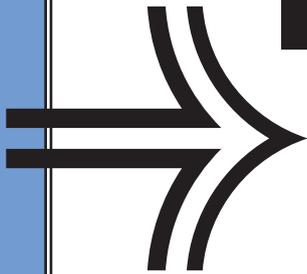
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# Emerging Influencers



SIX UP-AND-COMING LEADERS  
IN SNOWSPORTS INSTRUCTION

**With 50 years of history under its belt, PSIA-AASI has already started down the road to a new 50 years of innovation and fun. In honor of that sense of possibility, we started asking members from around the country exactly who they think will help define what's next.**

In what we hope will become an annual event for *32 Degrees* and for the association overall, we picked six individuals from the dozens of names submitted and asked them all how they got into instruction in the first place and where they see the opportunities and obstacles for the association in the future. We think it represents a telling roundup of the passion for snowsports instruction that we all share, and also of the direction in which the association is headed right now.

For the complete interviews of our esteemed subjects, log on to [www.TheSnowPros.org](http://www.TheSnowPros.org) and click the "The PSIA-AASI Community" in the Resources box. Then enter "Emerging Influencers" in the search field. (And while you're there, why not reply to the discussion to offer your suggestions on who you think should be on the next list?)



**SETH JACOBSEN**

- ⇒ Northern Intermountain Division Board of Directors VP
- ⇒ Division Clinician Trainee
- ⇒ Brundage Mountain Snowsports School Director, McCall, Idaho

**How/Why did you first get involved in snowsports instruction?**

I really got interested in instruction right after high school. My dad had taught at Targhee, and I started as an instructor at Brundage in the fall of 2001. I had the opportunity to move into the director's position at Brundage and have really only been involved with PSIA-AASI and the Northern Intermountain Division's board of directors for a year and a half. As for the "Why?," I would say it is skiing with my family and all of the wonderful memories that I have.

**What is it about instruction that appeals to you?**

I discovered that I have a knack for teaching and sharing information, and I want to share those kinds of memories that you don't forget for your entire life. I talk with our instructors a lot about how they have this one opportunity to create an experience that could stick with someone forever—and that's also if it's a bad experience.

I'm passionate about it and take a lot of pride in doing it. Skiing is not an individual sport; it is a social sport, and, inevitably, if you bring one individual to the sport, you're going to bring the family.

**What innovations or opportunities do you see that you believe will help instruction grow?**

One of the specific innovations in what PSIA-AASI is doing, and that I think is the most powerful, is the Children's Specialist 1 and Children's Specialist 2 credentials. It is really the only accreditation so far that has been equally accepted across the country from Idaho to New York and which encompasses a strategic education plan.

It creates a standard, has value for the individual instructor, and offers clients of all ages a vastly more interactive experience. I think it will become one of the most popular offerings for accreditation, because it is so student centered. I think it's one of the most powerful innovations that really helps instructors all across the country.

**What are the hurdles?**

I think number one is cost, especially in light of the economy. I do believe that mountains are getting much better at providing options for their guests, and really liked the focus on long-term leasing for kids in the last issue of *32 Degrees*.

With cost being the main factor for people deciding to

Seth Jacobsen makes the most of a powder day.



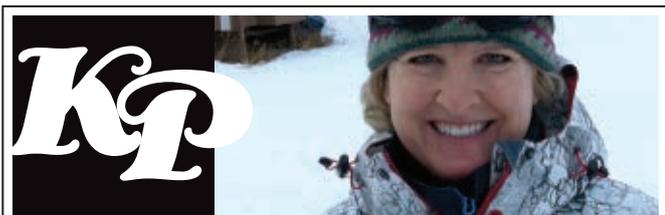
Photos courtesy of Seth Jacobsen

begin to ski or snowboard, we do have to keep finding new ways to offer people value. At Brundage, we have a learn-to-ski guarantee for \$99, which gives you all the beginner lessons that you want. We're experimenting with it right now, but really just want to keep looking at ways to open more doors to the sport for more people.

**What do you think is the state of snowsports instruction now?**

Number one is changing the perception of the general public about instruction from that of being a good-old-boys club, to that of a forward-looking organization with a thoughtful and reflective understanding of youth and popular culture.

I think we still need to preserve the history and stay in touch with the more experienced instructors who have really kept this whole organization so strong and successful for so long, but we also need to keep improving our connections with the youth. There are also opportunities to create more unity between the divisions. Being on the board, I sometimes feel like we're all competing each other, when we really need to rally together right now.



**KIM PETRAM**

- Northwest Division Staff Member and Children's Committee Chairperson
- Division Clinic Leader
- Training Director for Fiorini Ski School at Snoqualmie Summit, Washington

**How/Why did you first get involved in snowsports instruction?**

I learned to ski in high school in Seattle and took lessons from John Mohan and the instructors at the Northshore Ski School, and I quickly figured out I wanted to be one of those instructors. When I was a junior in high school I tried out to teach and haven't stopped teaching since.

**What is it about instruction that appeals to you?**

At first I liked it because it was what all my friends did. After college, I found that I loved group lessons. I loved having a class all year long, and just really enjoyed skiing with people and watching them grow, whatever their goals were.

I loved the process. I loved the camaraderie, and in my 20s I started going through the whole certification process, starting down the pathway between being a student and being an instructor. That's where I kind of learned that classic lesson that you don't know what you don't know. I don't think I had a natural knack for teaching, but I really enjoy the learning curve, and had a lot of great mentors and support to help me grow, and to help me understand what people need to help them learn.

**Why is teaching to a wide mix of people—from kids to seniors—important to you?**

They have way more in common than people might think. In our division, I am actually the coordinator of the children's specialist program and the senior program, and you could almost do them concurrently. I would say that about 80 percent of the focus is on the same thing. It's about what

Kim Petram (green jacket) coaches the Fiorini Ski School alpine staff.



brings them to sport, and what are they looking for from you, the instructor.

Children are the bread and butter of our industry. They are the most common client any instructor is going to have, and from what I have seen I think we are teaching younger and younger children all of the time. So just being able to support staff and help them identify who they have as a student—helping them understand that a four-year-old is a lot different developmentally than a 12-year-old is an important part of what I do.

**What are the most important elements of instruction for you?**

I love teaching students, but as a divisional clinic leader I train a lot of staff at a lot of other ski schools, which I love as well. I have clients, and then I have instructors who are on their own journey of growth, especially newer instructors who don't feel adequate yet, or don't think they can be a great teacher because they don't have the experience. I think everyone is trying to grow in some way, and I would imagine that there are some people on the national team who would say that they are still trying to grow in the same way as well.

**Is that one of the most important aspects of being a good instructor—wanting to grow?**

I think there are certainly inherent qualities you first look for when hiring a person as an instructor, like are they nice? Are they compassionate? Can they articulate their thoughts? And then you look at their skiing skills. I think you can't be taught to be a good person, but can be taught to be a better instructor, and a lot of what the Teaching Model talks about is learning trust. Everyone starts from there.

**What do you think is the state of snowsports instruction now?**

Sometimes I think as instructors we are reactionary, always going after the next best thing and losing sight of fact that it is just skiing, and how much fun it is to go slippery-slidey fast down the hill. What I do like is how we are working on a lot of national standards to ensure that we are all on same page.

I'm a fan of standards, because, nationally, it helps ensure we are consistent about our message and the product we are delivering. But I think instructors can also get too dialed into the idea of what good skiing looks like, and sometimes lose sight of what the student in front of them wants to do. You always have to think of the student first.

**Who in the profession do you look up to?**

For me, I'm looking at other people on the division's technical team right now—people Linda Cowan and Nick McDonald, who are talking about the whole spectrum of improving the sport and also always kind, compassionate, and willing to help. I appreciate people who think there is plenty of room for everyone to reach their goals, and are willing to help you reach your own. I think our division has given me a lot more than I have given it in return, and I'm very aware of that, and focused on trying to give what I have been given to other instructors.

# head



Rock 'n' Roll / 94

INFERNO / 104

KISS OF DEATH / 110

BONESHAKER / 125

SKIERS: JAMES HEIM  
LOCATION: GAN, MEADOW LODGE, BC  
PHOTO: RALPHE / MSP

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Terri Henderson

**Why is adaptive instruction important to you?**

I have been around many individuals who are extremely incapacitated by their disability or disabilities. To enable them to enjoy the freedom of skiing by using what they are able to do, and maybe a little help from me, has truly changed my life. It is always a bonus to hear when the experience has also changed *their* lives!

The smiles and joyful screams from people who can do nothing for themselves but can “ski” by turning their heads is priceless! It’s about allowing them to be involved and be part of the experience and not just take them for a joyride.

**What innovations or opportunities do you see that you believe will help adaptive instruction grow?**

I have been working in the Central Division over the past few years to raise the awareness of the need for adaptive instruction not only in small, non-profit organizations, but also through snowsport schools. In our division we rely on the small programs to fill the needs of the disabled communities, and the need is great. Although the process has been slow, I am seeing an increase in the number of instructors crossing over to learn adaptive techniques and have a few snowsport schools that are incorporating adaptive into their programming.

My hope for the future of adaptive is that someday it will

not be a segregated discipline. It currently encompasses all the disciplines, but I think many are afraid to think outside of the box and don’t realize that we are all teaching the same thing. It would be great if, during my lifetime, I could show up for a lesson at a school and see them taking out a student in a bi-ski, just like any other client. With the current heightened awareness of disabled athletes, it can only help.

**What are the hurdles?**

One of the main hurdles I have faced is that some schools still see adaptive as a liability because of the equipment. I have a very strong belief that, done correctly, adaptive lessons can be some of the safest. “Done correctly” is the key phrase. Training is essential.

**Who in the profession do you look up to?**

Beth Fox, who is currently operations manager of NSCD [National Sports Center for the Disabled], is probably the best instructor of anyone skiing in the country in my opinion. She is an amazing instructor with incredible passion for what she does, and her drive to move forward is also remarkable. It’s hard to put into words what she does differently, whether it’s with one student, a whole class of new volunteers, or whether it’s for a clinic for the National Adaptive Academy. I truly think she is a cornerstone of our industry.

**What information do you tend to share most with newer instructors?**

It is difficult to not share the passion for something you feel strongly about. I will often discuss that through the training we offer, we are able to set up any individual for success. We provide a safe, fun environment and once the newer instructor has worked through the initial apprehensions, their lives may be changed also.



Susan Hodder

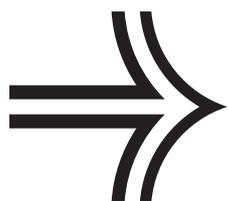


**ANN SCHORLING**

- Intermountain Division Telemark Examiner
- Alpine Level III, Telemark Level III, Children's Specialist I
- National Outdoor Leadership School field instructor and special projects director, Rocky Mountain branch

**How/Why did you first get involved in snowsports instruction?**

I am a second-generation ski instructor. Both my parents taught skiing, and my dad, Bill Schorling, still teaches at Keystone. I basically grew up in ski school in Colorado, and after college when I went to my dad and asked him to help pass out resumés, he told me to try to teach skiing and see how I liked that. And ever since then I have always been in ski school.



I REALLY ENJOY TEACHING PEOPLE—I LIKE IT SO MUCH THAT EVEN WHEN I'M FREESKIING I CATCH MYSELF TEACHING ALL MY FRIENDS AS WELL.

**What is it about instruction that appeals to you?**

Initially it was just about trying to figure out how to have as many days on the hill as I possibly could. But then I found out how much I really enjoy teaching people—how fun they can be and how much I like helping them work on accomplishing something and enjoying themselves more. I like it so much that even when I'm freeskiing I catch myself teaching all my friends as well.

**Why is nordic instruction, in particular, important to you?**

My sister got me into it when I was 17, and I instantly fell in love with the new sense of challenge at the top of all of the hills. I really liked how much more involved it felt to me. The best analogy I have heard is that telemark skiing is the difference between driving a standard shift and an automatic. I really like the people who tend to take telemark lessons as well.

I think lots of people come at it for different reasons, from that sense of challenge, to the desire to get into backcountry, or just because they like the beauty of the telemark turn, and I identify with all of those things. I always say that alpine is my first love, and telemark is my true love, because that's how it feels to me.

**What are the most important elements of instruction to you?**

I think it's the connections to other people that I can make through skiing. Whether it's peers or students, I especially

enjoy that sense of being on a joint venture where we are working to learn something together. That means a lot to me.

**What innovations or opportunities do you see that you believe will help nordic ski instruction grow?**

The thing I've noticed lately is how much festivals seem to attract more people. I think it's a good idea and a good way to get people together, especially in the spring. At least in the Intermountain region I am noticing them more and more. The festivals really seem to draw people out of the woodwork, and give them a great reason to get out and improve their skill together all at once.

**What are the hurdles?**

A huge hurdle has been the advent of really excellent AT equipment. For many people, the original reason that telemark became such a popular sport was because it allowed people to get into the backcountry. But so much of the new AT gear is faster, lighter, and more releasable, and the primary reason for the telemark binding has been usurped. I think brands like 22 Designs, with their Hammerhead binding, have really stepped up with gear that can take on the steeps. For people who want to take on telemark in the future, it will have to be because they love the turn and that style of skiing so much more than anything else, not because it gets them somewhere that they can't go on other gear.



Photos by Lindsay Post

**Who in the profession do you look up to?**

The person that comes to mind instantly is Patti Banks, who was the nordic chair for Intermountain Division. She just sort of represents to me a talented athlete and talented teacher who has an amazing way of teaching instructors how to teach and teaching students how to ski.

**What's the best information someone else ever gave you?**

That there are two kinds of ski instructors; ones who are always getting better at their craft, and ones who are not. And to always strive to be in the former category.



Melissa O'Brien

resources will certainly help contribute to the growth of instruction, especially for kids, who are not only our future, but really represent most of our business right now.

**What are the hurdles?**

The hurdles in instruction are just as real as what people are facing in other jobs right now. One of the hurdles is that the places where we like to live and ski are expensive. And I think people are moving to these places less and less.

One of the other hurdles is that, outside of our sport, there are still so many people who don't know about skiing, or how easy it is to learn. I think there are really lots of opportunities to promote the sport, and get more media around it to let people know how accessible it is again.

**What do you think is the state of snowsports instruction now?**

It's sort of a two-part answer. We're certainly seeing innovation in technology, especially in rocker equipment. And for instruction, certainly trying to be contemporary in identifying who our clients are and developing lessons for them. I think if we continue to ask questions and be forward-thinking, we will continue to innovate.

Snowsports instruction is as contemporary and forward-thinking as the instructor is. We all make choices in life, and I choose to be a ski instructor, and I choose to bring my A game.

**Who in the profession do you look up to?**

Obviously, there is a long list. At different times in my life I have looked up to different people. The first person who comes to mind is Michael Rogan [captain of the PSIA Alpine Team]. He is just really awe-inspiring to me, and one of the people who continues to challenge himself. Another person who has been a consistent mentor to me is Carol Levine. Both she and Michael are very encouraging, but in an honest and inspiring way. Whenever I go to either of them with a question, I know the time they take to give me an answer is so that they can offer me something that is concrete and sincere.

Stacey Gerrish has a passion for teaching kids.



Courtesy of Stacey Gerrish

**What is it about instruction that appeals to you?**

I get a lot out of it. I think initially, at a young age, I just decided to wake up and be really excited about going to work. I love learning and think teaching is learning, and I love having a connection to people. I still have so many college friends who say, "When are you going to get a real job?" But for me, teaching is just an amazing feeling.

**Why are kids and alpine instruction so important to you?**

I'll start with why alpine is important to me. Although we did a lot of nordic skiing when I was younger, and also snowboarding, I just feel the most connection with my alpine equipment. There has never been a point in my career when I wondered if I should shift disciplines. I always just want to ski.

And as for children, my first job was working as a nanny, where I began to discover that I have always enjoyed working with children, and really enjoy being with kids. I think I am one of those lucky people who was born with that ultra-creative gene, and I found that when working with kids I can be very experimental and creative, and that's also rewarding.

**What are the most important elements of instruction for you?**

I would say that one of the things that stands out for me, and I say it all the time, is that my job is your vacation. I'm an active participant in making someone's vacation memorable, and I think it's an honor.

I really enjoy sort of looking at the big picture, and the elements of figuring out how to communicate with different people, and having them work through the skills. Nothing makes me feel more effective than to hear someone say, "I skied my first black run today."

**What innovations or opportunities do you see that you believe will help both kids and alpine instruction grow?**

I think the *Children's Alpine Teaching Handbook* is a fantastic tool. It really speaks for itself. The *Children's Instruction Manual* as well. To have those resources, with that breadth and depth of knowledge, can help us all take our lessons to a deeper level. I think the fact that the information is easy to find, with relevance to whatever ability you're working with, is really helpful, and in a way that is specific to whatever age and ability you're working with as well.

We still have a lot of pros who if you put them with children they panic. The handbook really helps put them at ease. These

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**TM**

**TOMMY MORSCH**

- ⇒ AASI Snowboard Team Member
- ⇒ Bristol Mountain Terrain Park Manager and Snowboard School Director, Bristol, New York

**What are the most important elements of instruction for you?**

It's watching that person try something for the first time—and they may not get it on the second or third try—but when they achieve what we were working for, and lightbulb goes off . . . that's what it's all about. Whether it's the first lesson, working on a straight run, or a rodeo, it's always kind of a tender moment in the heart for me.

**What innovations or opportunities do you see that you believe will help snowboard instruction grow?**

One thing in particular that I think is creating more opportunities is the way that resorts are starting to work with terrain sculpting, providing better features for teaching—especially for beginners. Instead of just having a flat slope, the features make it easier to create that session lesson environment. Anything that gets people involved in the sport faster, and gets people up the hill faster is better for us all.

**Who in the profession do you look up to?**

Tom Vickery has really inspired me throughout the years. And since being on the AASI Snowboard Team, and being the youngest on the team, the whole team and coach Lane Clegg have really inspired me. I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity to hang out with those guys. Right at Bristol, I'm always looking up to the entire staff and everything they do.

**What's the best information someone else ever gave you?**

Probably the phrase I've heard in relation to myself was, "You know more than you think you do." Being something of an introvert and not a big talker, I think sometimes I probably underestimate the knowledge that I have built up over the years.

**How/Why did you first get involved in snowsports instruction?**

Originally it was when I was a senior in high school, and I started working at Bristol for the season pass. But once I actually got the job and started to mingle with some of the full-timers there, sharing the elements of teaching and working with people, and taking on more responsibility each year it just continued to become that much more important to me. In 2008 I moved to Vermont for one season, but I came back the next year. I've been teaching for 15 years, and this is my 14th season at Bristol.

**Why is teaching snowboarding so important to you?**

Growing up, it was the culture of snowboarding that really drew me into it. And I still really love that free-flowing buddy, buddy session feeling to it all. I love that group atmosphere, being in the park together, and the fun lifestyle. I did ski for a little bit when I was young, but for some reason that just never felt the same way that snowboarding feels to me.

Tommy Morsch cruises through the chop.



Photos courtesy of Tommy Morsch

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I WILL NOT MISS NATIONAL ACADEMY



**PSIA NATIONAL ACADEMY**  
**Snowbird, Utah, April 15-19, 2012**  
Play hooky if you have to.

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## PASSION PERSONIFIED

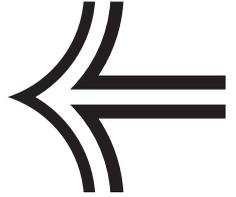


One of the pleasures of interviewing each of the instructors featured in this article was in how humble and surprised they were to have received the call. Across the board, they were all so focused on the passion they feel for teaching—and especially for working to build the best educational environment that they can, for their students, their clinics,

and their colleagues—that it never occurred to them that they might be setting an example for others. Or that they might be inspiring someone else, often in the same way that some other instructor inspired them before.

This, of course, is often the most important lesson in leadership, that what you do speaks louder than anything you can say. And the most important thing you can do is care.

WHAT YOU DO SPEAKS LOUDER  
THAN ANYTHING YOU CAN SAY.  
AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING  
YOU CAN DO IS CARE.



It's all of those instructors who keep trying to teach the best lesson possible, who keep trying to make a difference in every student's day, and who keep doing everything they can to make snowsports more accessible to others who will keep leading PSIA-AASI into the future. Which will keep making this a better organization for everyone involved. 

*Lindsay Iost* Peter Kray is the special projects editor for 32 Degrees. He skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is the founder of Shred White and Blue ([www.shredwhiteandblue.com](http://www.shredwhiteandblue.com)), a media and apparel company celebrating American boardsports.



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# PSIA-AASI Leadership



TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

**When it comes to leadership, finding the right resources is essential for anyone who wants to take their role as an instructor to the next level. To find out just how instructors can begin to identify what kind of opportunities are available to them, I started with one of PSIA-AASI's best in-house resources, Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. Here are a few of Saline's suggestions for taking your leadership skills to the next step, from your own snowsports school all the way up to the national level.**

### **Start local**

The first place to start, Saline said, is within your own school. And the fastest way to do that is to talk and work with the people who already stand out to you, and who you admire. "The more you learn, and the more involved you are, the more you are going to understand about how your school and your division work, and what opportunities are right in front of you," he said.

### **Go Regional**

After that, according to Saline, you should look at snowsports instruction on a regional level, and see what opportunities your division might hold for you. "Whether that includes becoming involved with the committees that you think are interesting, looking to work with the education staff, or going on to become an examiner, you have to start letting people know that this is something you're interested in," Saline said. "There are plenty of mentors and leaders in each division who are accessible, and who, in a sense, can help 'raise your hand' for you."

### **Specialize in what interests you**

Another way to stand out in an industry that is filled with passionate, motivated people is to focus on the aspect of instruction that most excites you. Saline points to PSIA Alpine Team member David Oliver,

who is known for his freestyle expertise, or Stacey Gerrish, who is profiled in this article for her insight on children's instruction, as examples. AASI Snowboard Team Member Tommy Morsch, also profiled here, is so passionate about terrain parks, Saline said, that he learned how to drive a snowcat just so he knew how to build the features himself.

### **Challenge yourself**

Above all, you have to continue to take on new responsibilities, and challenge yourself. Whether that's writing articles on instruction, looking to participate in strategic education, or even preparing to try out for the National Team, the road to leadership is built through effort, Saline said, adding that, "A lot of it is about working hard, taking things on, and doing a good job when you do."

### **Continue to contribute what you know**

But don't forget to have fun through it all. Whether it's at your local mountain, or by attending National Academy for alpine skiers, the Rider Rally for snowboarders, going to the National Adaptive Academy, or cross-country skiing at the West Yellowstone Ski Festival, there are always events that welcome your participation, where you can continue to increase your knowledge by doing what you love to do.

—Peter Kray

## At a basic level, we are all snakes.

This may or may not explain why people in general and skiers in particular often respond to perceived fear in counterproductive ways. A skier sees a steep slope or rough terrain ahead, and the body freezes and leans back uphill—exactly opposite of the supple commitment to the fall line that is needed to conquer the challenge successfully.

Mark Aoyogi, director of the sport and performance psychology program at the University of Denver, calls this a “reptilian” response to fear, triggered within the “primitive brain.” Confronted with the perception of fear, humans, since the origin of the species, have responded reflexively in one of three ways: fright, flight, or fight. Skiers typically get snagged by the first two (although the third sometimes comes into play). Freezing up is a fright response; sitting back or leaning up the hill is a flight response, an effort to retreat back to safety. It is the brain operating on chemical autopilot at a basic—make that reptilian—level of consciousness that rational mental tactics simply can’t suppress.



Such aboriginal brain chemistry might have served humans back in the day when we had barely slithered out of ancient waters to battle with other beasts on the Serengeti. But as civilization has evolved and advanced, it doesn’t work as well. “In most respects, we no longer need that response,” said Aoyogi. The problem is that the reptilian brain remains intact, and the responses it continues to activate remain inseparable from the psychological processes we use to cope with fear.

That said, evolution has empowered other parts of our brain, and sports psychologists and ski instructors have developed various ways to help people develop tactics, both mental and physical, to offset biologically automated responses. Mermer Blakeslee, a former member of the PSIA Alpine Team, has become an expert in the field of alleviating counterproductive fear responses. Author of the book, *In the Yikes! Zone: A Conversation with Fear*, she has devoted a large part of her career to “getting everybody into the comfort zone.”

As have all ski instructors at one time or another, Blakeslee has observed many skiers effectively taken hostage by the snake within. “They’re not prepared for the pull of gravity,” she said. “They move backward and lose their ability to turn.” Blakeslee throws a skiing-specific component of basic human fear into the mix: “Fear of falling is a primal fear, and, basically, skiing is falling down a mountain in a controlled way.”

She surmises that fear can sometimes run so deep that the objective hazards—steepness, terrain, obstacles—that might have triggered the initial fear response can virtually disappear behind a curtain of overwhelming apprehension. “[The

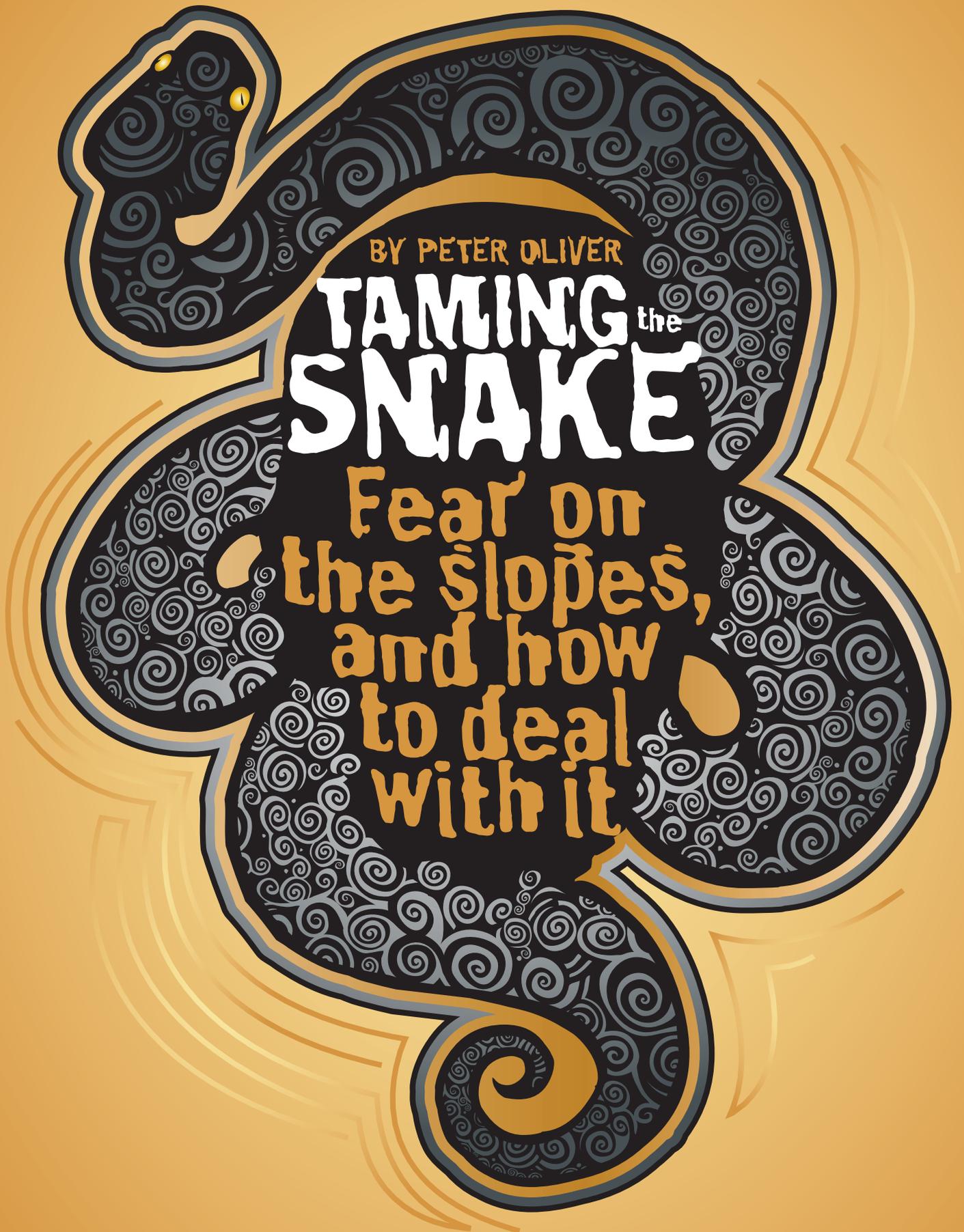
skiers’] attention moves inward, and they lose their ability to relate to the outside world,” Blakeslee said.

Erin Beskid, peak performance coach for Ski and Snowboard Club Vail, is a specialist in sports and performance psychology who works mostly with younger athletes. The fear she sees in a competitive athlete may often be more of a response to performance anxiety—e.g., “Can I meet my expectations in a race course?”—than a response to objective hazards. But the physiological responses activated by that primitive brain

**Fear of falling is a primal fear, and, basically, skiing is falling down a mountain in a controlled way.**

can be quite similar. And performance anxiety can hamstring recreational skiers just as it can competitive athletes. “It is all the same stuff as with competitive athletes,” Beskid said, and can be mitigated by “the same mental skills.”

“Muscle stiffness, shortness of breath, and breathing high in the chest causes less blood flow to the muscles,” she said, resulting in an obvious physical reaction to the mental cue. She also notes that the physiological response may be reinforced by an emotional response involving negativity and doubt. Put another way, if you don’t think you can do something, you



BY PETER OLIVER

# TAMING the SNAKE

Fear on  
the slopes,  
and how  
to deal  
with it

Once a client exhibits symptoms of entering the Yikes Zone, an instructor's job is to reroute that skier into a comfort zone.



probably can't. Her term for this cocktail of mental, physical, and emotional responses to fear is "overactivation."

Blakeslee notes that the fear response doesn't always manifest itself with a rigid, uphill-leaning posture. There is Aoyogi's third "f" set loose by the reptilian brain—fight. "Some people try to almost beat the fear," Blakeslee said. She divides people into two categories—"rushers," or those who get themselves in trouble by attacking the hill without the skillset to succeed, and "retreaters," who sit back and freeze. Perhaps ironically, she said, "the people who shut down and freeze often have better technique. It is the people who rush who typically have a bad stance or poor technique."

The question then, of course, is: What can you do to enable skiers to counteract it? This is where people like Blakeslee and Beskid really butter their bread—creating strategies and activities to empower clients (adults or younger athletes) to overcome the physiological and emotional reactions to fear that ultimately short-circuits skill advancement.

One place to start, said Beskid, is simply to be vigilant for indications of the encroachment of fear. "Watch for signs of overactivation," she counsels. At that point in the process, an instructor can help a client by "building a trusting atmosphere."

Blakeslee agrees, saying that once a client exhibits symptoms of entering the Yikes Zone, an instructor's job is to reroute that skier into a comfort zone. And what both women imply here is that dealing effectively with fear is a collaborative effort between instructor and client. The instructor creates an atmosphere in which the client can employ successful fear-fighting tactics.

Exactly what strategies can a skier then turn to? A good starting point, said Beskid, is simply to acknowledge and accept that primitive fear response. "It's okay if they get stiff," she said. "What matters is how they handle it."

A simple, *physiological* tactic can be to take a few deep breaths, to help flood the muscles with oxygen. Self-talk can be an effective *psychological* ploy—including the almost mantric use of repeated, positive words—e.g., "loose," "forward"—before the skis ever tilt into the fall line.

Such self-talk can be coupled with positive mental imaging—visualizing the conquest of a challenge before actually achieving it. This is something ski racers practice all the time; we have all seen racers before the start with eyes closed and hands moving to preview in their minds a successful run. There is no reason why this kind of exercise can't work with fear-struck recreational skiers as well.

Another strategy that recreational skiers can borrow from racers, says Beskid, is developing a standard, pre-run routine. Such a routine can involve whatever components might relax the skier and foster a mindset capable of dealing with any challenge. It might involve stretching, self-talk, singing a favorite song, a back rub from a fellow skier, whatever. Such a routine, suggests Beskid, can immediately establish a pre-run sense of familiarity and comfort no matter what challenge is about to be encountered.

Blakeslee recommends that, if a client shows signs of fear, back off the challenge level and then "move in very small increments." She recalls an episode with one client incapacitated by fear at the top of Snowbird's very steep cirque. "She was frozen and hyperventilating," recalls Blakeslee. So once they

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slowly worked their way out of that scenario, Blakeslee set about “giving her the lowest challenge possible. It is much easier (psychologically) to deal with danger on easier terrain.”

In other words, escort your clients out of the Yikes Zone to help them manage fear effectively. Don’t jump right into the deep end of the pool. Start with easy challenges and gradually work up to the harder stuff. A giant step from, say, a 20-degree slope to a 40-degree slope can be daunting, causing a major spike in anxiety. But bridging that gap in, perhaps, 10 smaller steps can make each incremental increase in challenge seem far less intimidating.

One of the great difficulties for ski instructors in coping with clients’ fears can be identifying the specific cause. As Blakeslee points out, any number of variables—equipment, pitch, snow conditions, visibility, and even group dynamics—can be the culprit. Isolating the cause of the fear and creating an incremental progression of challenges to cope with it inevitably varies from one client to the next. And it isn’t necessarily gender-specific; men don’t deal with fear or challenges in a characteristically different way than women. “Gender is just one variable,” said Blakeslee, “but everyone is slightly different.”

One good strategy might be to heed the advice of Satchel Paige, the baseball pitcher whose career spanned 40 years in the Negro leagues and major leagues. Among Paige’s recommendations for a long and happy life was: “Keep the juices

flowing by jangling around gently as you move.” Translated for skiers, that means bouncing lightly on your feet, before a run and even while moving, not only to loosen up tense muscles but also maintain centered balance. Such movement isn’t really possible if the skier is leaning or sitting back.

Still, there is a common template that can be applied by instructors who are dealing with a student’s fear. First, identify the symptoms of fear, *and* the stimuli that might be causing it. Take steps to create a comforting and supportive atmosphere where fear can dissipate, by speaking in soothing and encouraging tones and explaining the challenge(s) that lie ahead. Build up challenges in small increments. And encourage clients to employ physiological and psychological exercises, e.g., controlled breathing, self-talk, and visualization to alleviate fear symptoms.

And ultimately, acknowledge that fear and its physical manifestations are natural and irrepressible responses to danger. Fright, flight, or fight—no matter how far humans have advanced over many millennia, we can’t escape the reality that in our deepest and most basic level of consciousness resides the hard-wired mentality of a primordial snake. <sup>32</sup>

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

Build up challenges  
in small increments

**Bouncing lightly  
on your feet before a run  
not only loosens up tense  
muscles but also maintains  
centered balance.**

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By Peter Kray

# How 4 Four Teams Became One

*Assessing the Legacy of the 2008-12 PSIA-AASI Teams*

Only time will tell the true legacy of the 2008–12 PSIA-AASI Teams, with each successive winter helping to clarify which ideas, innovations, and especially which people will have a lasting impact. From the advent of rocker technology and how the teams embraced it, to the rise of the class-encompassing session lesson, the growth of adaptive lessons across all disciplines, and the renewed focus on kids, there are so many exciting things that this group helped define and promote that only a clairvoyant could pick exactly what snowsports instructors in 2061 will still be talking about.

One thing that seems certain, though, is that the role the teams played in the 2011 Interski in St. Anton, Austria, will have a lot to do with how that “legacy” conversation starts. Not just because St. Anton was the venue where they presented so many of the aforementioned innovations (many of which have been well-documented in the pages of *32 Degrees* by the team members themselves), but also because of how the four teams—Alpine, Adaptive, Nordic, and Snowboard—came together to prepare for the event.

“Obviously, rocker was the technological piece that was tied to Interski—and how the teams worked to wrap their arms around and master new technology like no other team before is really an awesome story,” said PSIA-AASI Professional Development Manager Earl Saline. “As is the fact that the Adaptive Team for the first time truly is an equal player within the teams, and how much Bill and Geoff are respected.

“But,” he added, “I’d have to say that ‘connectivity’ is the one word that comes to mind when I think about how these teams worked together, and how everyone was a part of what the teams accomplished,” he added.

Saline said that much of that sense of connectivity came about as a result of the four teams sharing so many notes, practice sessions, and shared epiphanies as they carved down to the core of which emerging *and* timeless elements of U.S. instruction they wanted to present. What they kept realizing, he said, was how much each discipline has in common. How sliding on snow is still just sliding on snow, no matter what anyone is skiing or riding on; how every instructor shares the same basic goals of connection, understanding, and

accomplishment; and most important, “How when we all work together, we can achieve great things.”

Of course, the role of external factors like Interski, and the sudden explosion of rocker technology, helped expedite that sense of collective purpose. In terms of rocker, and the ease of turn initiation it represents, it’s hard to imagine that there will ever again be a single shift in technology that so clearly affects everything—from telemark skis to snowboards to alpine skis and sit-skis—all at once.

But technology is always changing, sometimes as fast as the weather. And for some of those instructors with the longest tenure on the team, there seems to have been an even deeper shift.

“For sure, out of every team I have been a part of this was the most interactive amongst all of the disciplines,” said Michael Rogan, PSIA Alpine Team Captain. “In preparation for Interski, we collaborated on a lot. Our indoor presentation was built by Josh Spoelstra from the Snowboard Team, Ross Matlock from the Nordic Team, Adaptive Team Captain Bill Bowness, and me.”

Rogan said that multi-discipline presentation of instruction—with a culture of connection as the common thread—was a key aspect of what the teams wanted other countries to understand about the overall focus of teaching in the U.S. But he also likes to point to other successes at home in which the teams have played an integral part, especially in working with the association’s education department to more quickly provide insight to the PSIA-AASI membership. In particular, the use of the Internet to share information, especially with regard to the ever-expanding—and now free—*Movement Matrix*, of which he said, “That’s something the teams were involved in from the get-go. These teams were the first to be involved in the creation of something like that.”

Like Saline, Rogan also hopes that one of the lasting legacies of the present teams is one of collaboration, and working together to achieve common outcomes. But he goes one step further, turning that concept around to focus back on the interaction among team members in each discipline, and how quickly they each take ownership of the messages and ideas that they are individually trying to present.

“On the Alpine Team, I think with (Alpine Coach) Rob Sogard’s guidance, there was really a sense of making sure that everyone was involved in the process, and in the direction of where we went,” said Rogan. “I like to think that we are setting the next team up for that level of absolute participation, because there are so many new ways now to get the message out.”

Asked whether the basics—the student-centered heart and soul and skill-based essentials—of teaching have changed as a result of the new technology, Rogan thinks not. More appropriately, he said, the equipment has caught up to what the best instructors have always taught.

“I think the Skills Concept and Centerline have potentially become more relevant now,” Rogan said, citing two of the most lasting legacies of the past. “The blending of skills is more important than it ever was, and actually a lot easier now to put into practice. Frankly, in the past, even when you were talking



Alpine Team Captain Michael Rogan helped tout rocker technology.

Cesar Priotto



Bill Bowness, Michael Rogan, and Josh Spoelstra epitomize teamwork in an indoor presentation.

Cesar Priotto



National Academy attendees benefit from team wisdom.

Julie Shipman



Adaptive Team members Geoff Krill and Bill Bowness share the Interski scene with Teams Manager Katie Ertl.

Cesar Priotto

about edging and pressuring, there was always still a little bit of hopping around because of the antiquated equipment.”

Echoing one of Rogan’s points, PSIA-AASI Teams Manager Katie Ertl said that she also thinks one of the lasting legacies of this squad is how much more closely they worked with the education department (now known as the professional development department). While giving considerable credit to Saline and former department co-manager Ben Roberts, she also points to the welcoming, ready-for-anything nature of the instructors on the teams, and how hard they worked.

“They really are some the nicest, most approachable people

**“I like to think that we are setting the next team up for that level of absolute participation, because there are so many new ways now to get the message out.” —Michael Rogan, PSIA Alpine Team Captain**

I’ve ever worked with,” Ertl said. “From the office to the teams on the hill, there was always a sense of willingness to tackle change, which in this day and age is key to the success of all of us.”

Most important, Ertl said, that ongoing interaction between the professional development department and the teams will have a direct impact on the membership, providing the kind of immediate information that can help fuel every instructor’s personal growth.

“In some ways the teams have always represented an arm of the department, and what we have with these team members together represents a top ski and snowboard school in its own right, which for all of the divisions continues to be a valuable resource,” said Ertl. “It’s much like the constant level of interactivity in a lesson itself, where you are continually trying to shape what you’re presenting to the best benefit of your student. The question is always how to take the best advantage of that.”

Which may be the most important legacy of all as far as this team is concerned—that as a team, and an association, everyone really is working for the benefit of each other.

It’s an idea that may have been best summed up by Snowboard Team Coach Lane Clegg at the 2011 Team Training session at Copper Mountain. Along with the other members of the AASI Snowboard Team, Clegg was busy trying to summarize all of the accomplishments of the present team for the team that comes next. He said he felt it was important to provide a kind of template for the next team, outlining what had been accomplished, and especially what new challenges and opportunities they might expect.

“We want the next team to be as well-positioned as possible to carry all of this momentum forward,” Clegg said. “We especially don’t want them to feel as if they have to try and start from scratch.” ❄️

*Peter Kray is the special projects editor for 32 Degrees, focusing on emerging snowsports trends and on-snow innovations. Kray skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is the founder of Shred White and Blue ([www.shredwhiteandblue.com](http://www.shredwhiteandblue.com)) a media and apparel company celebrating American boardsports.*



AASI Snowboard Team Coach Lane Clegg (right) meets with international colleagues.

Cesar Proffo



Alpine Team member Nick Herrin works with a National Academy attendee.

Julie Shipman



LEFT: Alpine Team coach Rob Sogard touches base with Ertl. RIGHT: Nordic Team member Tom Marshall pushes the rocker message.

Cesar Proffo



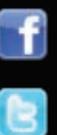
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# INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH: DESPITE SCANT SNOW, LEARN TO SKI AND SNOWBOARD MONTH SETS THE HOOK

By **PETER KRAY**

**L**earn to Ski and Snowboard Month (LSSM), January's nationwide initiative to get new and lapsed skiers and snowboarders on the snow via deep lift ticket, lesson, and equipment discounts, came roaring into the fall of 2011 with a head of steam and a focus on more than doubling the previous season's impact.

From the 2009–10 season to the 2010–11 season, the number of people who participated in the program grew from 30,000 to 75,000. This year's goal was 150,000 participants, and there was good reason to think that was a fair target. The entire industry was coming off of record skier visits and snowsports retail sales the previous year. And with 30 states participating in LSSM; partners such as PSIA-AASI and the National Ski Areas Association; a dozen supporting brands including Rossignol, Marker, Volkl and Head; and ambassadors such as Glen Plake and Bode Miller it seemed the sky was the limit.

And it was, at least in terms of the lack of snow that fell from it. The same uber-dry weather pattern that kept many areas from even running the lifts until January, made it difficult to offer skiing or riding to anyone, let alone to introduce new people to the sport. Winter Trails, a kind of one-day, free-heel version of LSSM created to get people cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, actually had to offer hiking options at some of its nearly 75 venues the day the event was held on January 7.

"Several sites that were snowless had snowshoes and cross-country skis on hand



Sherri Harbin

and were able to talk about the two sports, but were forced to hike instead of actually using the equipment," said Reese Brown, the nordic director for SnowSports Industries America (SIA).

Brown said that although official numbers had not been announced, organizers believe that the lack of snow will result in a drop in attendance, and in a statement said, "Winter Trails had really strong momentum following last year's event and great partners helping to spread the Winter Trails message. Unfortunately Mother Nature did not cooperate."

With official numbers for Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month also unavailable at press time, LSSM Director Mary Jo Tarallo was reluctant to make a guess regarding how much the dry weather might have affected the initiative. What she did say was that web traffic for the LSSM site ([skiandsnowboardmonth.org](http://skiandsnowboardmonth.org))

was up about 40 percent over the previous year, and that at least in the case of beginners, "You don't need a lot of snow to introduce them to the skiing and snowboarding experience."

Tarallo said several areas did proclaim their snowmaking capabilities during January, while advertising that it "was the perfect time to learn." She said she heard anecdotal reports of strong lesson traffic in Michigan, of 3,000 Boy Scouts taking lessons at Winterplace Ski Resort in West Virginia, and even of some areas reporting a rise in beginner-lesson volume even as overall skier visits dropped. In addition, the governors of Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia did officially declare the month of January as Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, helping to market snowsports to the regional customer that much of the initiative was created to target.

On a local and national level, PSIA-AASI Executive Director and CEO Mark Dorsey said partnering with LSSM represents a clear way for the association to work with the snowsports industry to try and drive more lesson traffic. "It ties us into a major industry initiative to get more people into skiing and snowboarding at the beginner level," Dorsey said. "And the best thing is that it does that by directly promoting the professional instructor, and their role in not only getting people started skiing and snowboarding, but also staying with it."

While PSIA-AASI's focus is to get people excited about skiing and snowboarding year-round, Dorsey said that LSSM "helps punctuate it." In the interest of creating more skiers and snowboarders in innovative new ways, PSIA-AASI announced a partnership in January with national outdoor retailer Recreational Equipment, Inc., (REI), to offer introductory ski and snowboard lessons at REI stores in Puget Sound, Washington, and Reading, Massachusetts.

Two-hour in-store lessons taught by REI Outdoor School instructors will be followed by half-day on-snow lessons from PSIA-AASI instructors at Stevens Pass in Washington and Wachusett Mountain in Massachusetts.

Launched as a pilot program this year, REI and PSIA-AASI plan to fine-tune the entire procedure with an eye toward expanding it. In a release announcing the partnership, Ben Johns, REI snowsports merchandising management director, said, "These pilot programs will help us design a more comprehensive and positive learning experience for first-time skiers or snowboarders."

Looking forward for LSSM, Tarallo said there are already discussions about how to extend the initiative's impact. One idea was to expand the "Bring a Friend Challenge," into February, by which incentives are offered to anyone who took a lesson in January and brings a friend with them when they come back the following month. She said there have also been conversations with representatives

from First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign against childhood obesity wanting information for their blog. And despite the weather challenges, Tarallo said the long-term collaborative relationships being strengthened through the initiative are continuing to form the baseline for growing the sport.

"We continue to increase that sense of cross-pollination between the manufacturers, retailers and resorts, all of it with the same common purpose," Tarallo said. "All of it is focused on getting people to come to the ski areas and take ski and snowboard lessons, because when you do you're significantly more likely to stick with it. That is what it's all about." 

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*Peter Kray is the special projects editor for 32 Degrees, focusing on emerging snowsports trends and on-snow innovations. Kray skis, telemarks, and snowboards out of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is the founder of Shred White and Blue ([www.shredwhiteandblue.com](http://www.shredwhiteandblue.com)) a media and apparel company celebrating American boardsports.*

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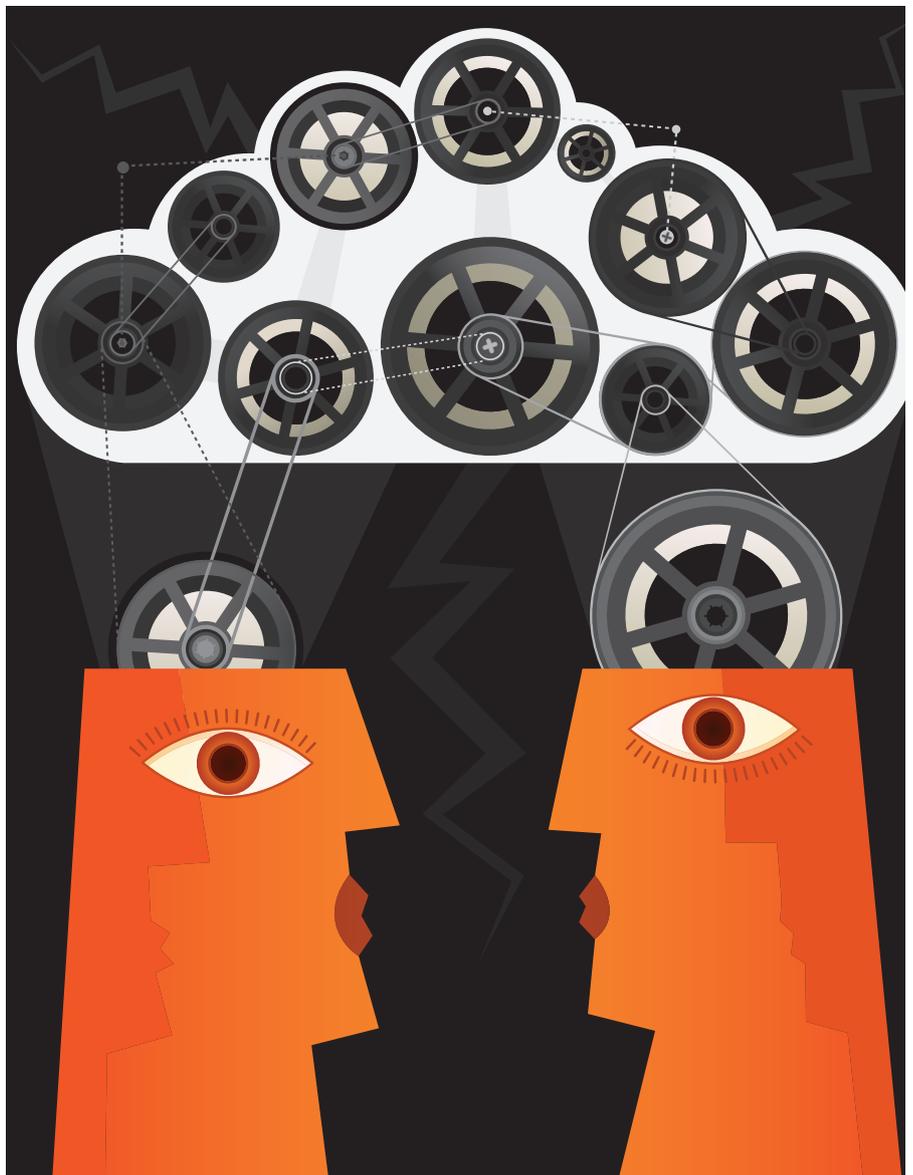
By JASON SCHETROMPF; Illustrations by TJAŠA ŽURGA

In this age of financial uncertainty coupled with a high unemployment, performing well in your position has never been as critical as it is today. You may say to yourself, "I have been teaching skiing and/or riding at the same resort for years and my position is secure." While you're correct in the fact that our industry has not seen the same down-sizing as other industries, resort operators are increasingly measuring the effectiveness of their operations.

Assessments of effectiveness look closely at the quality of products and services offered. These will inevitably have some reflection on how your individual performance contributes to the overall performance of the school. This article is not meant to scare you about the security of your job or to form you into a mindless automaton that sucks up to your boss. Rather, it discusses strategies and techniques that you can employ *in conjunction* with your supervisor to make yourself invaluable to your organization, the industry, and most importantly, our guests.

## KNOW YOUR PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

Performance systems in well-developed schools are typically defined in the employee manual or job guidelines. Effective performance systems seek to closely align with the mission, purpose, values, business goals, and current strategic direction of the organization.



Brainstorm and collaborate.

Study the document that facilitates your performance review or appraisal process, know what each of the metrics entail (such as days worked, return rates, roll rates), and how they are calculated. Also, understand the behavior expectations or other competencies that you will be measured upon.

Less-developed schools may not be as organized in terms of communicating expectations and documenting performance, but they still evaluate their employees. In these cases, pay attention to the practices of the instructors who receive praise from their peers and their supervisors. Or, simply ask your supervisor, "What is it about her (or him) that makes them so successful?" Whether your school is highly developed or less developed, partner with your supervisor to help grow your understanding of what it will take to be a top performer in your school.

### **KNOW YOURSELF**

Next, examine your self-awareness. This concept is simple: How well do you know your own strengths and weaknesses? People who have low self-awareness tend to overestimate their capabilities, which frequently results in sub-par performance.

We all have shadow areas that need to be brought into the light. Introspection, important as it is, is only half the equation. The other integral part is soliciting and carefully listening to other's feedback.

This info may come via repeat customers, close colleagues, valued friends, close family members, and direct supervisors. Self-awareness forms the basis for planning your development needs, and relates intimately to others' notions of your integrity as a person. Again, these discussions can be started with a well-timed, straight-forward question like, "What are some areas where I excel and what are some areas where I need to improve?" Be sure to get a wide range of opinions because each answer will be charged with elements of each person's individual values. Try not to take the feedback too personally and always keep in mind that the information is a powerful tool toward making you a better employee and a better person.

As a child I heard one colloquialism



**Examine self-awareness.**

## **How and what an organization celebrates speaks volumes to the staff about what your organization actually values.**

often: "Don't bite off more than you can chew!" This was not in reference to my dining etiquette. Rather, it was a wise and gentle reminder to set specific, achievable goals. Understanding where your strengths and weaknesses fit into the types of skills required is the next step in determining where your goals fall on the spectrum of achievability and the level of specificity.

Teaching snowboarding or skiing requires a broad set of skills, both hard

and soft. Hard skills in our industry include any function of our job that is teachable, testable, and has some ability to be measured. These would include things like proficiency with movement analysis, teaching concepts, a second language, skiing and riding, lesson protocols, product knowledge, and support software.

Think about certification and specialist exams, as they represent skills that are both teachable and testable; hence, they are mostly hard skills. Soft skills, on the

other hand, are not as tangible, but no less important. In fact, these are the skills that foster the relationships that enable you to showcase your hard skills. Soft skills in our industry encompass things like empathy, communication, motivations, team work, self efficacy, an ability to be coached, time management, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

Broadly speaking, hard skills are easier to acquire and can be either high or low on the specificity spectrum depending on the level of knowledge or skills that you are seeking to acquire. This is due to the measurable nature of hard skills. Conversely, soft skills—which are an extension of our personalities—may have longer achievement horizons, but are easier to be more specific about. It is important for both supervisors and instructors to recognize that the underlying assumption behind teaching soft skills is the belief that people can and will change, provided there is a compelling enough reason.

### PLAN YOUR PATHWAY

Once you determine what realm of skills are required (hard/soft or a combination of the two), your focus can turn to planning your development pathway. Here are a few things to keep in mind. Development plans, whether professional or personal, share more commonalities than differences. Start by considering your long-term goals or where you would like to be in three to five years. Long-term goal statements might run along the lines of “I want to achieve the highest status or level of instructor in my school” or “I want to be more adaptable and versatile as an instructor.”

These goals should be aspirational yet achievable. The length of your timeline will depend on the loftiness and/or complexity of your long-term goal. It’s also a good idea to write down your rationale for setting this as a goal.

This is important because with long-term goals it’s easy to lose sight of what motivated you to set the goal in the first place. Consider what success will look like or how will it be measured. The goal of achieving the highest status or top level of instructor in your school can be

assessed in terms of title or certification earned, while the goal of being more adaptable and versatile might require writing down what the end result will look like. For instance, “Three years from now I will be able to effectively teach kids and adults in both private and group lesson settings up to the intermediate level.”

Once you’ve established your long-term goal and how it will be measured, it’s time to create an action plan or set of short-term goals that will lead you to your destination. Short-term goals for hard skills address knowledge and specific capabilities while short-term goals for soft skills address attitudes and behaviors. It’s prudent to identify—early in the process—the resources you’ll need in order to achieve each of your short-term goals. Snowsports industry resources include written materials, multi-media tools, clinics, training, new technology, physical and mental fitness, suitable terrain and conditions, lesson experience, and people to help you be successful. Share your plan with your supervisors and them to help identify where, when and how to obtain the resources you’ll need.



Set aspirational, achievable goals.

### CELEBRATE SUCCESS

The most overlooked and underutilized aspect of professional growth and development is taking time to celebrate your successes. Let’s face it, development is hard work. Continuously pressing your personal and professional boundaries is stressful and frequently requires sacrifices in other areas of your life. As you tick off short-term goals and other stepping stones make sure you reward yourself. Occasionally stop along the path to smell the proverbial roses. This simple activity will help strengthen your resolve to follow through with your long-term goals.

Be certain to include in the celebration everyone who has had a hand in your current success. As we all know from instructing, helping others to learn can be exhausting. While a large portion of your success will come from your determination, the rest comes from your support team. This team includes supervisors, peers, mentors, trainers,

friends, and family members.

And here's a note for supervisors: Never underestimate the power of publicly recognizing accomplishments. How and what an organization celebrates speaks volumes to the staff about what your organization actually values. Share stories of success and include where the instructor started, how they got there, what they did, and how this accomplishment contributes to the success of the school. We all enjoy being affiliated with people and things that are successful.

The irony of this topic is that we ask our guests everyday to take very similar steps in order to learn how to ride and ski. Addressing your development will make you far more empathetic and enable you to relate more closely to the experience of our guests. 32°

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*Jason Schetrompf is the snowboard training and parks coordinator at the Vail Ski and Snowboard School. He's also an examiner in PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division.*



**Success comes through teamwork.**

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*JP Chevalier, Director, Copper Ski & Ride School*



## PURSUIT OF TECHNIQUE IS A WORTHY JOURNEY

By JOHANNA HALL

What does the accompanying photo reveal about technique? The skier is showing a little hip rotation on the left leg? A more aggressive push-off and weight transfer is needed? The skier needs to direct her body more over the gliding ski?

Okay, now what does the photo *really* tell you? There is a big smile on the skier's face and skate skiing looks like a lot of *fun*!

Skiing can mean many different things to each of us. What's important to you may not hold the same priority to your locker-row neighbor or to your guests. Common denominators, however, are the knowledge, skills, and motivations that we apply into a "technique." Technique changes from person to person, country to country, and year to year. Some look at technique simply as a means to an end, while others look at perfection of technique as the end goal.

My pursuit of proper alpine technique started in the mid 1970s at Vail, Colorado, during the early years of my alpine instructing career. Inspired by some of the best trainers in country, I quickly became a clinic junkie in what turned out to be a lifetime pursuit of *proper* skiing technique.

At the time, proper technique was narrowly defined by the "final form" we were required to master for our



Michael Bye

**Nordic skiing offers the author a new opportunity to pursue proper technique.**

certification exam. Imagine the Dark Ages when turn demonstrations were separated by a traverse. Turns were not linked. Each turn had to be "neutralized" by rising to a traverse so that the turn was performed in-and-of itself with "pure" movements unaided by the momentum of the previous turn.

We worked to master the technique required to perform these maneuvers correctly. Our certification trainers made sure we cut the mustard before signing off on our application forms.

For those of us showing up for early-morning or after-work training, there

were countless exercises to enhance our technique: javelin turns, crab-walks, flying wedges, hop turns of every variety, leapers, hangers, one-ski turns, 360's, one-pole and drag-pole drills, thumpers, and White Pass turns, to name a few. What fun we had skiing the ranges of possible movements and exploring the fringes at the risk of looking silly. The pursuit of technique, driven by the isolation of skills and movements through games and exercises, made landing on the target that much sweeter.

Today, linking turns with simultaneous



by **Champion**

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leg movement is the Holy Grail. Clinic leaders carefully monitor instructors' technique to make sure they pass the exam. The skill emphasis may have changed—and the games, exercises, and activities to reach the target—may have changed, but the pursuit of proper ski technique is what makes our journey so enjoyable.

Movements I worked on way back then have only resulted in what might be considered “bad habits” today, but it was the diligence of the practice that I cherish. The desire to be the best I can be, to practice with coaching, and to work on something new until it becomes automatic is what I consider fun. Putting it all together, in a multitude of situations during a typical run down the mountain, is the ultimate prize from all the hard work.

My best coaches were willing to hurt my feelings. Those sugar-coating coaches who only tell you, “That’s great” or “Looks good” aren’t for me. I had only a handful of coaches who nudged me along the right path with their honest feedback. They let me know when it wasn’t right. Besides, I *knew* it wasn’t right, because I wasn’t doing whatever *it* was.

And with their spectrum of feedback—“That’s not it, try again” to “You need to tip your ski on edge earlier in the turn” to “That’s good! You got it!”—provided me with the comparisons to change my technique for the better.

Constant judgment had repercussions. The paranoia of good versus bad turns haunts me still. Skiing under a chairlift, with the risk that someone might see one of the bad turns, is something I’m still not quite comfortable doing.

The pursuit of proper technique has been good to me. I was able to gain my certifications and even went on to become a clinic leader and examiner. Then *I* was the one imposing the good versus bad. I tried to be an honest coach, letting people know when they

needed to make changes. (Isn’t it funny how we all end up teaching how *we* like to be taught?) The rewards were threefold when instructors I coached were able to master their own technique *and* reach their full potential.

I’m no longer in the ski industry, but have a new circle of friends I nordic ski with. I fell in love with skating and classic skiing five years ago, and my old habits have happily resurfaced. I am in pursuit of proper technique again. Now it’s all about the V-1, V-2, V-2 alternate for skate, and the kick-and-glide for classic. Add in endurance, strength, aerobic capacity, and wax options, and it all equals a wonderful new way to pursue technique. I spend my lunch skiing at the local nordic center, and on weekends I test my progress in the local race series or

forward.” Countless nuggets of wisdom keep me entertained while enjoying the run. If my friends ask, I am happy to pass some of them along, but mostly we just meet and grab the next lift to the top.

The mindset of diligence you learn while pursuing technique crosses over to on-snow disciplines, other sports, and all aspects of life. Because of the wonderful coaching and positive rewards I experienced in alpine skiing, I am not afraid to challenge myself. Even huge steps backward or major life adversity has seemed less overwhelming because of my pursuit of technique. The pursuit taught me how to set achievable goals and short-term objectives that help me constantly move forward.

As you gear up for a lesson where you’ll pass on your wisdom to an eager

**My best coaches were willing to hurt my feelings. I had only a handful of coaches who nudged me along the right path with their honest feedback. They let me know when it wasn’t right.**

have fun trying to keep up with my newfound friends.

I occasionally alpine ski and have discovered a new world of just plain skiing. We get off the lift and ski down to the lift. There’s no stopping and talking, no one makes judgments about right and wrong, and we all have fun together. It is amazing how much fun we all have while not quite doing it “right.” And no one thinks twice about skiing under chairlifts!

My pursuit of technique through the years has allowed me great joy and confidence. I still think about my turns and hear little voices of what to do to make my day more enjoyable. When the snow gets hard, I hear “Tip the skis on an early edge.” When I ski powder I hear “Keep your pole baskets moving

student, remember that it’s all about the pursuit. Instill the love of learning, the respect for hard work, and the payoff for making positive changes. Let students know how they are doing along the way and rejoice in each step forward. Allow plenty of time for practice, as correct repetition is the path to muscle memory.

Keep it fun, keep it simple. And remember, if you instill the passion of the pursuit, your students will keep coming back! ☺

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*Johanna Hall is an emeritus examiner in Rocky Mountain Division. She was awarded a lifetime membership in PSIA-AASI for contributions made during her career, and is considering getting certified to teach nordic skate and classic skiing.*



# AN IMPRESSIVE VIEW.

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# CERTIFICATION: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

By **TIM JOHNSON, PSIA-AASI ASSISTANT EDITOR**

**T**he answer to the headline is entirely up to you. But if you're curious, read on about three snowsports pros who expanded their knowledge base and found success as they upgraded their on-snow skill sets. This trio—Mike Mettler, Steve Muise, and Eliza Kuntz—comes from different parts of the country, instructs on snowboard and skis, and each has a certification story that directly impacted their talents and professional growth.

## A SCORECARD

"I've always seen certification as a personal thing," said Mike Mettler, director of skiing and operations at Perfect North Slopes in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. "For most people, it's an issue that they have to have that [certification] in order to be accepted by their peers. I see it more as something that gives the individual some self-confidence, more feeling of their own net worth."

For Mettler, the path toward certification also represents a way to keep track of one's progress in the profession. "I look at it as our kind of scorecard, like a golf match or football game," he said. "It's just a way that people can qualify themselves, how they match up to other skiers and ski instructors. Most people who get into the sport are driven, and this is their carrot that gives them something to continue to chase and keep searching to get better."



Earl Saline

**Training for certification represents a path toward personal and professional growth.**

Even though Mettler is a big advocate of certification, his approach is to make his instructors aware of the opportunity and provide training but not necessarily crack the whip. "From a ski school perspective, I've never been one to force people to become certified. We just make all the options available and hope that they see the value of it in there," he said. "But what we gain when people do become certified is a commitment to the sport and a commitment to teaching."

We do plenty of in-house training and it gives our instructors an opportunity to have a more well-rounded approach to learning."

## MORE THAN MORE MONEY

"I'm being straight up; When I got my Level I, it was simply for a raise," according to Steve Muise, director of the Timberline Snowsports Center at Timberline, Oregon. Muise is also a snowboard examiner and Level III snowboard instructor with a



Julie Shipman

snowboarding for the last 15 years getting paid for it and supporting them. You can make it happen if you go for it.”

### SUPPORT AND ADVANCEMENT

“I was very fortunate to have a role model when I started, and professional development was held out in front of me when I joined,” said Eliza Kuntz, director of base area operations at Red Lodge Mountain, a Level III alpine and Level I nordic instructor, and Northern Rocky Mountain Division’s representative on the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors. “It was just kind of ‘if you want to be a ski instructor, this is how it goes.’ You didn’t ask about the pin or the pay; it was just a matter of ‘this is what we do here.’ I trained for my Level I and I got certified and joined the association.”

Having a wide range of supporters on the hill was also a plus, Kuntz acknowledged. “There are two reasons to get certified: professional support and professional advancement. The professional support is the education aspect; the manuals, the *Movement Matrix*, and the other people around you who have been through it and can help guide you. Support is a huge part of it, which is above and beyond what you would get from a regular training program coming down from general management. You become a member of a huge support group.”

Although it sounds like quite a challenge, Kuntz says the results were worth it. “It’s a great way to continue to better yourself. You’re following these standards, the education requirements, and you’re attending clinics. As you move through the system you automatically become a better instructor, a better athlete, and better at customer service. And then you obviously keep at it, and soon you’re the person talking to others about getting into the pool.”

### JUMP IN, THE WATER’S FINE!

If you’re interested in “getting into the pool,” contact your snowsports school supervisor, manager, or director. No matter where you are in your professional development path, PSIA-AASI’s nationally recognized credentialing program is ready to help support your goals. ☑

### What better training could you get than one-on-one time with a member of the PSIA-AASI teams?

Children’s Specialist 1 credential. “It was my first year instructing and I wanted to make a bit more money. In my second year I realized that it was something that I really enjoyed doing. I didn’t really have a current [snowboard] trainer to help me out, but we had a couple of examiners on staff that were skiers and I went and rode with them a bit. They let me know that the Level II was more in depth.”

Taking the next step in the process was a challenge, according to Muise. “When I started training at the end of my second year I didn’t know what they were looking for. It was difficult . . . but I passed, Muise said. “That really opened my eyes and made me hungry for the next step. I breezed through Level III because of the process of Level II. Every step I took after that first year I understood that it would

help me improve as a coach and as an instructor. And it improved my riding—which was a great bonus.”

Muise doesn’t press certification for certification’s sake; he does it to help develop skills. “What I try to do with my staff is showcase the fact that, okay, you get a number after your name, but it’s the process that’s important. By going through the Level I exam, more important than getting that number by your name is the fact that now you’re a more well-rounded instructor. My goal is to get everyone to understand that it’s not just an exam, it’s training to make you into the type of instructor that we—or any other mountain—would like to have.

“What have I gained from it? I have a wife and three kids, and I’ve been

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM A EUROTTEST EXPERIENCE

By PHILIPPE ASTIÉ

- 7:00 a.m. Rise and shine.
- 8:00 a.m. Catch a bus to the base, then a funicular train, then a high-altitude tram.
- 9:45 a.m. Reach the training ground at 11,500 feet; temperature is about 0°F. Train hard in giant slalom until 2 p.m., no break.
- 2:00 p.m. Get back to base, grab late lunch.
- 3:30 p.m. Video analysis or gym training.
- 5:00 p.m. Ski maintenance.
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner. Lights out shortly after.

Repeat. For six weeks. At the end, take your skills to a gnarly World Cup-caliber giant slalom course—where you have less than two minutes to prove you have the right stuff.

Welcome to the Eurotest, a giant slalom, FIS-format test instructors must pass in order to attain the highest level of certification in several European countries, including France and Austria. The equivalent level for “passing” is 110–140 FIS points. I’d wager that local kids in intense racing programs based in ski areas typically reach that level around the age of 15; most strong skiers without racing experience often need to take this course—or a similar one—two or three seasons in a row to have a fighting chance. (To get a good idea of what a passing run looks like, check out this video at <http://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=475192166629&oid=37595260338>.)

Beyond achieving a very high skiing level, people who conquer the Eurotest have accumulated a wealth of knowledge in equipment preparation and tuning, boot fitting, and physical conditioning—plus a mental and physical toughness that



Philippe Astié

**A 13-year-old showing vision and movement directed toward the apex of the turn, balance on the outside ski, and simultaneous edge work. Racing promotes strong, accurate skiing movements; what about teaching skills?**

will serve them immensely in their chosen profession. In fact, passing the Eurotest puts French and Austrian instructors on the path to certification—licensure, really—that allows them to open their own snowsports school.

I followed that opening regimen for just one week last winter with Podium Ski, an organization that offers a preparation program for the Eurotest. The other trainees were 20- and 30-somethings, there for the full course from mid October to December—and who went on to the first Eurotest of the season at France’s l’Alpe d’Huez in early December. One passed, a couple were within striking distance, and everyone else needed a lot more work. As for me, I was 48 years old at the time and was nowhere near the required level for passing. That said, I felt a strong improvement in my skiing, which I carried through my season. I didn’t train for the Eurotest this year; rather I committed myself to training with the local masters racing program,

which I know will greatly enhance my technical skiing ability.

## A MANDATE DOES NOT A TEACHER MAKE

Without a doubt, race training is exhilarating . . . but an overarching question that comes to mind when comparing American instructors to their counterparts across the water is this: For all the Europeans’ focus on *technical skill*, is such a high level of skiing proficiency really necessary to teach quality lessons?

Wanting to examine the issue for myself, I subjected myself to that Eurotest training, did a bit of research, and consulted international colleagues who are familiar with standards embraced by the International Ski Instructors Association (ISIA). And you know what? As a bi-national who teaches in the United States and recently earned PSIA Level III certification, being exposed to the expectations of my birth land left me humbled—and motivated me to keep

learning and get better at my profession.

But lest you think you have to book a transatlantic flight to go to that next level of professional development, recognize—as I did—that the means to train and better yourself are available here too, they’re just not mandated as part of a certification path. And you don’t necessarily have to hold your own on a race course to teach a life-changing lesson.

### COMPARATIVELY SPEAKING

If, as I did, you were to venture onto a high glacier in the French Alps to train with Eurotest candidates and talk with students and coaches from several European countries, what would likely jump out at you is that the requirements for reaching the highest certification are significantly different in Europe than they are in the United States. Historically, each country created its own training standards and certification system, but when Europe started to meld as a single political and economic entity in the 1990s, some degree of convergence ensued. In 2000, a giant slalom test, originally used as a performance measure in France, started being applied within key Alpine countries as part of their full certification path, under the guise of safety. (The argument being, apparently, that the highest technical ability as demonstrated on FIS courses is necessary to ensure guest safety—seriously!).

It’s important to recognize that areas operate differently in different countries. A key distinction between the American and European snowsports resorts is that schools in America are—generally—a component of a resort’s overall guest-service plan and business model, and often resort-owned. In Europe, ski schools are usually independently-owned and operated businesses, while the area is focused on operating lifts. There might be several snowsports schools competing for the same business at the same area. A key requirement to open one, and subject to the regulations of a given country, is to hold the highest level qualification available in that country—an added motivation if you are really an entrepreneur, rather than simply a focused teacher trying to make a living at it.

What are other requirements of several European countries, and the standard being promoted by ISIA, for the highest level of certification? Well, besides training for and passing the Eurotest:

- ◆ The ability to teach in a second language (a bit of fudging goes on here on the part of many a native English speaker, or so I hear!). Independent of certification, many ski schools also require the ability to teach in a third language.
- ◆ The ability to teach a second discipline (snowboard, telemark, adaptive, etc.) at beginner and intermediate levels.
- ◆ Racing ability (and race coaching depending on the national cert system).
- ◆ Knowledge of introductory physiology and biomechanics.
- ◆ Euro mountain safety certificates 1 and 2 (encompassing knowledge of snow conditions, avalanche safety, and an ability to guide out-of-bounds outside of glacier areas).
- ◆ A first aid certificate.

With the French certification example, covering this curriculum entails 12 weeks of formal, full-time training time over several scheduled class/training periods, interspersed with additional mandatory internships. My research indicates that an aspiring instructor can realistically plan on taking 7 to 10 years to reach full cert (although it can theoretically be done in 4 to 5 years), at a cumulative cost of 12,000 € to 14,000 € (\$15,000 to \$20,000); this being mitigated by the fact that one can work under a “trainee” status for up to four years after the first classroom session and the slalom test; and longer once he or she has passed the GS Eurotest. (I understand that the British system is equally involved, time consuming, and costly. I have not investigated the details of other key national systems, e.g., Swiss, Austrian, Italian, but they look to cover much of the same ground, with comparable depth, using both country-specific courses/exams and the independently-offered courses/exams/Eurotest discussed here.)

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## SnowSports 360

### IS ALL THE TRAINING NECESSARY?

European instructors certainly have strong motivation to raise their game to a high level. But do they really need all of this to teach city slickers who go down the slopes twice a year? Does it make for better lessons?

Even within Europe, some items of the system are very controversial—particularly the Eurotest as a means to ensure “safety.” Frank Luiten, of the Dutch Snowsports Association (yes, I know, the Netherlands does not have actual alpine ski areas, but Dutch instructors *do* teach in the Alps and have several artificial-snow training hills back home) famously illustrated the debate at a 2008 ISIA meeting, saying “What we need are good driving instructors, not Formula 1 drivers.”

This was a rather amusing way to illustrate two fundamentally different approaches that a national association can take toward certification and training of its members. Either, as PSIA-AASI does, you focus on creating strong teaching environments (aimed at delivering relationship-based lessons), promoting an instructor image that the student can relate to (maybe even age- or gender-matched), ensuring strong teaching standards and a solid minimum skiing level, and delivering very effective lessons across a broad range of disciplines and proficiency levels (with an emphasis on retention of beginners and intermediates). Or, like in Europe, you promote a younger, athletic, race-ready instructor who will technically inspire and challenge clients to the highest levels whether it be in a race course or off-piste. For example, it is easier for an instructor teaching in the Alps to work in glacial areas or avalanche-prone areas because not much is really “out of bounds,” whereas avalanche-prone terrain in the U.S. is much more controlled.

Different philosophies lead to different outcomes. It’s fair to say that an instructor teaching in the heart of France, Austria, or Italy may have more

income potential than a U.S. counterpart, including the option to open and run their own school. (This certainly isn’t guaranteed—you still have to know how to operate a profitable business!) It is equally fair to mention that American areas are more successful at selling lessons per skier days than European ones because they cater more fully to the guest experience. In other words, the certification processes are matched to the environments in which one teaches, and the perceived needs of the guest.

### FREE TO CHOOSE

Personally, as I mentioned, this exposure to the expectation levels of a full-cert Euro left me humbled. I am really happy I passed my PSIA Level III, but this experience renewed my motivation to continue learning and growing past my current level—and become stronger at my profession. When I survey all the many areas where I could get further training, my inclination is to reinforce my Spanish, continue race training (within my modest abilities), take coaching courses with the United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA), and seek to coach entry-level race programs at my ski area.

An introduction to racing may not be your cup of tea, but if you aspire to higher levels the means to train and learn and better yourself beyond Level III are available here at home—whether it’s through avalanche or mountaineering/guiding courses, USSA race coaching credentials, certification as an adaptive instructor, involvement in masters racing programs, or a training regimen focused on becoming a division examiner and clinic leader. It’s just not *required*. And, of course, it’s not just Level III instructors who benefit from taking their game up a notch. Professional development pays dividends no matter your certification level. Take heart, too, that American snowsports schools generally offer ongoing training and education opportunities throughout the season, rather than structure things around multi-week courses.

To some extent, you could say that the American Teaching System is more “user-friendly” than the European ones. You can focus on whatever is applicable to your ski area needs and relevant to your personal

goals. Be passionate about it, get really good at it, and create a differentiation for yourself and for your ski area. That's the American way! 32°

*Philippe Astié passed his PSIA Level III certification at the young age of 48. He skis and teaches out of Park City, Utah, and fully intends to keep race training with the masters group in Park City, Utah.*



teacher—go to [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) and check out the Web Extras for 32 Degrees.

For more perspectives on the European performance measures for full-cert instructors—and what it means to be a good ski or snowboard

## ANOTHER OPINION: CERTIFICATION DOESN'T ALWAYS IMPROVE THE LESSON

BY BARRY WACKWITZ

How do you know if you're getting the best bang for your buck when taking a ski lesson?

Common logic would say the higher the certification, the better the lesson. In some cases this may be true . . . but all too often it is not. I believe that many exam certification bodies around the world have moved to over-educated systems that have little to do with the quality of the lesson.

For example, how can a racing speed test, a standard part of European ski teaching, possibly enhance the instructor's ability to teach a wedge turn? Can knowledge of snowpack and the skill to forecast the likelihood of an avalanche produce a top-quality beginner lesson?

I strongly doubt it.

I believe the main reason the European certifications are the way they are is to control who can teach—in the aftermath of the development of the European Union (EU). This now allows anyone with Level 4/ full certification in ISIA, which is approximately equivalent to a division examiner and clinic leader in PSIA, to open and run a ski school, provided the person holds an EU passport. Protectionism is alive and well in Europe. The tougher the exam process, the more the old boys' network can control who gets a cut of the business. It's quite simple, really.

For the sake of the overall product, it may be better to focus on how well all instructors teach the fundamentals of skiing. Perhaps every certification exam could have instructors show their developing knowledge of beginner, wedge turn, and basic parallel turns.

A Level 3 (or III) instructor should deliver a much higher quality low-level lesson than a new Level 1 (or I) teacher. Unfortunately

this is not always the case. I'd argue that the exam process only measures where an instructor is at that moment in time. On any given day there can be so many variables. On a blue-sky day, it's a pass and the same instructor may fail in a white-out. Soft snow versus hard snow may lead to different results. Interestingly, in some organizations the candidate has to pass the skiing portion of certification before the teaching. Isn't this the wrong way round? Instructors make their money teaching, not skiing.

Being a former chief examiner with the New Zealand Ski Instructors Association, I found it great fun to ask Level 3 candidates about low-level lessons. They were always shocked, because they had studied so hard for high-level skiing and teaching but had neglected the importance of developing an overall depth of knowledge. Top-quality instructors are always questioning how to be better at their job, and I believe this needs to be part of the certification process.

We instructors have a responsibility to the industry to maintain and develop the market. Surely all areas of the ski industry would benefit from more of the entry and low-level skiers discovering the great enjoyment of skiing that we all feel.

This can only be achieved by teaching great lessons regularly, so the customers become confident that they are going to improve every time they attend ski school. That's what it's all about!

*Barry Wackwitz is a former chief examiner and technical director for the New Zealand Ski Instructors Association and a two-time delegate to Interski for New Zealand. He teaches year round, at Mount Hutt, New Zealand, and Park City, Utah.*



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# FROM MASLOW TO NOW: A FRESH LOOK AT MOTIVATION

By JASON SCHETROMPF

Understanding the motivations of our guests is a critical and powerful skill that empowers us, as instructors, to make connections that are more meaningful. Motivations are much like the fuel we use to run our cars—they provide the drive that enables us to reach our destination. Conversely, not having enough fuel can leave us stranded and immobile.

This article examines the models and concepts about motivation that PSIA-AASI currently applies to snowsports instruction, as well as a few models with which you may be unfamiliar. Before turning to the models themselves, let's take a moment to define what motivations are and how they relate to instructors and our guests. According to most dictionaries, motivation has to do with the act of "motivating or providing a reason to act, behave, or perform in a specific manner." When getting to know our students, we typically ask "So, why are you taking a lesson today?" The answers give us a sense of what motivated our students to seek our services and help us begin to develop goals that are then used to formulate an action plan.

Let's now look at a formal definition that will serve as a basis for considering motivation models. According to *Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience/Motivation and Emotion*, (accessed via Wiki Books.org), "Motivation is an extended notion, which refers to the starting, controlling and upholding of corporal and psychic activities. It is declared by inner processes and variables which are used to explain behavioral

changes." According to the text, these bodily and emotional activities can be separated into *drives*, which are acts of motivation (like thirst and hunger) that have primarily biological purposes; and *motives*, which are driven by primarily social and psychological mechanisms.

These are both motivations—each have the inherent potential to drive behaviors—yet they represent clearly different needs. This definition aligns with American psychologist Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," which currently serves as PSIA-AASI's primary model for addressing needs/motivations.

## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY

A proponent of the "humanism" school of psychology, Maslow first outlined his concept of needs in 1943, in a *Psychological Review* article titled

"A Theory of Human Motivation." Humanistic theory espouses the belief that an individual's conscious experiences are uniquely individual and, therefore, highly subjective. More specifically, this subjectivity is founded in that individual's perceptions and understanding of the world. As a result, humanists employ qualitative research methods to arrive at their theories, the most basic assumption of which is the belief that humans exercise their free will in an effort to maximize their full potential (think "self-actualization").

Illustrated by a five-level pyramid diagram (fig. 1) Maslow's hierarchy of needs proposes that an individual must sequentially and completely satisfy lower, "basic" needs before moving up the pyramid to "higher" needs and—eventually—self-actualization. In a 2006

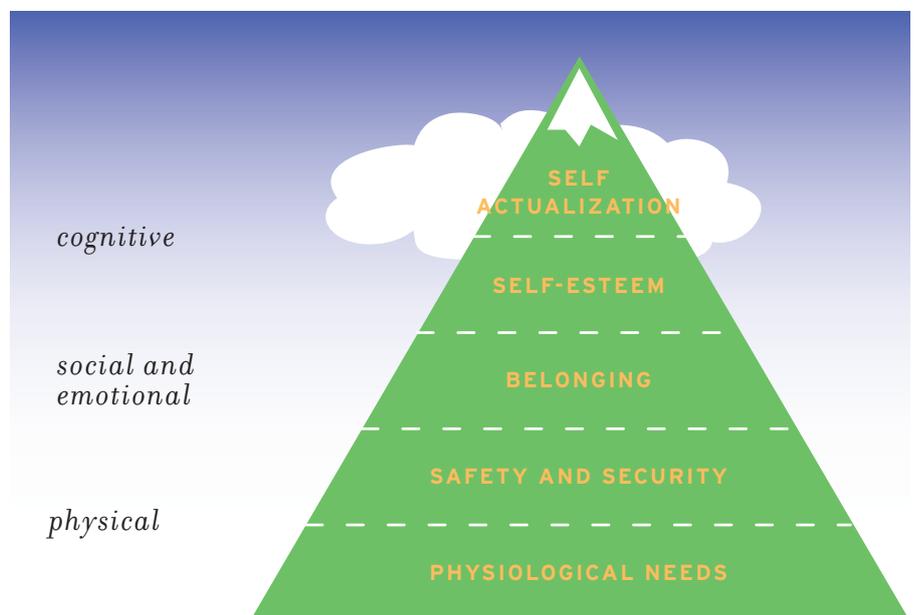


Figure 1

paper on Maslow, Dr. C. George Boeree describes Maslow's four needs at the bottom of the pyramid as "deficit needs," which are—from lowest to highest—physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, and self-esteem needs. This portion of the pyramid is used by snowsports instructors as a checklist of sorts that ensures they are meeting the fundamental needs of their guests. Instructors learn quickly in their careers the importance of fulfilling the lower three needs.

The fourth need, self-esteem, is less understood than the others yet it contributes directly to the degree of connection we are able to make with our guests. Boeree describes how Maslow broke self-esteem needs into two levels. "The lower one," he writes, "is the need for the respect of others, the need for status, fame, glory, recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, even dominance. The higher form involves the need for self-respect, including such feelings

as confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom."

This is a poignant reminder for instructors to provide a supportive and inclusive environment for all of their students. The list of feelings in the higher form makes for an ideal list of emotional outcomes for any lesson.

Self-actualization, or "being needs," represent the compulsion to always perform to your ultimate potential. Maslow believed that only a small percentage of individuals with a unique set of personality traits ever reach the level of self-actualization. It is very similar to the ever-elusive and aspirational idea of perfection.

### CHALLENGING MASLOW

Due in part to the loftiness and exclusivity of the need for self-actualization, challenges to the hierarchy of needs in the last decade. These new models have been driven by advancements in neuroscience, especially the use of

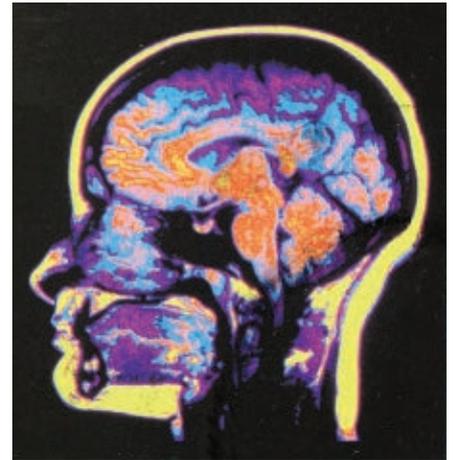


Figure 2

magnetic resonance imaging to measure brain activity in response to a variety of stimuli (fig. 2).

### FOUR DRIVES

As professors of organizational behavior at the Harvard Business School, Paul R. Lawrence and Nitin Nohria first presented their "Four Drives" model in the *Harvard Business Review* and went on

to publish *Driven: How Human Nature Shapes Our Lives* in 2002. Unlike the hierarchy of needs, this model identifies four independent drives that have their effect on the prefrontal cortex of the brain. The drives are: the drive to acquire, the drive to learn, the drive to bond, and the drive to defend.

Again, it's easy to see how knowledge of these drives can provide a framework for motivational considerations while teaching snowsports. Applying the Four Drive model to snowsports instruction, one could make a case that the drive to acquire speaks to the need for PSIA-AASI and schools to provide not only physical things like pocket guides, handbooks, and certification pins but also less tangible things like recognition and status. The drive to learn can encompass not only the need for some measure of improvement to occur but also to set goals with our guests that innately provide real challenge.

The drive to bond relates to the need to provide a social and personal connection with the sport, our organization, and us as individuals, while the drive to defend speaks to aligning with the basic beliefs of our guests but also to connecting our sports with our guests' purpose and passion. In considering the Four Drives model, it should be clear that there is considerable overlap of ideas in modern and historical models of motivation.

### SCARF MODEL

The last model I'd like to examine here is called the SCARF model, developed by leadership coach David Rock. It's made up of five domains of social experience: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness. While there is an assumed interrelationship of the five domains, the real power of the model stems from identifying and understanding the individual domains.

This model finds its origins in the relatively new field of social neuroscience, which places great value on the concept of minimizing threats and maximizing rewards—and how this response affects the all-encompassing ability of the brain

to subconsciously organize information. Simply put, the brain has learned to evaluate stimuli in the environment and either considers the information in terms of approach or avoidance. Rock contends that these are innate survival instincts that we have developed through our vast set of individual, past experiences. In "A Brain-Based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others," an article he wrote for his *NeuroLeadership Journal*, he writes "The significance of the approach-avoid response becomes clearer when one discovers the dramatic effect that these states can have on perception and problem solving, and the implications of this effect on decision-making, stress management, collaboration and motivation".

Applied to snowsports instruction, the concept of status, alluded to in all of the models described here, is significant as we deliver feedback to our guests. The simple act of delivering feedback can potentially trigger an avoidance response. Striving to balance positive versus negative feedback in our lessons has a direct impact on the perceived status of our guests, especially comments that are shared with the whole group. Another technique would involve increasing our student's ability to self-assess, thereby affecting the concept of status. This facilitates their understanding as well as establishes more collaborative notion of managing performance in the lesson.

Certainty deals with providing important information about what the lesson will entail. Going straight into teaching without providing a general outline of the day will most certainly evoke feelings of avoidance. Another example is that of establishing behavior guidelines at the beginning of children's lessons.

The perception of autonomy is another consideration that's important to include in our lessons. It's the idea that the power structure needs to shift from the instructor to the student in order for the lesson to be effective. Involving our guests in goal-setting and decision-making throughout the day will provide the needed feeling of autonomy.

Relatedness is very similar to Lawrence and Nohria's drive to bond. An example would be introducing not only yourself to the class but also introducing all the students to each other. Assigning a team name to a group taking lessons together is another example of an action that promotes relatedness.

The idea of fairness is one with which we can all identify. Anytime we experience a sense of *un*fairness, the next move is usually to avoid the situation. Class lesson splits should be handled in a manner in which expectations and intended results are clear at the beginning of the process. Striving to continually see and understand lesson situations from the learner's perspective is the best thing we can do as instructors to ensure the perception of fairness.

Understanding the domains of the SCARF model is an excellent resource for instructors to understand the unconscious workings of the brain during lessons. Being conscious of the unconscious processes will surely help us develop an approach state with a greater number of our students, which will result in more returning participants in our schools and in our sports.

### CHOOSE WHAT TO USE

Whether you are fan of the hierarchy of needs, the four drives, or the SCARF model is up to you. All three models are valid and provide fundamental information about our student's motivations. Once you raise your awareness and understanding of the concepts of motivations, you'll be better equipped to deliver the best experiences possible for your guests. Ultimately, you should be able to apply some ideas from each in order to directly benefit the connections you are able to make with your skiing and riding guests. 

---

*Jason Schetrompf is the snowboard training and parks coordinator at the Vail Ski and Snowboard School. He's also an examiner in PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division.*



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# WE ASKED, AND 1 IN 4 ANSWERED: HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2011 MEMBER SURVEY

By **TIM JOHNSON, PSIA-AASI ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Membership is the lifeblood of any association, so we need to know what you like and don't like about what we do. It's the people like you who take advantage of PSIA-AASI resources to improve your skiing and riding, sharpen your teaching skills, connect with one another, and inspire tens of thousands skiers and riders across the country. That's why a prime driver for the survey distributed in the fourth quarter of 2011 was to gain detailed feedback about how well, or not, the association meets your needs and helps you achieve your aspirations.

"We asked members for input—and they delivered," said PSIA-AASI Executive Director and CEO Mark Dorsey. "Sharing these results with the membership is a thank-you to those who committed their time to participate in the survey. The overall response is very positive, yet it's clear that we need to continually improve services and products delivered at division and national levels. Our ultimate goal is for every member to be satisfied with what the association delivers and feel supported in achieving his or her personal goals."

## MEMBERS LIKE WHAT WE DO

Designed by JVA Consulting to measure PSIA-AASI members' perceptions, motivations, and satisfaction, the survey included a mechanism by which roughly half of the surveys included information about a dues increase slated for 2012–13 and the other half, the "control group," did not. Other than the inclusion of a sentence about the dues-

increase—sent to a randomly selected portion of the membership—the surveys were identical.

Members in the control group said they plan to renew their membership next year at a rate of 97.3 percent (fig. 1). Members notified of a potential dues increase indicated intent to renew at a rate of 95.4 percent. It's worth noting that, according to Marketing General Incorporated's 2011 *Membership Marketing Benchmarking Report*, only 23 percent of all associations claim renewal rates higher than 90 percent.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.9 percent, or 3,845 members) said that their needs are being met or exceeded (with nearly 10 percent [538] falling into that latter category). About one-third (36.1 percent, or 2,169 respondents) indicated that their expectations are not being met (fig. 2, page 70).

## CORE AREAS RANK HIGH

Members apparently appreciate the work done by PSIA-AASI volunteers and staff, with most members rating those efforts at the highest end of the satisfaction spectrum. The offerings that garnered the most member satisfaction are education materials, member events, and pro deals, which cumulatively scored 4.04 (on a scale of 5, with 5 equating to very satisfied and 1 equating to very dissatisfied). The association's certification process (at 3.59) and the web-based learning modules (3.50) were rated lowest, albeit still in positive territory.

It's no surprise that member satisfaction depends in part upon the division with which he or she is affiliated. Eastern Division posted the highest satisfaction score (4.01), and other scores were lower—but all were above the scale midpoint.

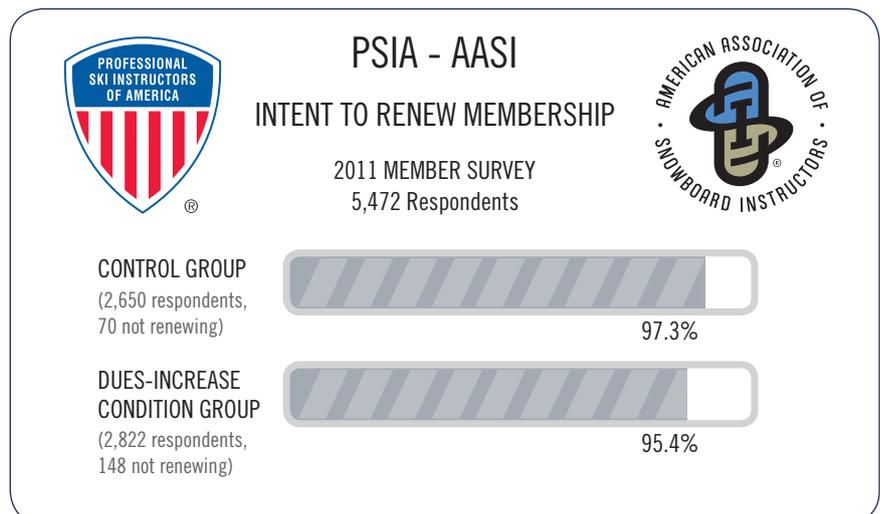
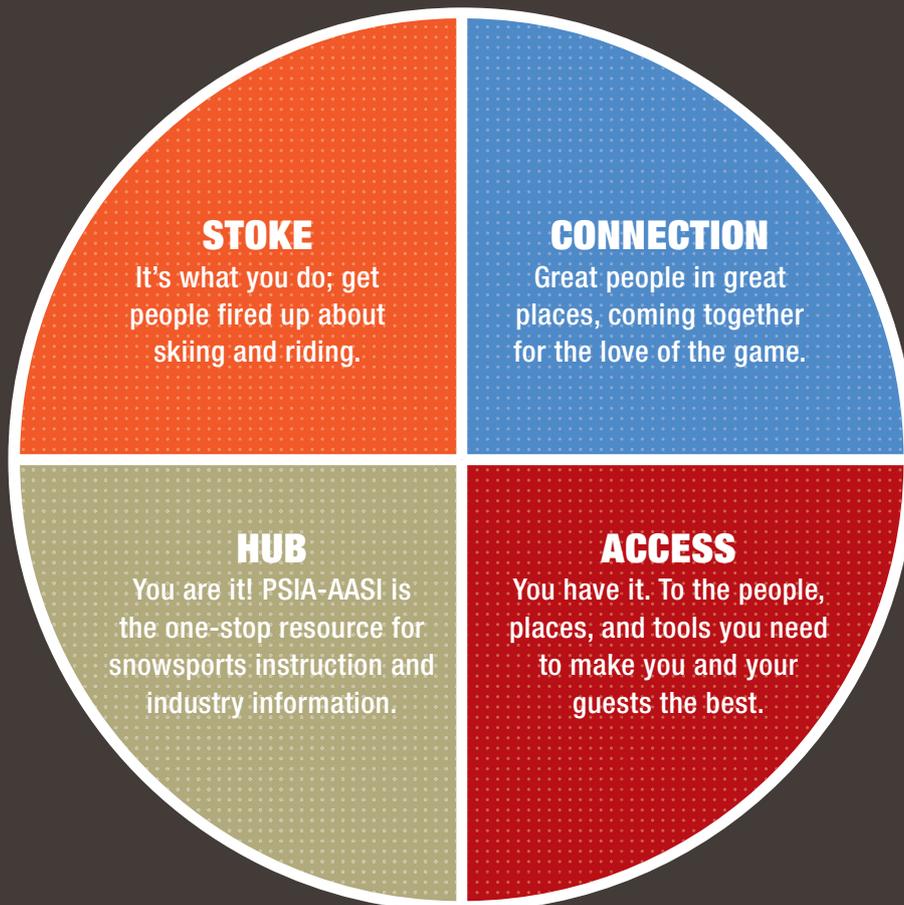


Figure 1

# 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](http://TheSnowPros.org)



### RAVING FANS

Newer members are the association's biggest fans (fig.3). The variable appears as length of membership and employment status (for instance, part-time versus full-time) become an issue. As a member reaches the six- to 10-year range, satisfaction decreases—but increases again as members' tenure in the association reaches 15 years. Satisfaction levels for volunteer and part-time instructors stay basically steady (3.85 and 3.74, respectively), while full-time instructors start at about 4.10, decrease to 3.5, and rebound to 3.8.

This shows us that we need to determine what is of most value in the middle of one's teaching career and membership, not just those new to the team and the old pros. Still, average satisfaction ratings remain positive and well above the midpoint.

### HIGH LEVELS OF SERVICE

The core areas of our business were those rated most highly, as you would expect. Education events earned the highest rating by members for value (4.15) and quality (4.08), while the perceived value and quality for the certification process came in lowest at 3.66 and 3.55. But all areas of professionalism and service shone through (fig. 4). Close to two-thirds of members surveyed rated value and/or quality either "good" or "great" (69.3 percent [3,851 respondents] and 70.1 percent [3,316], respectively). Relatively few members rated value and/or quality of PSIA-AASI membership "poor" or "very poor" (8.7 percent [451], and 8.4 percent [398], respectively).

### WHAT YOU LIKE MOST/LEAST

When members were asked what they liked most about being a PSIA-AASI member 37 percent (1,383) touted educational aspects of the PSIA-AASI membership. Twenty percent of respondents (747) expressed that they liked the sense of belonging to the ski/snowboard community. Sixteen percent

FREQUENCY OF EXPECTATION RATINGS (n=6014)

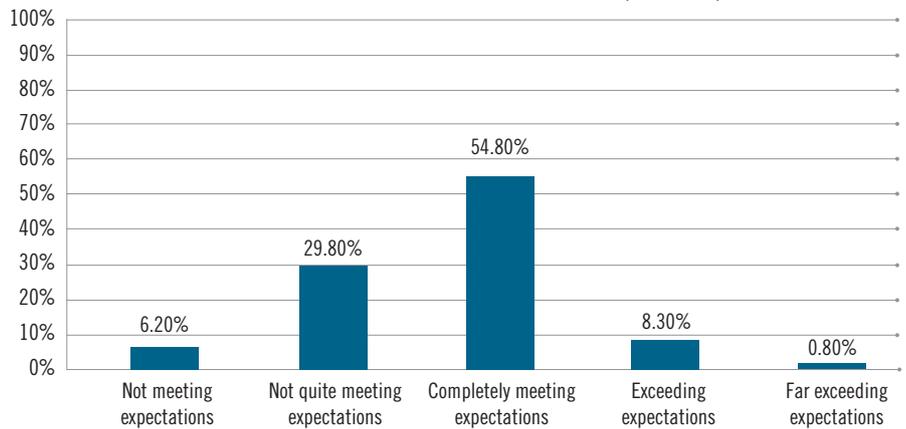


Figure 2

INTERACTION OF MEMBERSHIP LENGTH BY EMPLOYMENT Status for Satisfaction Scores (n=5804)

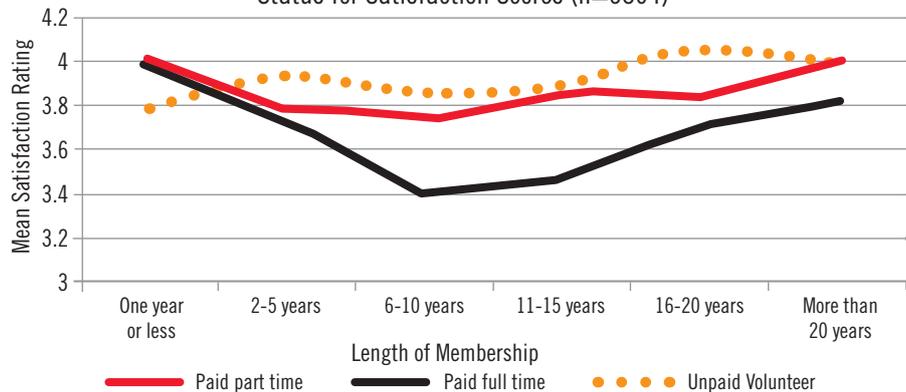


Figure 3

of respondents (601) said that the certification was the best aspect of being a PSIA-AASI member—an interesting contrast to the quantitative data. Twelve percent of respondents (440) identified the level of professionalism as what they like most about being a member.

When asked what they liked least about being a PSIA-AASI member, the majority of responses fell into four categories. Thirty-seven percent of respondents (1,079), representing the largest group of responses, identified cost as their least favorite aspect of the membership. Fifteen percent of respondents' (546) identified different ways they felt the organization did not represent the needs of all members.

Twelve percent of respondents (421) indicated that they did not like the organization's events—again, in contrast to the quantitative data. Nine percent of respondents (314) expressed that they did not like the PSIA-AASI certification process.

### THE WRAP UP

PSIA-AASI seems to be on the right track when considering members' satisfaction, perceptions, and motivation. Although there were certain PSIA-AASI member groups that seem to be less pleased with their member experience, there were no extremely negative findings. On the contrary, there were several surprising findings in the positive direction.

The results suggest that PSIA-AASI should focus on learning more about the PSIA-AASI groups that provided lower ratings. These included members from certain divisions, longer-tenured members, and members who are employed full time. This does not mean that these groups performed poorly across the board. Most lower-scoring items were still in positive territory on the particular scale.

In closing, we wish to thank all members who responded to our survey. Your participation and ideas help improve PSIA-AASI for every member. 32°

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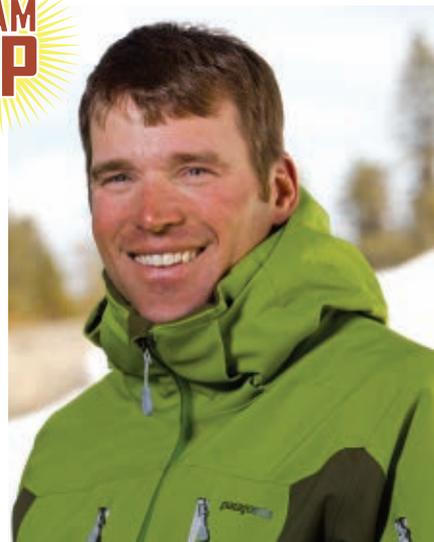
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Jonathan Selkowitz

# Get Back to the Basics of Rotation

By MIKE HAFER

**T**he best athletes in the world have an innate ability to control their bodies more than the average human being. There is nothing like Ted Ligety ripping up a giant-slalom course at 45 miles per hour and having the awareness to redirect his skis so accurately that he can shave a thousandth of a second off his time to win a race.

Or Shaun White throwing himself into the air, contorting his body in what looks like the most unnatural positions, and then stomping the landing. What these two athletes have in common, besides having no fear, is that they understand exactly how to move their bodies.

## ROTATIONAL PULL

Successful athletes continue to perfect the fundamentals as they mature. Even at the elite level, these athletes continually try to improve on their weakest moves so they can compete at a higher level. Taking a cue from these athletes, I focus on the fundamentals to raise my game. In my own skiing, one element I'm working on is the ability to control the rotation in my legs so I can achieve more accurate separation between my lower and upper body. Some benefits of such separation can be cleaner transitions, faster bump lines, and improved skiing in the steeps.

As illustrated here and shown in the "Twisting the Legs and Feet for Better Turns" video on TheSnowPros YouTube Channel (<http://youtube/k14x9DuZU4Q>), my first goal is to

sensation, I lay flat on my back with my legs straight up in the air and twist my legs. The straight leg is only for the purpose of the drill, as this position isolates the femur for maximum results. I look for the first trigger that presents itself. I feel tension in the upper legs (femur), near the front pockets on my pants at the hip joint. That is my cue!

Next, I have someone hold onto my feet to add some resistance (photo 1). This accentuates any sensations present. I practice twisting at different rates to simulate different turns sizes and shapes—slower for larger turns and

**Successful athletes continue to perfect the fundamentals. Even at the elite level, these athletes continually try to improve on their weakest moves so they can compete at a higher level.**

identify exactly where the rotation should originate. The feeling that I am searching for is the twisting sensation that occurs at the hip joint. This is the movement pattern that develops the separation of the upper and lower body.

In order to accurately develop this

faster for shorter turns. My goals are to control the rate of twist and explore any limitations.

## POLE CUE

The next step is a double bonus because it gives me visual and kinesthetic feedback.



Photo 1

**In this leg-twist exercise, the legs are straight—which isolates the femur at the hip joint. Have someone hold onto your feet to simulate the resistance you will feel in a turn.**

After I step into my skis I place my poles horizontally around my waist at the top of the pelvis—with one pole pointing to the left and one pointing to the right so I can connect them pole strap-to-pole tip and hold them in place as I ski (photo 2).

In the skiing phase of this exercise I recommend that the turn shape and pace be a short-radius, steered turn for optimal feedback. I focus on the tension in the upper leg as I steer through the turns. The objective here (the visual part of the drill) is to keep the poles parallel to the horizon at the bottom of the run rather than let them turn so much as to be parallel to the side of the run (photo 3, page 74). If done correctly, there will be very little movement of the upper body; and if done incorrectly, the poles will apply pressure to the pelvis and give me immediate feedback (the kinesthetic part of the drill). I try to control the rate of the twist so I don't overturn the skis at the top of the turn, which leads to a pivot slip or over-rotation. At the point where I am feeling success with round,



Photo 2

**Attach the poles by wrapping the wrist strap of one pole around the tip of the other pole. Place around the top of the hips and repeat with the other side.**

short turns, it is time to experiment with a larger turn.

As the turns get larger, the relationship between the poles and the bottom of the hill will change.

The poles will move away from parallel slightly, however they should never square up to the edge of the trail (photo 4). The twisting motion in the femur should be quite a bit slower. The tension in the legs will be difficult to feel due to the smaller amount of separation that develops in a larger turn.

As I move beyond a steered turn into more of a carved turn, the skill blending will change the sensations slightly. You may feel more resistance in a larger turn due to the resistance that builds as the ski is carving. One thing to keep in mind is that the relationship of the poles to the bottom of the hill should remain



Photo 3

**In a slow-radius turn with good separation, the legs turn more than the hips (upper body). In this photo, note the difference between the direction of the feet and the direction my upper body is facing.**



Photo 4

**In this medium-radius turn without separation, note the relationship of the poles to the direction of the feet at the end of the turn. Because of the direction my upper body is facing, the transition from this turn to the next will not be as clean as it would be with separation.**

Terry Peters

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Photo 5

Even at the higher speed of a dynamic medium-radius turn, the relationship of the feet to the upper body is quite similar to that of a slow, short-radius turn.

the same as in the larger, steered turns (photo 5). The same holds true in short-radius turns.

When I take this information into my freeskiing, I try to recreate the same sensations. Using my hands as a point of reference rather than the poles, I just make sure that my hands are equal distance from my body and level to the snow. The most notable feedback for me is how smooth the transitions become.

### CONCLUSION

One reason I love skiing so much is that I always have something to improve upon. Taking a page from successful athletes, I feel that improving on the fundamentals will take me to the next level. If you are looking for smoother transitions, faster feet, or better steep-skiing technique, refine your rotary skills for more success on snow. 

Terry Peters

*Mike Hafer is a member of the PSIA Alpine Team and the assistant director of the Ski and Snowboard School at Northstar, California.*

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# Observing the Facts: Movement Analysis on the Hill

By KEVIN JORDAN

**W**hen performing movement analysis, or M.A., in an exam format, you don't have to dress like an attorney or trial lawyer (no Armani or Prada suits required), but it doesn't hurt to *think* like one. In other words, you want to clearly state the facts and describe how events transpired.

This may seem daunting at first, but here are some tips that may come in handy when you're doing movement analysis out on the hill.

The admissible evidence is what you observe the skis doing—along with what the skier's body does at a particular point in the turn. Because you observed this effect in the skis, you know that the body had to perform X, Y, and Z to cause that ski performance. In an exam format you need to prove your case to examiners—a.k.a. the jury—by describing the evidence that supports your conclusion (or closing arguments).

One exam strategy is to adopt the mantra of “less is more.” The less you say, the less likely you'll dig yourself into a deep hole. It then becomes the examiner's role to skillfully ask more questions (i.e., a blistering cross-examination) to see your depth of knowledge and technical understanding. If you listen carefully and have a basic understanding of biomechanics and physics, then you'll

successfully answer the examiner's questions. If the examiner *didn't* see what you saw, you may be able to prove your case and sway the jury with your “truth.” (A word to the wise: It's generally *not* a good idea to make like Jack Nicholson in *A Few Good Men* and respond to examiner questions with “You can't handle the truth!”)

What should be included in movement analysis? PSIA-AASI's Rocky Mountain Division has developed a Movement Analysis Filter, previously known as the Movement Analysis Matrix, to help organize instructors' thoughts about this important lesson component. Developed by PSIA Alpine Team member Jim Schanzenbaker, Beaver Creek Trainer Manager John Wiltgen, and other division members, the Movement Analysis Filter has been incorporated into each level of the division's alpine exams. (See “Division Approaches to Movement Analysis” on page 78 to see how M.A. is handled in some other PSIA-AASI divisions.)

Everyone's system of how they perform M.A. is uniquely their own, and the Filter is similar to the “Pirate's Code” in *The Pirates of the Caribbean*—it is more like a set of guidelines, not set-in-stone rules. What an individual shares with another instructor or examiner is up to the individual, as is the prioritization he or she goes through in the M.A. process. The Filter is comprised of the following elements (and, as you'll see, can apply to snowboarding as well as skiing).

## TURN-PHASE SPECIFIC

*Where* in the turn is the movement or ski/snowboard performance happening? What part of the turn are we talking about? For instance, your analysis might refer to the beginning, the middle, or the end; the initiation, control/shaping, or finish/completion phases; or the first half and the second half of the turn.

## SKI/BOARD PERFORMANCE

*What* is the tool doing? As a result of the body moving, what did the skis or snowboard do and where did it occur? Are the skis or snowboard skidding? Are they slipping where they should be gripping? Are both skis bending? Is one ski coming off the snow? There are two skis in alpine skiing, so are both skis doing similar or different things? Are both skis bending, tipping, and twisting? Or are there



Julie Shipman

PSIA's National Academy offers a great opportunity to work on movement analysis.

variances in the fact that one ski is bending more than the other; is one ski twisting before the other and at different rates? We can learn as much from the path, bend, and snow spray of the inside ski as the outside. It's important to remember to tie the ski performance back to where in the turn this particular ski effect is occurring. In other words, where in the turn is the specific ski performance observed?

### BODY-PART SPECIFIC

Which joint or what part of the body is being used to create the observed ski performance? For example, maybe the old *inside/uphill ankle* is extending in the initiation of the turn and was most flexed in the finish phase of the previous turn. The body parts or joints that we often discuss while doing movement analysis are the feet, ankles, knees, femurs, hips, hands, arms, shoulders, and spine.

We can often draw comparisons between body parts to explain the movements of the individual being analyzed.

## Everyone's system of how they perform M.A. is uniquely their own, and the Filter is similar to the "Pirate's Code"

For example, in the shaping phase of the turn a skier's outside knee and hip may have been more extended than his or her inside knee and hip. In terms of fore/aft pressure control, perhaps the hips of the skier were behind their heels, putting the skier in an aft position at that particular point in the turn. You can also use the movement pools of flexion/extension, tipping, and turning of different body parts to describe how the body has moved to get the skier or rider into his or her current position.

### D.I.R.T.

Then it's time to play in the D.I.R.T, which stands for duration, intensity, rate,

and timing. What was the *duration* or the length of time it actually took to do the movement? How much *intensity* or power did the movement involve? At what *rate* or how fast did the movement take place? Was this rate similar or different between the two skis or between two different body parts? What is the *timing* or when did the movement happen? Again, you need to connect the D.I.R.T. with the location in the turn in order to be turn-phase specific when you are performing M.A.

### CAUSE-AND-EFFECT

Body-part X caused the ski to do movement Y at point Z in the turn. All you have to

do is fill in the blanks. I know; easier said than done! What you observe in the body performance usually causes some effect that you can observe in the ski performance.

## OBJECTIVE VS. SUBJECTIVE

Language like “good” or “bad” or “I liked the way he/she did \_\_\_\_\_” is omitted to make the movement analysis process more objective. Instead, the skier/rider is doing movement *A*, with this body part *B*, at this point in the turn *C*—which causes the ski to do *D*. In other words, M.A. is descriptive not prescriptive.

The prescription for a change comes after you have finished observing and describing what is currently happening to the skier/rider on the snow at that particular moment in time.

## DIVISION APPROACHES TO MOVEMENT ANALYSIS

Every division within PSIA-AASI focuses part of its training efforts on movement analysis, but each takes a slightly different approach. Most models, frameworks, filters, and study guides within the divisions seek to help members better organize their thoughts while they compare and contrast the tool/snow interactions, skill blending or isolation, specific body movements, and cause-and-effect relationships. Here is a brief sample.

Northwest Division uses the Feedback Model, and, as outlined in the accompanying article, Rocky Mountain Division uses the M.A. Filter. Intermountain Division uses a Hierarchy of Observation and Report, Analysis, and Prescription (R.A.P.), while Eastern Division uses various tools to perform M.A. The Level II and Level III study guides in PSIA-AASI’s Western Division offer a list to highlight the aspects of M.A.

Northwest Division’s Feedback Model is printed on a coaster, so there are sure to be lively M.A. discussions when instructors are having their favorite après skiing/riding beverage! This model (fig. 1) has “bubbles” for Desired Outcome, Tool/Snow Interaction, and Movements—which surround Communication (Coaching/Teaching). “Communication” refers to how the information is presented. “Desired Outcome” represents the skier’s or rider’s intent or goal. “Tool/Snow Interaction” represents the observed effect, while “Movements” refers to how the body moved to cause the effect. Each bubble can be leveraged against another.

In Intermountain’s Hierarchy of Observation and R.A.P., the hierarchy aspect includes: Overall Impression, Ski/Snow Interaction, Specific Body Movements, and Balance references. Similar to Northwest Division’s model, the Ski/Snow Interaction is akin to the observed effect, and the Specific Body Movements represent the cause. The Balance reference brings in the planes of motion (i.e., frontal, sagittal, and transverse). Once this information is gathered, a R.A.P. is performed: report what the skier or rider has done relative to the task; analyze cause- and-effect relationships; and prescribe one change.

According to Eastern Division’s *Alpine Study Guides*, “Movement assessment is the process of assessing a student’s ability, movement patterns, and skill blending and identifying the cause-and-effect relationships.” The

steps are to look at the big picture and then work from the feet up. In other words, Eastern’s approach is to look first at the tool/snow interaction and then how the body moves. Next, instructors look at the stance and balance of an individual.

Another important component calls for describing the turn shape and turn connection (i.e., the movements from one turn to the next). PSIA’s *Visual Cues to Effective/Ineffective Skiing*, second edition, is another tool used by this division.

Western Division incorporates a list of important components of the movement analysis approach in its Level II and Level III exam study guides. The list, which encourages members to find an approach that works best for them, includes the following:

- ◆ Assess a student’s skiing ability and goals.
- ◆ Identify movement patterns, skills, skill blending.
- ◆ Identify cause-and-effect relationships.
- ◆ Understand ski performance and turn mechanics.
- ◆ Develop progressions that are logical and based on a solid understanding of turn mechanics and biomechanics.
- ◆ Create a lesson plan that can be adapted to the guest’s needs and goals.

As mentioned, the M.A. Filter in Rocky Mountain breaks down the separate skills and compares them to the location in the turn where the movements are happening. As a result, members use their experience to prioritize which skill or where in the turn he or she wants to focus.

Regardless of the approach, movement analysis is an important function for any snowsports professional. All of the models, frameworks, filters, and approaches cited here include aspects of identification, observation, description, and analysis, as well as constructing cause-and-effect relationships in order to present information for a desired outcome/improvement. ❧

—Kevin Jordan

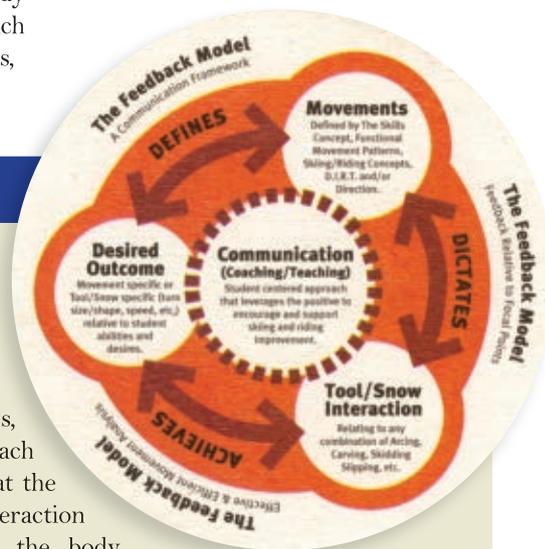


Figure 1



Katie Horvath

**Movement analysis is all about close and objective assessment of performance on the snow.**

### KISS: KEEP IT SIMPLE, SHORT

Movement analysis should be short, simple, accurate, and relevant.

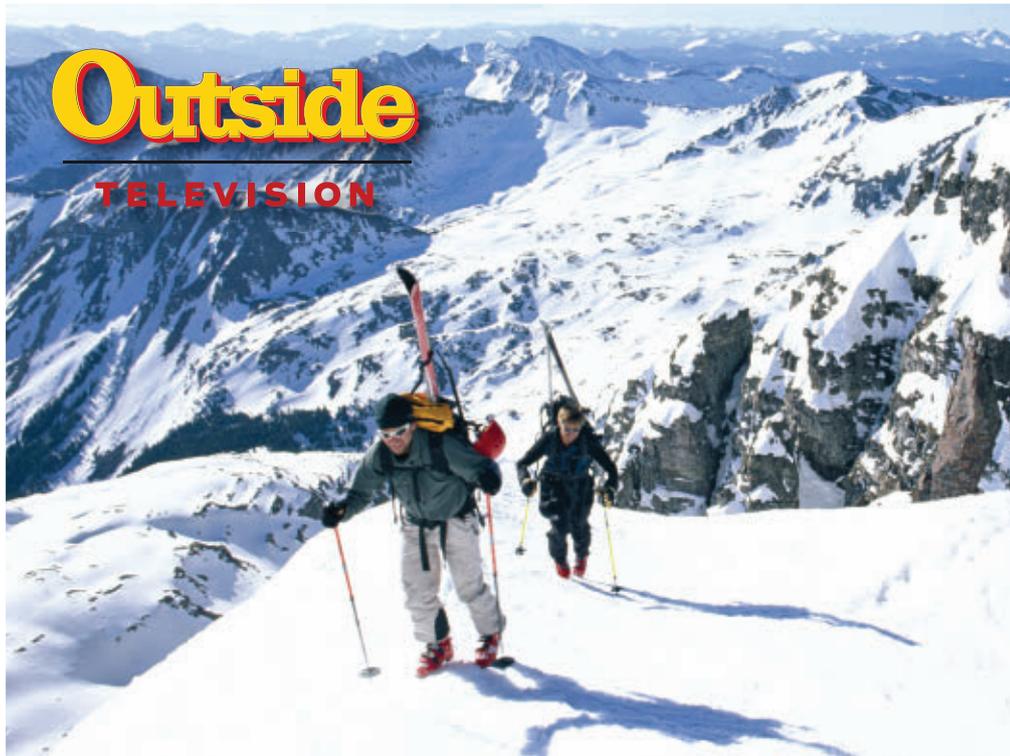
If your model includes the seven items listed here, you will have an easier time explaining to another instructor or examiner what movements you observe a skier/rider performing out on the slopes. In other words, you can prove your case to a jury of your peers if you include evidence from the seven areas listed previously.

Oftentimes, you might see something that someone else did not observe because his or her attention was focused on a different movement a particular skier or rider was performing. This can also be attributed to the fact that each individual may prioritize movements differently. Nevertheless, when you make a point to use these common elements to explain what you see, the person you are having the conversation with might more fully understand your point of view. For example, one person may start talking about movements a skier/rider makes at the

end of his or her turn. One person might choose to talk about the body performance and then the skis/board. Another may choose to talk about the ski/board performance first and then how the body is moving to create that particular performance. It doesn't matter where you start, as long as you start somewhere in the turn and then verbally paint the entire picture of the skier's/rider's performance on the hill.

It's up to you how you choose to perform M.A. As long as you can convince the jury (a.k.a. an examiner) that you know what you're talking about and can describe what you see, you're likely to benefit from a favorable verdict. ☑

*Kevin Jordan is the children's program coordinator at Aspen Snowmass's Buttermilk Mountain. He is an alpine, children's specialist, and freestyle examiner for PSIA-AASI Rocky Mountain. He also writes for Examiner.com as the Denver Ski Instruction Examiner and the National Ski Instruction Examiner.*



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Jonathan Selkowitz

# It's the Balm! Keep your Hands on Target

By J. SCOTT MCGEE

A dab of balm on your lips can feel great when you're on the hill. By applying that same lip balm to your client's goggles you can help him or her improve hand placement, enhance balance, and allow the lower body to do more with less energy.

Many advanced or even expert skiers suffer from a habit of dropping the inside hand toward the end of the turn. This drop also indicates upper-body rotation, which can make it difficult to initiate the next turn. When the upper body turns across the hill, it has that much farther to turn to enter the following turn.

Many attempt to rebalance or initiate with gross movements, such as turning the upper body (head, shoulders, hands) first, rather than releasing the edges and letting the lower body start the turn. "Hands in front of the body are essential to counter the turning forces of the lower body," according to Ron Kipp, alpine sport education manager for the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association and a PSIA alpine examiner.

Old-school telemarkers used to over-counter to compensate for deficiencies in equipment, whereas now the new-schoolers tend to over-rotate, esp-

pecially at high speeds. Both examples are "loud-hands" situations, where the upper body is wrestling with something that muscles from the hips down should be handling.

Now it's time for lip balm to make its mark—and help you move your clients

Here's how clients can put the lip-balm-on-goggles trick to work. Have them twist the lip balm out just past the rim of the tube, and then lightly smear some balm onto the rim itself. Now have them retract the lip balm into the container (photo 2). Holding the lip balm in one hand, they'll next need to look ahead and place their free hand in the ideal position within their field of vision (elbow in front of the torso with the hand somewhere in that arc of directly in front to no more than 45 degrees to the side).

Now they'll want to place the rim of the lip balm onto the goggle lens and "print" a ring that frames that ideal

**Hands in front of the body are essential to counter the turning forces of the lower body.**

toward ideal positioning, in which the hands are always within the skier's field of vision (photo 1). The goal is to help ingrain the habits of relying on the lower body for creating turning movements, and turning the skis underneath a stable upper body.

hand placement. Repeat the process on the other lens for the opposite hand (photo 3). As the clients begin to ski, have them center their hands in the two circles as they use their peripheral vision.

With a visual focus closer to the



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3

fall line for shorter turns and half a turn ahead for longer-radius turns, try the following progression with your students:

- ◆ Ski without poles, with hands in the lip-balm rings.
- ◆ Ski with poles, then with pole plants, with hands in the rings.
- ◆ Make short turns with hands in the rings.
- ◆ Ski short turns with hands in the rings. and poles balanced on the wrists.
- ◆ Practice hockey stops with hands in the rings.
- ◆ Ski bumps with hands in the rings.
- ◆ Ski powder with hands in the rings.

Keep the balm—and your bag of tricks—close by to help your clients maintain effective hand placement as well as a

great time on the mountain. It lends a whole new meaning to a balmy day on the slopes. **32°**

---

*J. Scott McGee coaches the PSIA Nordic Team and works as the senior manager for nordic, training, and guides at the Jackson Hole Mountain Sports School in Wyoming. A former telemark competitor, he now dreams of perfect corn on spring backcountry skate ski tours.*



# Set a Solid Foundation with Beginner Heelside Slip

By JOSH SPOELSTRA



Jonathan Selkowitz

There was a time when the prevailing myth about snowboarding was that heelside falls—and the likelihood of hurting one’s wrist as a result—were “just part of the process of learning.” But with the advent of rocker, rocker combo, and base bevels, beginning snowboarders are more assured of progressing with their bodies intact.

Quality lessons are part of that equation too, with snowboard instructors committed to offering slam-free progressions that set their students up for success from the outset.

One area I’ve focused on recently is my approach to introducing the heel-edge sideslip to guests. Being able to sideslip on the heelside is a critical skill to have, and one that is used at every level of snowboarding. It can also be a difficult skill to learn in a first-time snowboard lesson.

If your current beginner progression goes from straight glides and one-footed J-turns into heelside sideslips with both feet in the bindings (whether at the base area or once you take students up on the lift) you might be having your students tackle too much at first. Instead of adding all of these pieces to the puzzle at once—and potentially inviting a heelside slam—introduce the heelside sideslip as a one-footed progression in the beginner area. Here’s how.

First, with barely any pitch below them and a flat run-out zone, have your guests orient the board across the hill and strap in the front foot (photo 1). While facing downhill and with their back foot in the snow uphill of the heelside edge, encourage them to stand with the heel edge tilted into the snow (photo 2, page 84). From this static position, have them start to move through the range of their heelside



Photo 1

Tiffany Spoelstra



9:00 AM Search for freshies.

2:54 PM Drop again.  
And again.

2:20 PM Stomp the rainbow rail.

10:30 AM Call tricks.  
Head to the park.

2:42 PM Launch a  
backside 540.

4:21 PM Cheers.

8:17 AM Wake up  
and caffeinate.

3:45 PM Pull pine needles  
from goggle strap. Ride to  
catch last chair.



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edge angle by flexing the front ankle. This gives students an idea of how small, controlled movements of the lower body can dictate edge angle.

Second, have them lower their edge angle and slide the board down the hill—with the board still facing across the hill. As their board gets out in front of them, ask them to dorsiflex (i.e., raise their toes up) to stop the board (photo 3), and then slide their back foot down, next to the heel edge. Have students repeat these steps until they reach the bottom of the hill, and until you can visually see the guests controlling their board with their ankles.

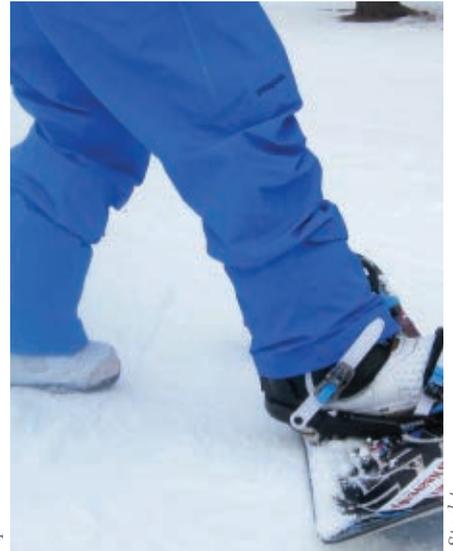
**Being able to sideslip on the heelside is a critical skill to have, and one that is used at every level of snowboarding.**

For the third part of the progression, walk back up to the starting point and have your students combine all these movements into one fluid motion, what I refer to as the “slip, slide.” Encourage students to “slip” their board down the hill (photo 4) and follow that by immediately sliding that back foot into place behind the heel edge (photo 5). Everything is the same as in the second step, except that students are now in constant motion.

Finally, once students have the hang of this, have them make two “slip, slides,” then have them repeat the exercise but place just the ball of their foot on the stomp pad—leaving the back heel



**Photo 2**



**Photo 3**

*Tiffany Spoelstra*

*Tiffany Spoelstra*



**Photo 4**

*Tiffany Spoelstra*

Tiffany Spoelstra



Photo 5

Tiffany Spoelstra



Photo 6

Tiffany Spoelstra



Photo 7

in the snow (photo 6). Once students are able to do this, they're essentially sideslipping on their heel edge (photo 7).

After a few attempts—and only after they feel solid in their one-footed heelside sideslips, they'll be ready to strap that back foot in and try their first

true heelside sideslips.

I have seen more success with this approach—and less potential for wrist-risky heelside falls—than when just getting guests to try sideslipping with both feet in. So break down the progression and keep dispelling

that myth that if it doesn't hurt, you're not learning. 32°

*A member of the AASI Snowboard Team, Josh Spoelstra is the training manager for the Ski & Ride School at California's Heavenly Mountain Resort.*



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# For a Sweet Jump, Teach Your Students about ‘Pop’

By **BRIAN DONOVAN**

**W**hen teaching a lesson on jumping, one of the most difficult skillsets to pass on to your students is the idea of the acceptable range of speed needed when approaching a given jump. Without a doubt, your students will ask “How fast should I go?”

The usual way to address this question is to have your students ride alongside of you, shadowing your speed as you hit the jump and they ride past (photo 1, page 87). For the best vantage point, goofy riders would be on your right and regular riders would be on your left. Your students should try to match *your* downhill speed as *they* mimic every set-up turn that you make. This will give them visual, auditory, and kinesthetic cues for the proper amount of speed needed to make the landing.

But what about “pop”? How can you teach students the intensity of leg extension that’s required as they leave the lip of the jump?

## HIT GOLF BALLS TO LEARN ABOUT TRAJECTORY

Let’s take a step back and focus on golf for a minute. A golfer has a bag full of different clubs with varying degrees of loft, which in turn produce varying trajectories upon striking a golf ball. Breaking this down even further, consider two specific clubs; the 3 iron

and the pitching wedge. The clubface of the 3 iron has a low degree of loft and is traditionally used to hit the ball a long distance with a relatively low ball-flight trajectory. Alternately, the clubface of the pitching wedge has a high degree of loft, and is traditionally used to hit the ball a short distance with a high ball-flight trajectory. Both of these last two statements are gener-

alizations that assume the golfer uses a common swing speed for both clubs. (For the sake of this scenario, believe that every time this golfer uses either club, he or she strikes the ball equally, cleanly, and squarely.)

Now let’s change that assumption in terms of the common denominator between the two swings: *speed*. Imagine if the golfer were to swing faster or slower. That would affect how far the ball would travel.

If, for argument’s sake, the golfer slowed his or her swing down with the 3 iron, the ball would continue to have a very low trajectory and would travel a shorter distance than previously. With this understanding, you can assume that a person who hits a golf ball X number of yards with a normal swing of the pitching wedge *could* hit a golf ball the same number of yards with a slow swing of the 3 iron. The two balls could travel the same exact distance with very different trajectories through the air. The pitching wedge would send the ball along a long flight path with a relatively high trajectory to the landing zone and the 3 iron would send the ball along a shorter flight path with a relatively low trajectory to the landing zone. The two balls, however, would land in the same landing zone, and the only thing that changed was the speed of the swing.

## BE THE (GOLF) BALL

So, what does this have to do with hitting a jump on a snowboard? Well, for starters, it illustrates why riders should think about both the speed and



AASI Snowboard Team member Eric Rolls on the fly.

Brian W. Robb

the corresponding trajectory that's needed to get to the desired landing zone safely.

Photo 2 shows two possible trajectories off the same jump. The green line indicates the rider's approach all the way to the lip. The blue line shows a high trajectory, giving the rider more height and more air time. This is the result of the rider extending his or her legs out and pushing against the snow to create "pop" and separation away from the ground at the lip of the jump (photo 3, page 88).

By using a balanced, centered, extension of both legs simultaneously, the rider—in this scenario—is not using any added advantage of loaded and stored energy derived from pressuring the board's nose or tail through any type of fore/aft movements of the center of mass (such as in a nollie or an ollie, respectively). The rider is simply focusing on using his or her legs simultaneously to jump away from the ground. The corresponding jump is similar to the pitching-wedge trajectory, and is the easiest way to create separation between the rider and the ground for students at the intro-to-jumping stage.

Alternately, the red line in photo 2 shows a low trajectory, giving the rider less height and less air time. This is the result of the rider's legs remaining static and not extending as the rider leaves the lip of the jump in order to coast off of the lip and float toward the landing (photo 4, page 88). This is similar to the 3-iron trajectory.

Both the red line and the blue line land in the same spot—and the factor that allows this is speed. The rider with the blue flight path needs to carry more speed into the jump than the rider with the red flight path in order to make it to the same landing zone. This is because—by generating more "pop" through an extension of the legs at the lip of the jump—the blue path airs with a higher trajectory and covers more linear distance in the process. The blue rider needs to supply more speed in order to arrive at the same spot in the landing—just as the golfer swinging the pitching wedge needs to supply more speed during his or her swing to hit the



Photo 1

Brian Donovan



Photo 2

Brian Donovan

ball X amount of yards. The equation is simple in this example: more speed equals more distance covered linearly.

The rider with the red flight path can afford to carry less speed into the jump than the rider with the blue flight path in order to make it to the same landing spot. This is because—by remaining static with the legs and coasting off of the lip of the jump—the rider is depending solely on his or her speed and the terrain angle of the jump to send him or her airborne at

the corresponding angle of the jump. The rider is greeted by a flatter, lower trajectory that requires less distance traveled in the air to make it to the desired landing spot. The red rider needs to supply less speed in order to arrive at the spot in the landing—just as the golfer swinging the 3-iron needs to supply less speed during his or her swing to hit the ball X amount of yards.

This is a very important aspect of coaching a lesson on jumping. The desired amount of speed needed for

a jump is usually taught, but I feel that the combination of speed plus the extension or lack of extension of the legs at the lip (also known as the amount of “pop”) is not stressed as a dynamic duo. Approach speed for a jump by itself is a minor lesson idea. Popping at the lip of the jump is also a minor idea. But when the two minor ideas are combined and taught as one, an effective coaching program is occurring.

### ‘WHERE DO I START?’

Photo 5 depicts the two possible points from which a rider would have to start (known as the “drop in”) in order to land in the safe landing zone for this particular jump. The drop-in spot for the blue trajectory from photo 2 is marked by the blue “X”, and the drop-in spot for the red trajectory from photo 2 is marked by the red “X.”

As mentioned previously, the blue-line trajectory requires more speed than the red-line trajectory in order to accomplish the goal of making it to the desired landing spot. More speed is generated by dropping in from a higher point on the hill above the jump and approaching with the same approach line comprised of equal amounts of turning and speed checks. For this discussion, the approach lines are depicted as straight runs visually displayed by the green lines in photo 5.

### ‘WHAT HAPPENS IF I DROP IN FROM HERE?’

Photo 6 (on page 90) depicts what would happen if both of the riders dropped from the red “X” in photo 2 and then performed the differing body movements of extension of the legs versus firm, static legs at the lip of the jump. The blue-trajectory rider would extend his or her legs at the lip, but due to less-than-ideal speed for this maneuver, would come up short of the desired landing location, and would run the risk of possibly hitting the knuckle in a violent crash.

The red-trajectory rider would remain



Photo 3

Brian H. Robb



Photo 4

Brian H. Robb

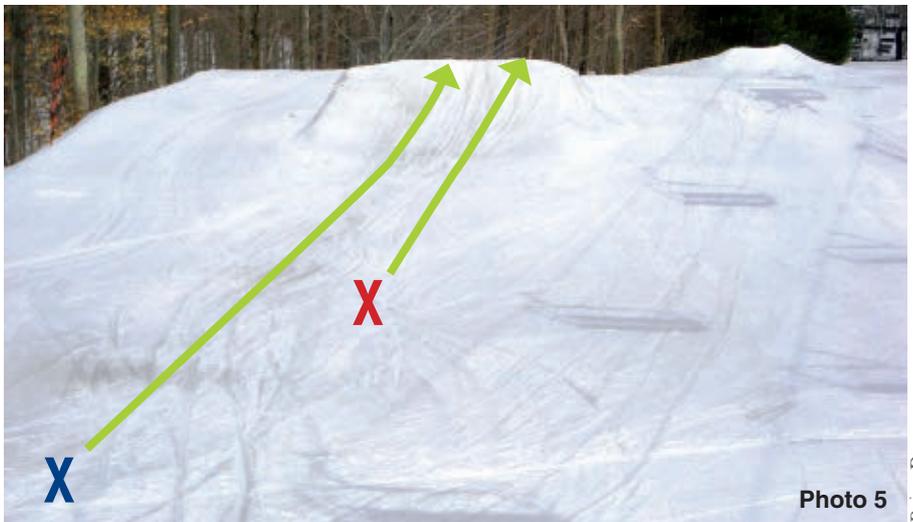


Photo 5

Brian Donovan

in a static position with his or her legs staying firm at the lip, coast off of the jump, and float to the desired landing location with success. This red-line trajectory is commonly used by downhill racers, skiercross racers, and boardercross racers as a method of decreasing air time as well as linear distance travelled in an attempt to travel a shorter amount of distance on the way down the course while still making it to the landings of jumps.

### ‘MAYBE I SHOULD START FROM FURTHER UP’

Photo 7 (on page 90) depicts what would happen if both of the riders dropped from the blue “X” in photo 2 and then performed the differing body movements of extension of the legs versus firm, static legs at the lip of the jump.

The blue-trajectory rider would extend his or her legs at the lip, and would find success upon landing in the desired landing location. The red-trajectory rider



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would remain in a static position with his or her legs staying firm at the lip, coast off of the jump, and—due to the increased and unnecessary speed for this maneuver—float well beyond the desired landing location, potentially running the risk of over-shooting the safe landing zone altogether.

This blue-line trajectory is commonly used by freestyle riders who want to maximize the amount of air time in order to perform various aerial maneuvers. The blue-line trajectory travels more linear distance, and therefore allots the rider more time before returning to the ground.

## THE GAME PLAN

So how do we teach these very different movements that will produce very different results? One method that I have found great success with is in having a student stand in a static position while strapped in on flat terrain. I have my student lower his or her center of mass into an athletic stance, then work on a centered “pop” takeoff with both feet equally extending, similar to a jump shot in basketball. This pop movement created through a rapid and equal extension of both legs simultaneously will create separation from the ground. This is how we can generate a pop off of the lip of the jump in order to increase air time with a high trajectory.

As the student returns back to the ground I have him or her focus on flexing the legs in a deliberate and controlled fashion and freezing in this position. This frozen position emphasizes that the flexion of the legs allows the center of mass to remain stationary by neither dropping toward nor extending away from both the snowboard and the ground in a controlled manner. This static position is the same stance needed to create no extra pop at the lip of a jump “in order to decrease air time with a low trajectory by simply coasting off of a jump.

The student now has the fundamental understanding of both an explosive pop movement and a controlled static pos-



Photo 6

Brian Donovan

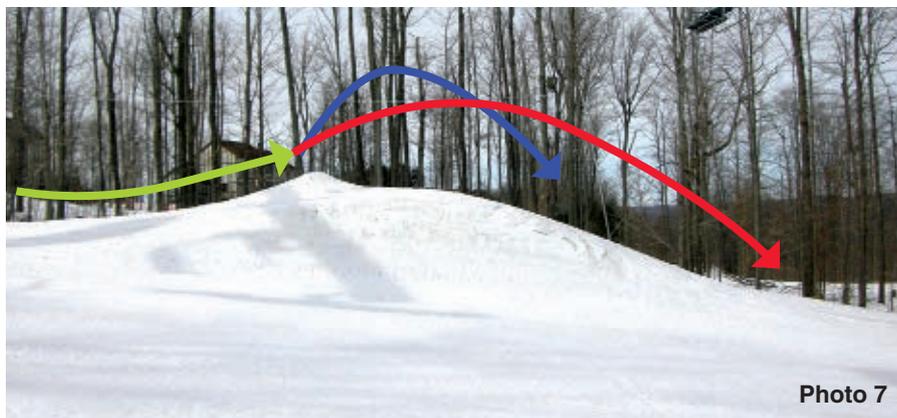


Photo 7

Brian Donovan

ition. He or she can dial in these movements by practicing the timing needed to perform these movements at the lip of the jump. I find that this timing can best be practiced all over the mountain as you set your student up to pop over snowballs, sticks, whalebacks, and anything else that’s fun to jump over. It is essential to make sure that the pop is occurring with both legs simultaneously extending in order to set your student up for consistent success over jumps in the future.

The static position created by neither extending nor retracting the legs can be practiced when riding over rollers and whalebacks as the student attempts to simply allow his or her speed to combine with the terrain shape to get airborne with no extra intentional movements made by the rider. These practice scenarios will start to refine your student’s timing as they prepare to ultimately take these two movements to the jumps.

## CONCLUSION

When teaching jumping lessons, instructors should incorporate the ideas of both speed and pop blended together as one dynamic concept. Neither teaching

speed by itself nor pop by itself will yield consistent success in students.

Every body movement needed to perform in a terrain park can be practiced and mastered outside of the park in low-consequence settings, so get your students to work on both speed and the possibility of a popped versus static takeoff all over the mountain. Set your students up for ultimate success by breaking down the end goal into a progressive build-up of skills and timing. As the instructor, it is also extremely important that you constantly monitor the snow and jump conditions.

Throughout the day, changing snow conditions may require different speeds. Trust and confidence will be easier to achieve with a lesson if you, as the coach, know the features and conditions well.

So get out there and teach your students all about pop. Get your students to the landing zone safely and consistently, and they will love you for it. ☑

*Brian Donovan is an AASI-certified Level III snowboard instructor with Children’s Specialist 2 credentials at New York’s Peek ‘n Peak. He is also a member of Eastern Division’s Development Team and Snowboard Team.*



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# Take Extension Cues from Racers

By Matt Boyd

Photos by Paul Bussi



If you have been teaching for any amount of time, it is nearly guaranteed that you have heard a trainer tell someone to move their center of mass forward and downhill through edge change. We hear this so often because it is not easy to do, and even harder to see and understand.

If you stand in your ski boots and squat down, bending both legs, you'll notice that your hips will be behind your feet. As you stand up, you'll see that your hips end up *over your feet*. Simply unfolding your joints results in a forward movement of the hips. If anyone is even more ingrained than ski instructors with the message of using edge change to move the center of mass forward and down the hill, it's World Cup racers—and you can learn a lot by seeing how they pull it off. In photo 1—a composite image of Ted Ligety and Kjetil Jansrud racing at a World Cup event at Beaver Creek—you can see the two athletes in roughly the same line and body position. Because their bodies are tipped to the inside of the turn, only one leg (the inside leg) is significantly flexed. The inside joints are bent, while the outside joints are straighter. Using the same logic shown while squatting in your ski boots, the foot of the bent, inside leg is behind the corresponding hip.

In photo 2, both skiers begin to release their edges. Jansrud (white helmet) begins to extend his short left leg, while Ligety (green helmet) maintains the flex in the left leg, relying on the forces pulling him outside of the arc to release.

In photo 3, the benefit of extension can be fully seen. By remaining flexed, Ligety “bottles up” his momentum and locks his hips behind his feet. As a result, his balance is toward his heels. He is succeeding with moving his body downhill, but has missed the mark on moving *forward* at the same

time. Jansrud, on the other hand, has used extension of his old inside leg to propel his body forward and downhill. This move sends the energy created in the old turn directly into the next.

In the micro second since the last frame, Ligety has already moved forward in photo 4. A World Cup athlete is able to regain balance in an instant. For us mere mortals, the result of a lack of forward movement can affect a far greater portion of our turn. Because of the forward movements made by Jansrud, no re-centering is necessary. At this point, it may look like a wash. Both skiers are engaged, balanced, and in relatively the same spot at the same time.

Photo 5 begins to show the result of Jansrud's extension. By extending and



Photo 1



Photo 2

moving forward into the new turn, he had a far more powerful release of the energy built up in the old turn. In this case, the result is a boost in forward momentum and, therefore, speed. Although the skiers were neck-and-neck throughout the past several frames, the forward movement in transition, or lack thereof, creates a sizable difference in speed, as is evident in photo 6.

## Extension allows the flexed muscles in the inside leg to get new blood flow.

Although speed is the overriding goal of a World Cup racer, it may not be the desired outcome of our skiing guests. Our guests come to us looking for outcomes like reduced fatigue, speed control, better performance in difficult conditions, and improved efficiency. That said, we can learn a lot from World Cup athletes. Aside from speed, the simple extension shown in this sequence of photos allows the flexed muscles in the inside leg to get new blood flow, reducing muscle fatigue. It also provides a smoother release and earlier engagement of the outside ski, which will prove beneficial in almost any snow condition. Additionally, it enables the skier to remain in balance through one of the most crucial portions of any turn, creating a more stable, trustworthy platform.

So, the next time you're on the hill, share this valuable extension movement with your guests to enhance their performance and boost their confidence. They might never share a podium with Ted Ligety and Kjetil Jansrud, but they *can* share this foundation of good skiing. 32°

*A member of the PSIA Alpine Team, Matt Boyd lives in New Hampshire and is an instructor at Cannon Mountain. He is also a partner, coach, and consultant for the Arc2Arc Alpine Training Center.*



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6

*continued from page 4*

As I mentioned, the divisions are best able to provide personalized on-snow experiences and create the individual connection with the members. The national association is well-positioned to support this effort by facilitating discussions between divisions and disciplines to help develop consistency in education, certification, and even business practices. It also serves members by working with industry partners to grow sponsorship opportunities, represent PSIA-AASI internationally, and promote the value of the association to the industry and the general public.

And don't forget that the national office provides a website, products catalog, and high-caliber member magazine. Lastly, the national association serves the membership by funding the national teams and their mission to develop technical messages and provide unique training experiences and connections. For more information on member benefits, please go to [TheSnowPros.org](http://TheSnowPros.org) and click on the "Why Go Pro" link in the Go Pro navigation tab at the top.

Recently, the leadership of the national association and the divisions met to discuss PSIA-AASI's future. The discussion affirmed the association's focus on providing access to the resources you want and need to improve personally and professionally, and to help you create an exciting experience for your students. The participants also rededicated themselves to communicating to you, area management, and the public about the value of ski and snowboard instructors. The national association and the divisions have the best opportunity for success by identifying our primary roles and key areas for collaboration.

Last, the future of PSIA-AASI depends on ensuring that the member's voice is represented in everything we do, and understanding that the needs of the membership is the highest organizational priority. The recent member survey helped inform this discussion, and you can be certain we will continue to ask about what we can do to improve your

experience with PSIA-AASI. It is our job to work tirelessly to ensure that the value is there and that your needs are met. I can assure you that your national board is committed to a continued focus on value and improving the products, programs, and services you expect. 32°

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No-snow fever was nearly epidemic across the country earlier this season yet Georgia Strickland, Alpine II, and Raymond Kern, Snowboard II, decided to make lemonade from the lemons. The Snowmass, Colorado, residents made a four-hour drive to the National Park Service's Great Sand Dunes in south-central Colorado to make some sand turns. Bravo to the downhill duo!

Georgia Strickland

## Laugh Tracks

As I was chatting with my group of adult beginner students at lineup, a young woman walked up, pointed at my student, Dan, and said, "We're getting married. We're going to Aspen for a ski honeymoon, and he needs to learn how to ski." She then looked first at Dan, and then at me with something that might have been interpreted as "the evil eye" and marched away.

Several minutes later, as I was having my students do a variety of drills to ascertain their strengths and weaknesses, she reappeared, walked up to me, and said, "That's it? I paid all that money so you can have him walking around on his skis?!"

Dan managed to half convince her that it was going to be all right. As she reluctantly departed, she looked at me. This time there was no mistaking the evil eye.

It turned out that Dan was my star pupil. At the end of the group lesson, I discretely kept him a little bit "after

school" to refine some technical stuff. As we were getting ready to start our last run, the fiancé reappeared and said to Dan, "Well, at least he's finally got you at the top of the hill." I said, "Dan, shall we show her what you've learned?"

He nodded and I proceeded down the hill with Dan following close behind, beautifully copying a variety of linked parallel turns from the top to the bottom of our Poma lift hill.

She followed, making some rather shaky turns that had little to do with technique, skied right up to me, threw her arms around me, and kissed me on both cheeks as she asked, joking (I think), if I would come with them on their honeymoon.

Dan, feeling pretty pleased with what he had accomplished, and aware of his newly restored manhood, thanked me profusely and said, "I'm sorry Jim, I didn't introduce you to my fiancé—

this is Marie Antoinette."  
 — Jim Hutt, Gore Mountain, North Creek, NY

## INQUIRING MINDS

In the winter 2012 issue, we asked how you help guests understand the value of lessons. Dan Clausen (Nordic III, Telemark III, and former PSIA Nordic Team member) spoke to us from Minocqua Winter Park, Wisconsin, where he runs the area's ski shop and nordic lessons. Part of his focus is to deliver value by packaging gear, a lesson, and a ticket.

"We really put an emphasis on good equipment, good [snow] grooming, and getting guests into a lesson. We hear a lot of people say, 'My sister is going to show me how,' and then at the end of the day they drop the skis down, say 'That was fun,' but never return.

"It's hard to get beginners in lessons, because they don't think they need it. We have a beginner special that includes a lesson for a dollar more. We try to price it right, and that helps. We get people training for the Birkebeiner and they want to cut a couple of minutes off their time, so we get those people taking lessons."

Our next "Inquiring Minds" question is:

**What's the one piece of information you wish someone had told you about teaching snowsports on your first day?**

## SEEKING SHOOTERS AND STORY TELLERS

We're not looking for gun-slingers and tall tales, just solid photos and engaging stories that capture our lives on snow. Before this season is but a memory, send us your best images or a finely honed description of an interaction with a client. E-mail us at [32Degrees@thesnowpros.org](mailto:32Degrees@thesnowpros.org) (with "Last Chair" in the subject line). If your submission is used, you'll earn a \$25 gift certificate to the PSIA-AASI Accessories Catalog.



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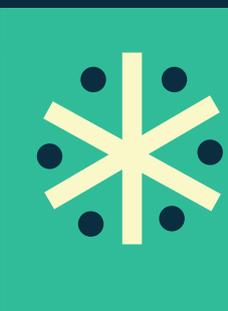
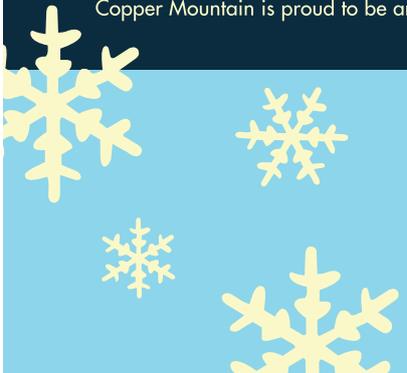
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