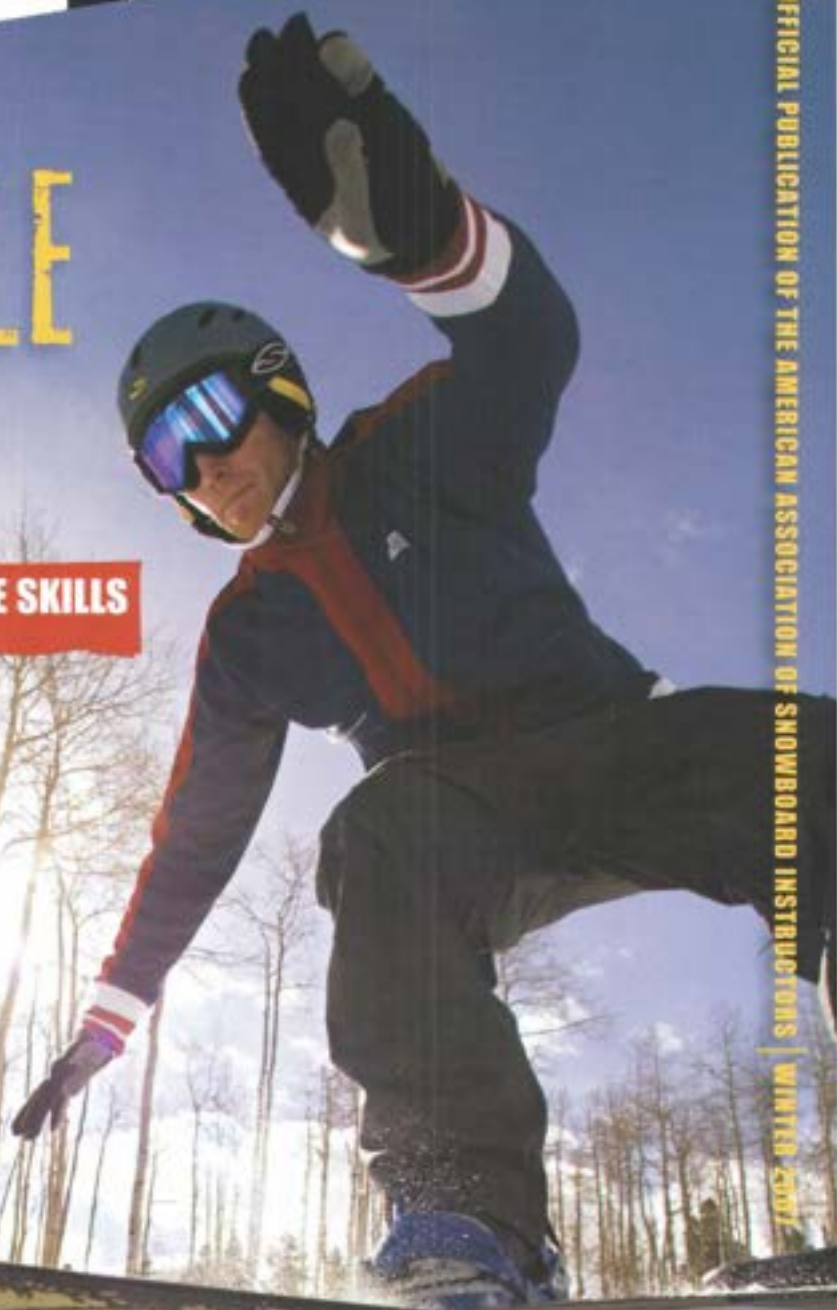


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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SNOWBOARD INSTRUCTORS | WINTER 2007



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Dan Caruso carves into 5000 feet of virgin powder, Davos, Switzerland.
Photo: Adam Clark. © 2006 Patagonia, Inc.

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WINTER
2007

pro rider

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Cover photo of Ben Preston, a Level III instructor at Colorado's Crested Butte Mountain Resort, by Tomas Zuccareno.



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respect gets respect

No, the title of this article isn't a lead-in to a review of terrain park etiquette. It's about the status of snowboarding in the broader context of teaching snowsports, and how, through mutual respect and communication among the various entities that comprise our national organization, we can boost respect within the industry and meet your needs as a snowboard instructor.

If you read my commentary in the fall issue of *The Professional Skier*, you already know about my election as ASEA president, the selection of Mark Dorsey to serve as executive director, and other recent changes in the organization. (And if you missed my comments in *TPS*, you can find this information—as well as an introduction to Kim Seevers, the newly hired education director for PSIA-AASI—on pages 50–51 of this magazine.)

One goal of my tenure is to attain the highest possible level of member satisfaction in AASI. This requires, among other things, that the snowboard community be well represented at both the national and division levels, that your educational events and materials be relevant and of the highest quality, and that the discipline be treated with the respect it deserves. It also requires that you be an active participant in association activities.

To a large extent much of this is happening. Nowadays, boards and committees usually have snowboarders, either elected or appointed. Since the first AASI manual was published in 1998, a full range of high-end educational products has continued to flow, augmented by division offerings. There are many excellent division events and we are moving to create an annual national event for AASI members.

We are also working to reinforce certification standards across the country.

Snowboarding has come far since it started to gain prominence in the 1980s. We have made great strides in reducing, if not eliminating, the “we-they attitude” that once put skiers and snowboarders at odds with each other. This is certainly aided by the fact that a large portion of our membership participates in both skiing and riding. When AASI was formed in 1997, the PSIA Board of Directors recognized that instructors of this “new” discipline needed an associational identity separate from that of their skiing colleagues. Soon, the industry coined the word “snowsports” to reflect that mountain sports are not just ski-centric. Our community has not only embraced snowboarding, but also recognizes its importance in helping stem what was once a decline in winter sports participation.

While most everyone has figured out what snowboarding brings to the table and better understands cultural differences that exist between riders and skiers, there are still some questions to be answered. According to the National Ski Areas Association, snowboarders account for about 30 percent of snowsports area visits. (That's an average; the range goes from single digits to over 90 percent at individual areas.) Why then do AASI members make up just 17.5 percent of ASEA's total membership, even counting dual discipline members? Part of the answer is that snowboarders are a little less likely to take lessons (24.4 percent of total lesson sales, according to NSAA figures, against the 30 percent total snowboard participation).

For snowboarders who join AASI, our divisions report that the membership retention rate is lower than for the other

disciplines (i.e., alpine, nordic, and adaptive). Does this indicate a level of dissatisfaction? Are riders less likely to join and maintain membership in organizations? Also of interest is the observation that the ratio of females who participate in snowboarding (and AASI membership) is low compared to that of males.

Are these just aberrations in a continually evolving environment? Are there things we (AASI) could do better? Are we directing our energies in the right places?

Initial attempts to package AASI like PSIA were not and would never be successful because the two groups are different from one another. We understand that snowboard members are younger, and more likely to come and go. But I believe we can be more successful in building AASI membership if we can get a better handle on why ongoing members stay and what it takes to bring new snowboarding instructors into the mix.

As pointed out in the 2005–06 Kottke End of Season Survey commissioned by NSAA, “Snowboarding continues to attract a high share of new entrants, and its base of participants is most heavily concentrated in younger age groups who have many years of participation still ahead of them.” We need to make sure AASI grows with the sport, by meeting the needs of both our customers and our members.

Your national board and staff appreciate and value your commitment to the association, and we welcome your input on how we can enhance your AASI experience and appeal to the broadest number of riding instructors. This can only improve our effectiveness in the marketplace, which will benefit you, our organization, and the snowsports industry as a whole. 

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BY ELLEN TWINAME

SICK CHICKS

LEVEL III WOMEN OF AASI TELL IT LIKE IT IS

It was a simple question. Researching material for a new AASI snowboard manual, Eastern Division examiner Holly Andersen asked me how many female snowboard instructors were on my area's education staff. The answer was equally simple: zero.

This brief exchange led to more—and more complicated—questions. How many top-level female instructors are out there? Given the rise in talent and popularity of competitive women's snowboarding, is the number of female instructors keeping pace? What challenges do these educators face in a male-dominated field? Is it important to have more female instructors? And if so, what can be done to recruit and retain them?

Women have been present at the highest levels of snowboard instruction since well before AASI was formed in 1997. Colorado-based Kerri Hannon (now Kerri Hannon-Marsh) and Utah's Jane Mauser were members of the inaugural Snowboard Education Team, which was created in 1988—a time when PSIA referred to the sport as "snowboard skiing." In 1998 (when each geographical division placed a member on the team) Belenda Mehlschmidt served as Alaska's representative. There are currently no female riders on the AASI Snowboard Team, although with a system of national tryouts now in place, two women vied for a spot on the team in 2004.

Exact figures are unavailable because members are not required to cite gender in registration records, but there are an estimated 50-some female Level III snowboard instructors. Although that number proves women can reach the pinnacle of snowboard education, consider that out of a total AASI membership of 5,135, there are 596 Level III instructors overall. If you do the math, you'll find that among the top echelon of snowboard instructors,

women make up less than 9 percent of the ranks. And when you look higher—to a tally of examiners—the figure dips even lower, with just over 8 percent of division education staffs comprised of women.

This despite the fact that, according to the 2006 Kottke End of Season Survey (commissioned by the National Ski Areas Association), snowboarders accounted for 30 percent of area visits last season—and 33 percent of those riders were female. The study also found that females represented the majority of area visitors in three categories of special note to snowsports instructors: never-ers (56 percent), beginners (59 percent), and lesson takers (53 percent).

To gain a more personal perspective on the role women play in snowboard instruction, I posed a series of questions to 12 female riders of varying ages and backgrounds who overcame the odds to reach Level III certification. (See "Who's Who" on page 10 for more information on the women I surveyed.) Each has been confronted by the "boys' club" image of boarding, some more harshly than others. Hannon-Marsh, for example, recalls being told by a former ski school director that she would never be promoted to the position of supervisor because she was female.

Among these instructors there is also a shared belief that, thanks to the sport's ever-increasing popularity and technical innovations such as boards and boots designed specifically for women, the snowboarding playing field is level (metaphorically speaking, anyway). The women I spoke with hope that as more females realize this and discover the fun of the sport, some of them will turn to teaching and help inspire a new generation of riders.

HOLLY



WHEN DID YOU START SNOWBOARDING,
AND WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED?

BELENDIA: I started in 1990. It was clear that snowboarding was not a fad and that it would be around for a long time. I figured if I learned snowboarding and was able to teach it, it would make me a valuable instructor since I was already teaching alpine and telemark skiing.

ANGELA: In 1993. When I first started seeing people snowboard, I thought it looked so fluid. I was skiing at a small area called Arizona Snowbowl near where I was going to college. I decided to take snowboarding for a PE credit to add more chal-

lenge to the mountain. We had an eight-inch powder day, our instructor let us be on our own for the afternoon (can't imagine why), and I fell in love.

AUDRA: I started snowboarding in 1994 when I was in fifth grade, back at the two-room schoolhouse in Fishtail, Montana. The whole school would go to Red Lodge, but because snowboarding equipment was so expensive to rent back then (\$15 as opposed to \$10 for ski gear), we couldn't snowboard all the time. On the last week of every season, our teachers let us snowboard. It was love at first feel, for sure.

MINDY: I started snowboarding 10 years ago. What got me to try was a Thanksgiving dinner bet with my little brother. Then age 29, he bet me 50 bucks that he could learn to snowboard better than me in one winter. He won the first year, but I won the bigger prize: the life-long thrill of riding, Level III certification, and becoming an examiner.

HOLLY: I started riding at Greek Peak Ski Resort in central New York in 1990. I got my first Burton Air 5 when I was 11 years old. [Editor's note: The touching story of how Holly got the money for this snowboard by selling a cow she raised through 4H is recounted in the AASI *Riding Concepts* video.]

KERRI: Spring of 1985. Breckenridge Mountain Manager Jim Gill asked if someone would try snowboarding to see if it should be allowed.

PAULA: I started in 1995. My husband went to a ski show/swap and bought a snowboard. A friend at Vail who taught kids said, "Next time you come out, don't bring your skis and I'll teach you to snowboard." Well, I did not want to learn at Vail (I'm from Minnesota with limited experience in the mountains). So I tried it without a lesson in Minnesota (ouch) and then again with a lesson at Brighton and Snowbird, Utah, in soft snow (ahhh). Being a beginner snowboarder made the Midwest green and blue runs challenging and fun again.

continued

WHO'S WHO

ANGELA HAMILTON

- Ski school supervisor and snowboard trainer – Alpine Meadows, California
- Snowboard Level III; snowboarding examiner (Western Division)
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "Kill Bill"
- Favorite trick: Big, stalled-out lean in the halfpipe.
- Top three riding songs: "Californian Love" by 2Pac, "Rainshine" by Bran Van 3000, and "We're Gonna Make It" by Damian Marley.

AUDRA BINTZ

- Lead snowboard instructor – Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, Garmisch, Germany
- Snowboard Level III; accredited freestyle educator (Northern Rocky Mountain Division)
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: The one movie that inspired my success was "Optigrab" by Mack Dawg Productions. On a lighter note, I find "Out Cold" is a pretty comical movie about mountain town resorts.
- Favorite trick: I like frontside rail slides and popping off switch. Spinning is fun too, but I lose my proprioception pretty easily.
- Top three riding songs: Where I ride determines my music selection. A lot of the time, I don't even like to ride with music (in the park, no way). I like the beat, so I veer toward Blackalicious, Sage Francis, A Tribe Called Quest.

BELENDA MEHLSCHMIDT

- Instructor – Alyeska Resort, Alaska
- Snowboard Level III; Alpine Level II; Nordic Level III
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: Don't have one.
- Favorite trick: I'm too old to do tricks (will soon be 57). I'm not as flexible as I used to be.
- Top three riding songs: I don't listen to music while I'm riding. I like to concentrate on what's going on around me at all times.

DANI CASE

- Snowsports supervisor – Schweitzer Mountain Snowsports School, Idaho
- Snowboard Level III; Alpine Level I; children's educator (Northern Rocky Mountain Division)

- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "... As if!" by Misschief Films. I got it from a Roxy Camp, and I love it!
- Favorite trick: Backside rodeo ... sure wish I could do one.
- Top three riding songs: "Lyrics to Go" by A Tribe Called Quest, AC/DC's "TNT," and "Come On Feel the Noise" by Twisted Sister.

HOLLY ANDERSEN

- Staff trainer – Mount Snow, Vermont
- Snowboard Level III; Alpine Level II; Adaptive Level I; snowboarding examiner (Eastern Division); member of Eastern Division Steering Committee
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "Gone With the Wind." Scarlett O'Hara rules.
- Favorite trick: Anything that gets a rider stoked on riding.
- Top three riding songs: "Closer" by Nine Inch Nails, "Long December" by Counting Crows, and anything by IC Nuts out of Killington, Vermont.

JODIE LUSH

- Snowboard instructor – Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen, Colorado
- Snowboard Level III

KATIE SMITH

- Trainer – Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen, Colorado
- Snowboard Level III; New Zealand Ski Instructors Association Stage 2
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: My favorite snowboard movie is "Follow Me Around."
- Favorite trick: Frontside shifty
- Top three riding songs: "Kickstart My Heart" by Motley Crue, "Whatcha Waiting For" by Gwen Stefani, and anything by The Sounds.
- Snowboard Level III

KERRI HANNON-MARSH

- Alpine Level II; Snowboard Level III

MINDY COVINGTON

- Head trainer – Boston Mills/Brandywine Resorts, Ohio
- Snowboard Level III; snowboarding examiner (Central Division); member of Central Division's Education Committee and board of directors

- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "... As if!"
- Favorite trick: Anything jib.
- Top three riding songs: "Sexy Back" by Justin Timberlake, "I'm So Excited" by Le Tigre, and "Wind It Up" by Gwen Stefani

PAULA LEE

- Snowboard instructor (on hiatus) – Schweitzer Mountain, Idaho
- Snowboard Level III
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "The Thomas Crown Affair"
- Favorite trick: To teach: 180s. To do: pipe riding and 360 progressions.
- Top three riding songs: Classic rock. "Ride My See-Saw" by The Moody Blues, "Got a Line on You" by Spirit, and "Magic Carpet Ride" by Steppenwolf. Honorable mentions: "Flirtin' With Disaster" by Molly Hatchet and "Rebel Yell" by Billy Idol.

STEPHANIE WALES

- Snowboard program director and head trainer (on hiatus) – Ragged Mountain, New Hampshire
- Snowboard Level III
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: No favorite chick flicks; I don't watch those. My favorite boarding movie is "Transcendence."
- Favorite trick: Backside 180s, half cabs, switch 3s.
- Top three riding songs: I don't listen to music when I ride (way too dangerous, in my opinion), but my favorite riding movie soundtrack by far is "Transcendence."

TRAVIS CAPOBIANCO

- Staff trainer – Loon Mountain, New Hampshire
- Snowboard Level III; member of Eastern Division's Snowboard Demonstration Team and AASI Development Team
- Favorite (sick) chick flick: "DC Mountain Lab" and "Lame" are my favorite snowboard flicks, but they don't have any girls in them.
- Favorite trick: My favorite thing is riding trees in deep snow.
- Top three riding songs: "Ms. New Booty" by Bubba Sparxx, "187 On the Dance Floor" by L.A. Symphony, and "Get Rhythm" by Johnny Cash.



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STEPHANIE: I took my first snowboard lesson in 1994 after a guy at my local ski shop talked me into buying an entire snowboard setup when I really was there to buy skis. I saw people ripping during my lesson and thought, "Yeah, I want to do that." I was hooked.

TRAVIS: I started snowboarding 1994 when I was 11. I was at a small mountain where I was bored with skiing, so I decided to try something new. I continued to do both for the rest of that season. At the beginning of the next season I got a new snowboard and didn't ski for the next six years.

HAVE YOU BEEN TREATED DIFFERENTLY THAN THE GUYS?

STEPHANIE: People used to rag on my equipment, and they still do. I ride men's boards, and I ride big boards—usually a 166. Guys in the lift line used to say, "What are you thinking?" But when they see me ride, they get over it. The bottom line is that I like to go fast and carve, and most chick boards can't handle that type of pressure.

JODIE: Maybe a little bit. It's mostly when teaching. I often find that I have to prove myself in order to get respect from male students in particular. It usually doesn't take long to win them over. It's a challenge I enjoy.

ANGELA: We are nice to look at, so we get more free drinks and sometimes we get to drop into the pipe quicker so they can see us stick our butts out. Seriously though, the more women started

snowboarding, the more we got grouped together with stereotypes about how girls ride. I noticed how throwing all girls into this category seemed to go along with a lower expectation. In the beginning, there weren't enough of us to make generalizations. If you were good, you just "rode like a guy." As a woman rider, you have to work harder to set yourself apart. It's good, because the result will be an elevated overall level of riding among us.

DANI: Not really. When I began snowboarding, it was all about riding with whoever could go up to the mountains for the weekend. Now, as an instructor, I still ride with whoever can get away for a run. In this job, all the same rules apply to both the guys and the girls. In contests and games of almost every sport, guys and girls are separated because they compete at a different level. In AASI, we're all just instructors and are expected to meet the requirements no matter what gender we are. I think that says something for women instructors.

KATIE: I was the only girl instructor at my resort for three years. Now I am the only female snowboard trainer at my resort. Sometimes you have to really step up and make your opinion known. It can be a bit of a boys' club. Gaining the respect of the boys can sometimes be hard, but if you ride at Level III, then it's a given you ride better than a lot of the males on staff. That's why we need more chicks! It is hard being one of the only girls, but the more we have out there, the more of a voice we have.

WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE RELATIVELY FEW WOMEN ON THE EDUCATIONAL SIDE?

DANI: This is just a guess, but I think a good number of girls

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IN AASI, WE'RE ALL JUST INSTRUCTORS AND ARE EXPECTED TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS NO MATTER WHAT GENDER WE ARE. I THINK THAT SAYS SOMETHING FOR WOMEN INSTRUCTORS.

continued from page 11

who come to take lessons are simply there because a boyfriend, husband, or someone similar encouraged them to do so. They are not truly interested in getting good at the sport. They simply want to have one day of fun on the slopes and spend some time with the other person. I've heard this from many female customers as their reason for visiting the area.

If they have no desire to go beyond the beginner or intermediate level, then how can we expect them to eventually become instructors? I myself began snowboarding due to the influence of a high school boyfriend. It was luck that I tried it a few times and fell in love, and even more random that I became an instructor. I simply never thought of it until the opportunity was right there in my face.

AUDRA: Maybe a lot of people don't realize how amazing and beneficial teaching can be, for all parties involved. The way I figure it, when I am able to help share what I know about my passion with others who are looking to become better and stronger, I feel remarkably fulfilled.

MINDY: As my 16-year-old daughter, a Level I snowboard instructor, so clearly states, this is not solely an educational problem. If you look beyond the beginner lessons, how many women are taking intermediate and advanced lessons? My daughter has been a rarity through her journey of high-end lessons, competing, and training to become an instructor. She is used to being the solo female. If we want more women instructors, we are going to need to attract more women to the intermediate and advanced lessons.

Additionally, all marketing and collateral pieces are geared toward 12- to 16-year-old girls. Nothing is geared toward adult women beyond their mid-20s. Look at the ads for families: the children are riders, the women are usually skiers! When the rare ad displays a family (mom, dad, and kids) who are all riders, the adult model depicting the mom looks out of place, never holding the board correctly.

Women were late into the game of snowboarding and are still greatly in the minority. We need to attract more women to snowboarding, beyond the one-day trial. I have three daughters, and due to my snowboarding they all ride, and each intends on instructing when they are old enough. Each daughter struggles to find girls to ride with. Usually they are out with the boys. We need to reverse the thinking of "when more women ride, we will spend more money advertising to them." How about spending more money now

to attract more women, which then grows the snowboard market?

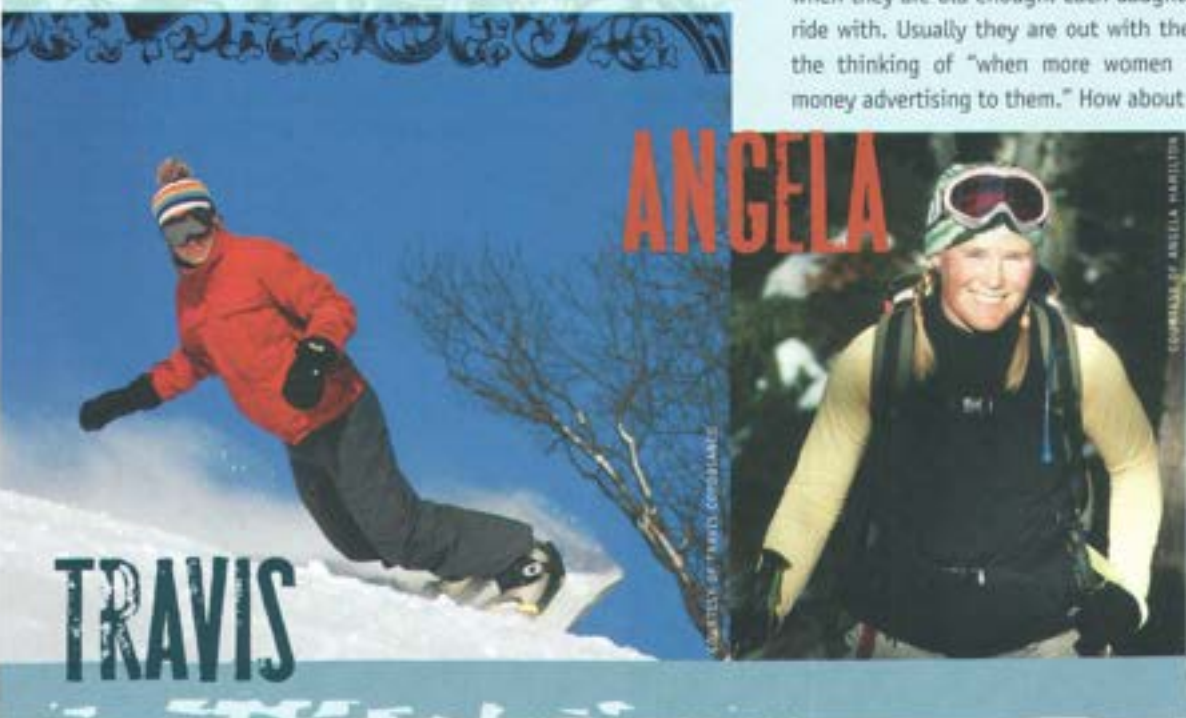
TRAVIS: I don't think the actual ratio of female instructors to male instructors is that much different from any other job, especially in the recreation industry. Women in the workforce as a whole are greatly outnumbered by men.

HOLLY: I think there is an intimidation factor involved for anyone.

You have to stand and speak in front of people and you have to be confident in your own abilities. That is challenging for anyone.

STEPHANIE: I have found that especially in education it is a big boys' club. It's practically a fraternity for God's sake!

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BELEND: I think it has to do with the fact that anyone can learn to do anything, but it is more difficult to teach it. Besides, people want to have fun riding. It's a selfish thing. It takes a special person to teach and share what they know and pass it on to others.



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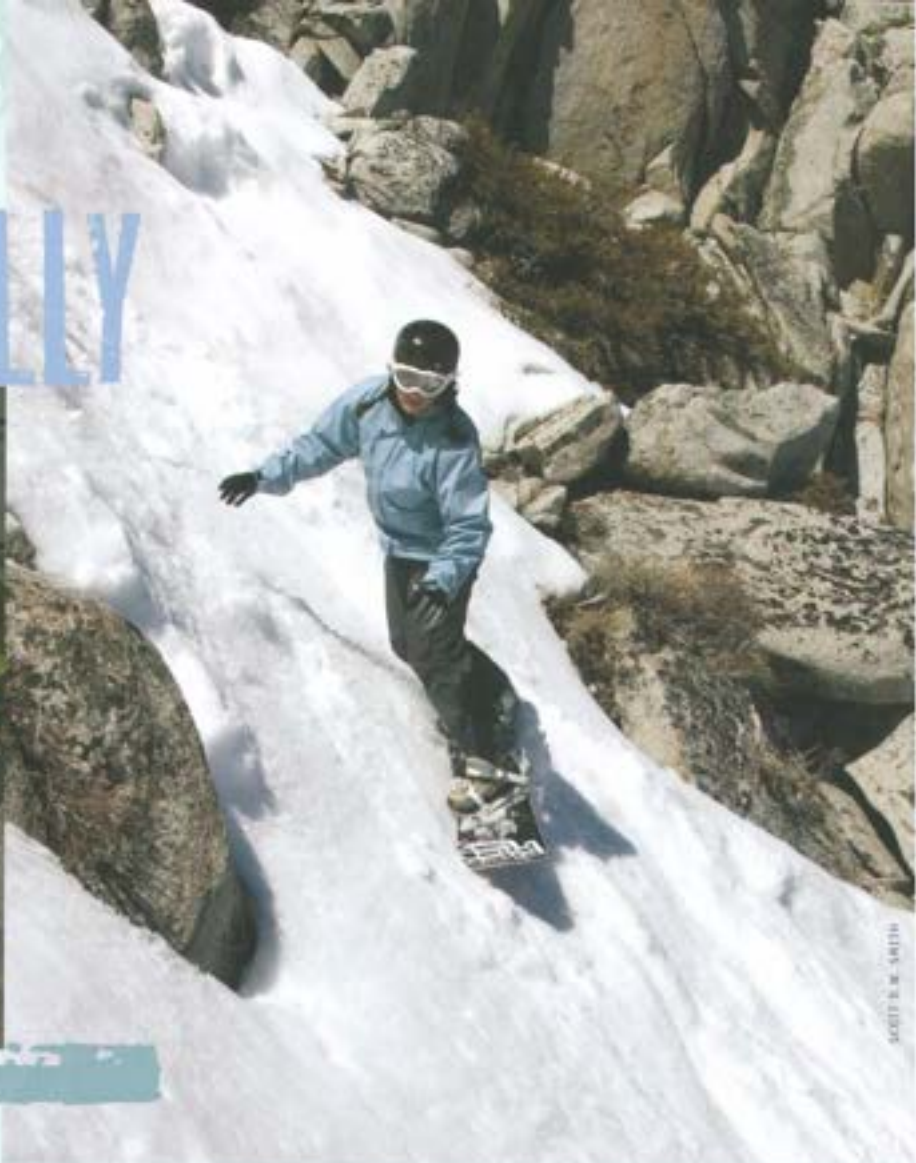
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HOLLY

COURTESY OF HOLLY ANDERSON



SCOTT B. W. SMITH

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WHAT CAN BE DONE TO GET MORE WOMEN INVOLVED IN INSTRUCTION?

TRAVIS: Let girls know that the snowboard side is very open to girls teaching. We need to make sure they are treated the same as the guys, whether it is in lessons or whether they are coming to a mountain wanting to teach. Also make sure that they don't get hit on or coddled. Girls need to be pushed and also shown that they are as able as men.

ANGELA: I think more women trainers would get more women involved in snowboard instruction. Word spreads, and if there is a guaranteed place to hook up with a fun chick posse, more would want in.

DANI: If there is any truth to my guess as to why some women try snowboarding in the first place, I think the place to start would be to get women excited about the sport from the beginning. Perhaps push the women-specific learning gear and women-specific clinics such as Roxy Camps to increase their interest,

their enthusiasm, and their confidence. This would be a great job for an ambitious marketing team.

AUDRA: I think a good way to get more women involved in teaching is word of mouth. We're women, we like to talk! If we are good representatives of our sport and are passionate about sharing the joys of the mountain atmosphere, then people will notice.

BELENDA: I hate to say this, but snowboarding is male dominated, and any female who gets into the sport is looked upon as being inferior unless she can outride the opposite sex.

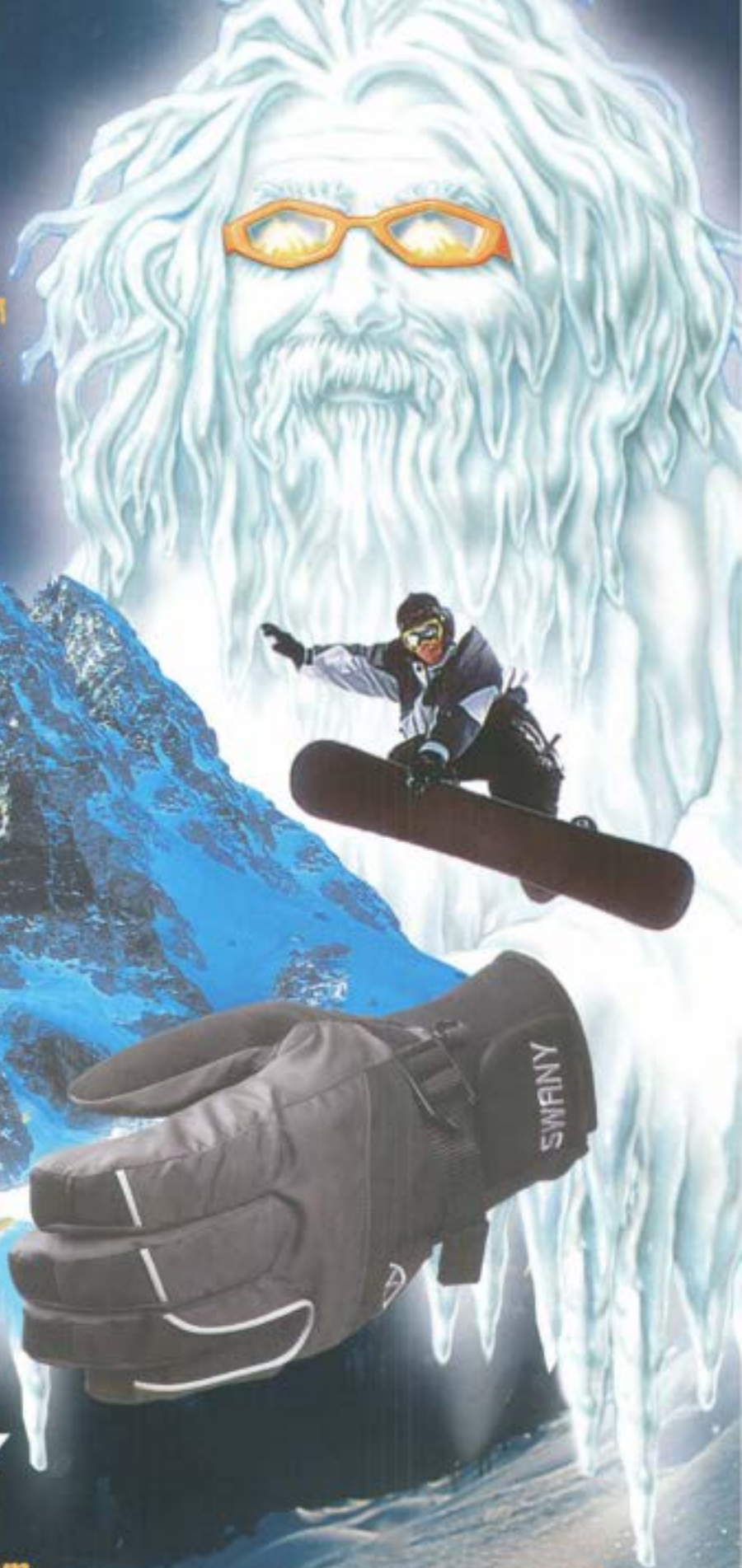
KERRI: Treat them with respect.

MINDY: Let women know they can keep up with the boys, if not pass them. Several women don skis to hit the beginner and intermediate slopes when the kids are young, but how many continue at a high level?

PAULA: Recruit women in other snowsports or instructors from other disciplines to try snowboarding. Offer internships. We

continued on page 60

FREE
your style
and the
SPIRIT
will
follow

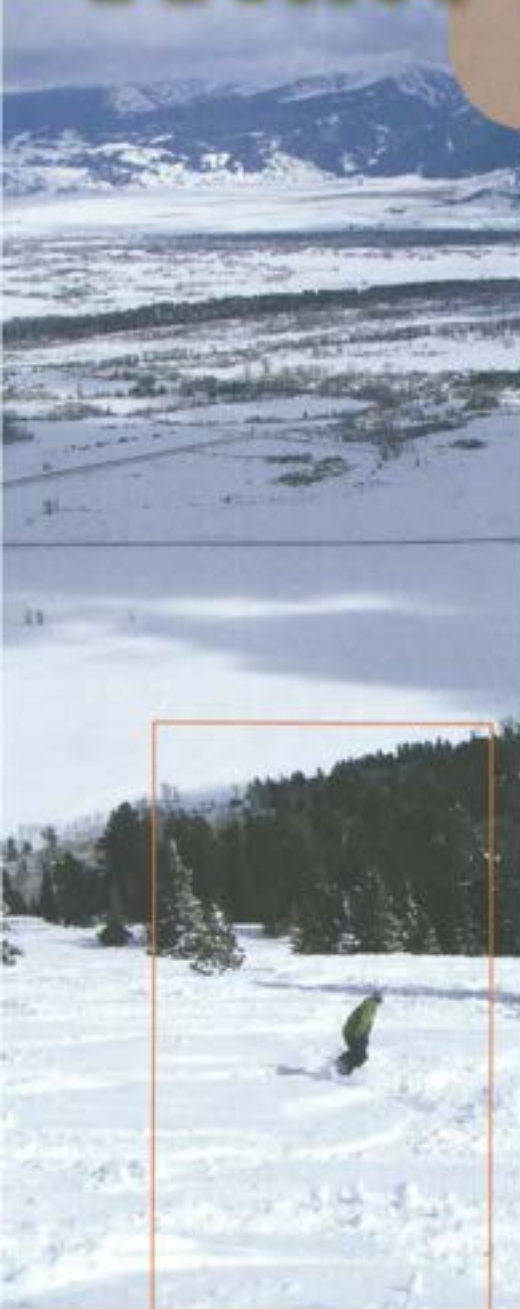


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WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO

Some Clinical Thinking



Plentiful snow and beautiful backdrops greeted attendees of the 2006 Renegade Rider Rally held by AASI's Northern Rocky Mountain Division.



What do you get when you turn the AASI Snowboard Team loose among a couple dozen challenge-seeking instructors and tell everyone to go outside and play ... for five days ... at a world-class resort pounded by fresh snowfall?

- A. A rewarding learning experience marked by topical conversation, captivating clinics, and lots of time on snow
- B. Just one more way for snowboarders to flaunt their penchant for having a good time with fellow riders
- C. Mano-a-mano posturing, the likes of which hasn't been seen since Kanye West and Bill O'Reilly bumped into each other at Shaq's pool party
- D. All of the above

As evidenced by the following team-member accounts of exploits at the 2006 Renegade Rider Rally, the correct answer would be "D." Apparently, this annual end-of-season bash, hosted since 1999 by AASI's Northern Rocky Mountain Division, really gets the competitive juices flowing. But who would've thought those happy-go-lucky guys on the Snowboard Team, in addition to being tops in their field, could be so driven, so calculating, so downright caty?

While reading the following accounts of the Rally, you're going to find outrageous tales of brinkmanship, descriptions of extreme terrain and physical prowess, and stories of heroic participants having more fun than humans ought to be allowed. We've chosen to believe them all and feel that each Rider Rally write-up offers real pearls of wisdom for snowboard instructors everywhere—not just those who flew the coop to attend the 2006 rally (held March 27–31 at Jackson Hole, Wyoming). You don't have to take our word for it, though. Read to the very end and you'll see what AASI Snowboard Team Coach Randy Price makes of it all.

Oh, and speaking of those who attended, you can get a first-hand glimpse into the event from someone other than an ego-maniacal team member by reading the article on page 24 by Central Division snowboard instructor Phillip Howell.

THESE GUYS?

on the Renegade Rider Rally

TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH

By Butch Peterson

As the tram docks in the metal bay at the top of Jackson Hole, I catch a quick glimpse of the chutes below. Filled with bottomless drifts of powder, they shamelessly beckon fellow AASI Snowboard Team member Scott Anfang and me as we assemble the troops who on this third day of the Renegade Rider Rally have signed on for the "Steep and Deep" clinic.

Nearly two feet of fresh snow blankets the mountain. At the top, there's even more. Sixteen of us exit the tram just in time to be pelted by icy pellets driven by a fierce blast of wind. Scott and I decide to waste no time divvying up the eager group.

After strapping in, I raise my voice over the roaring gusts.

"Anyone who would be disappointed if we did not drop into Corbet's Couloir today, come with me." Without hesitation, seven riders posse up—and it's game on! Scott goes his merry way, as we slash toward destiny. Little did we know at the time what sick lines we were to experience that day.

It's the final week of operation for the famous red tram (which is to Jackson Hole what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris) and many of the passengers appear a bit misty-eyed. But while trams may come and trams may go, the mountain stays the same—and this day, with a gang of gung-ho riders stoked to drop epic terrain and a rockin' après rider party at the Mangy Moose Saloon planned for later that night—is shaping up to be one to remember.

Corbet's Couloir, which hangs above Teton Village like a maraschino cherry on a giant ice cream sundae, is nearly straight-up-and-down vertical at the top before "flattening" to an average pitch of 40 degrees. Five hundred feet of sheer gravity in a snowy coating, the chute is only 40 to 50 feet wide through the gut and you never really know what sort of conditions lurk within, so it makes for one wild ride threatened by a rock wall if you don't nail the jump-in entry. Locals say the best snow on the mountain is found in Corbet's, but to drop into that cherry pow skiers and riders must first launch a literal leap of faith.

Today the conditions are ripe, but we are not dropping in cold.

In preparation for the big drop, we charge down 4,000 vertical



DAN LUTY

feet of fresh like a pack of rabid jackalopes. What starts out as a warm-up quickly turns into a mad dash to launch as many cliffs as we can find. With every powder slash and rock-band booter, the excitement builds. Minutes later we are again at the top of the tram. I shotgun a Red Bull, then we slide up to check out our goal. I drop to my chest to peer over the precipice.

The cold breeze howls up from the valley floor through the frozen chutes, spraying me with an icy gust as I lie on my chest just a few feet away from the swirling abyss that is Corbet's Couloir. The hoarfrost grips the Gore-Tex fibers of my coat as I attempt to slowly inch forward and peer down into Jackson Hole's infamous run.

The coarse snow unexpectedly gives way and I lurch forward, my head and shoulders hanging perilously over the edge. I gasp and feel as though my heart has stopped beating. Behind me, someone yanks me back by my snowboard to relative safety away from the edge—but not before I get a quick glimpse of the drop-in, landing zone, and epic powder field below.

I wait a moment to regain the composure my group likely expects of the guy who has led them to this gnarly terrain. Then I give the report: "It smells sweet," I say, "but if anyone overshoots

continued

Donovan Nash gets rail-world experience at the Rider Rally.



PAULA JILL

Welcome to Corbet's Cauldron; so glad you could drop in.



continued from page 17

the small landing zone the compression could be ugly."

This cautionary observation does not seem to subdue anyone's desire to drop in. In fact, before I even finish my description, which details what I believe to be the safest and most effective technique to negotiate the 20- to 25-foot mandatory drop-in, one clinic rider is in the starting gate, clearing his goggles of fog. He's ready to show us how they do it in the Northwest.

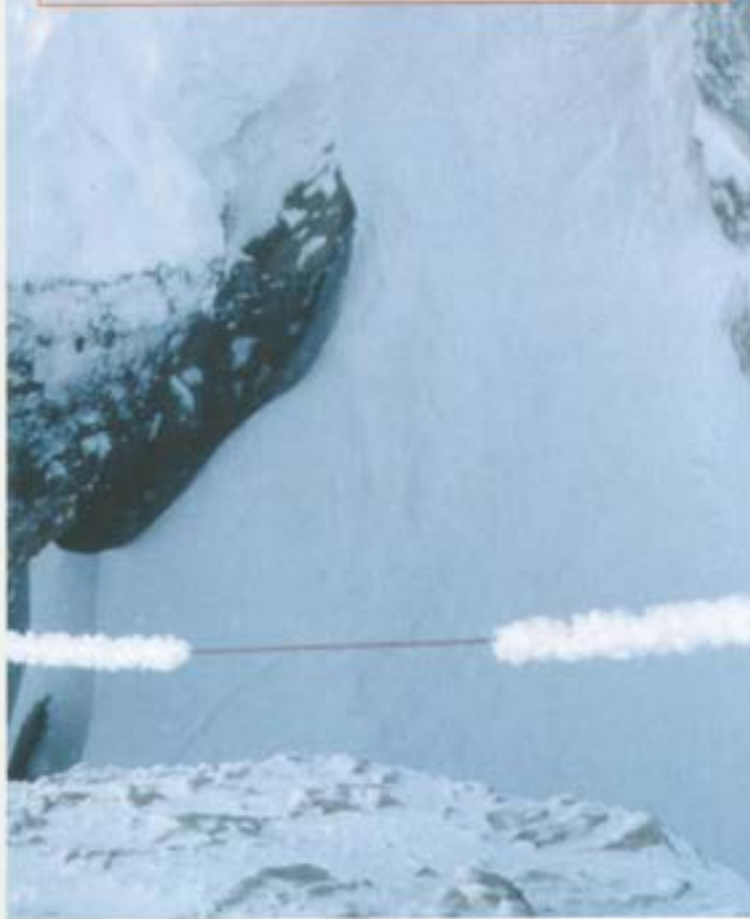
In preparing to tackle this daunting drop, my clinic group—made up of riders from throughout the country—discusses the necessary elements. Number one on the list is fear. Actually, fear is also number two and three on the list. All who dare to ride Corbet's require a healthy instinct for self-preservation. I mention that it will also be helpful to explore our flexion range of motion to the fullest upon landing.

What turns out to be most challenging, however, is the technical move needed at the drop-in. It seems simple at first. But what seems simple on the flats at the bottom of the mountain can be a whole different experience 4,000 feet above the valley floor on an exposed rock ledge.

In order to hit the sweet spot—consisting of soft snow and a steep transition—each rider needs to slideslip about 10 feet into a 5-foot-wide, rock-strewn chute, which ends in a sheer overhanging cliff. A regular-stance rider could then hop gently away from the cliff, turn the board 90 degrees, and freefall 20 to 25 feet in order to land in the soft transition and rocket blissful turns in the deep powder. Unfortunately, due to the overhanging rock, even when positioned inches from the cliff, the rider cannot see the sweet spot hidden below. The one goofy footer in the group chooses the same line, with his back to the drop—a dicey move at best and truly a leap of faith.

The successful riders actually drag their tails against the rock as they pivot their boards during freefall. Those who leap too far away from the cliff learn a lot about absorption.

While everyone in the group dropped in, I can't say they all stuck the landing. But that was not the point. The point was staring personal fear in the face and conquering it. We did the steep and now we were ripping the deep and riding out like heroes. As I gasped for air in the shoulder deep drifts, I thought for a second about K.C. Gandee, who was hanging out at the pipe while we got the goods. But the thought vanished as quickly as it came as I dove deep into my heelside turn and blasted through another giant white wave of snow.



THE PARK WAS THE PLACE TO BE

By K.C. Gandee

Well, Butch, after a night of Rider Rally festivities some of us were in the mood for something a little more... laid back. It was almost as if our heads were pounding in a rhythmic chant—*no big, scary drops... no big, scary drops... no big, scary drops*. While you and Team Extreme were out getting your adrenaline fix, my group was chilling; enjoying the weather, the snow, each other's company, and some progression in the pipe and park.

Seriously, hyper-masculine chest puffing aside, you don't need to be insane—like you Corbet's Cripples—to have fun at the rally. We had about as diverse a group as possible, with participants from several different divisions. There was one rider who wasn't afraid—and had nothing to be afraid of. There was the rally-goer who was terrified, and didn't need to be. And then there was the person who had just the right amount of nerves and the dude who wasn't scared at all—and probably should have been. We ranged in age from 20 to mid-40s to late-50s (maybe a bit older, but it's not polite to ask), and jib credentials ran the gamut from sweet 270s to barely pulling off an ollie. At first glance, you might have thought we'd never be able to ride together for an entire day. But you would've been wrong.

Despite the fact that everyone in the group had different experience levels, goals, and learning paces, we not only rode together for the day, but everyone progressed. We kept it low key and focused first on a park with relatively small features. Scoping the jibs and jumps until we found a feature that everyone could handle—a flatbox about 10 feet long and 2 feet wide—we made the scene in a big way. The setting played right into the energy levels of the group, with some hiking and others taking laps on the nearby chairlift to get a breather and a bird's-eye view of the action.

Each rider received coaching not only from me, but from nearly everyone in the clinic. Not the kind where you're going, "Oh geez, will this cat ever be quiet?!", but the kind where you think, "Oh yeah, right on!!" We started slow and cheered for each others' attempts at something new. Some riders went from 50/50s to cranking 5-0s; some from boardslides to nose slides—but each time someone nailed a new trick the stoke level of the entire group soared. This led to more progression. Which led to lunch.

Mr. Peterson, while you and your band of daredevils headed back up for another ogre session on the steepest, gnarliest face at Jackson, we took off for the freshly groomed super pipe. Yet again, we were able to set up a session on terrain that didn't intimidate anyone (just like Corbet's... *riiiiiigghht*). While some riders took laps on the rope tow, others set up camp at the bottom of the pipe to watch and discuss.

The focus of this particular afternoon in the trick ditch was realizing that if we pop in the pipe like we do on a jump, we'll

end up landing at the bottom of the tranny having to absorb some major compression and losing a ton of speed. To go big in the pipe for more than one hit involves resisting the urge to pop at the lip and simply riding into the air with a goal of landing on the vertical section of the wall. To get a feel for this concept, riders made runs through the pipe, flattening their boards to the snow for the crest or peak of their ride on the pipe wall. For those who were more courageous, the task was to flatten the board at the lip of the pipe, resist the urge to pop, sail into the air, and land with their boards still flat at the top of the vert for their re-entry to the pipe. (We were lucky enough to have a freshly cut pipe for this session. Different pipes with a different amount of vert may call for slight changes in the amount of pop.) By focusing on one concept but allowing riders to process in their own ways—whether boosting out, doing some mellow cruising, or just observing and discussing—everyone in the group was able to glean something from the session.

Everyone was flowing in the pipe, but after a couple of hours my compadres started to feel a bit slow and sluggish, like wet sponges. Some inspirational riding was needed and, luckily, U.S. Open champ and Jackson Hole local Rob Kingwell showed up to play. Nothing gets a group fired up faster than "Kinger" hucking corked 9s in the pipe. And you know, we observed that Kinger (who was going WAY bigger than anyone else in the pipe) didn't seem to pop at all at the lip of the pipe and landed almost every time on the vertical section of the pipe wall!

We ended the day on a high note, everyone realizing that instructors have a lot in common, regardless of where they come from, how old they are, or how hard they ride. We also created a buzz for just how easy it is to tailor the pipe and park experience to everyone's tastes and talents. Most important, we recognized that progress and learning happens for instructors too, especially when we leave intimidation behind and encourage each other to succeed. Butch, you guys may have had an emotionally charged day shredding the gnar-gnar, but who really progressed that day? I think the answer is clear.

continued



DAN COFFY

FEEDING THE CARVE STARVED

Yeah, yeah, talk all you want about Corbet's steeps, gnar-gnar, rails, and halfpipes. To be good at that stuff, you have to get back to the basics. And what could be more basic—and yet more major-league stylin'—than the carved turn?

As you go through instructor certification in any division throughout AASI-land, you have to perform the task of carved turns. Why is it, then, that everyone looks so different when doing it? Carving for consistency and power was the focus of my group as we etched crisp signatures in the perfectly groomed corduroy one morning at the Renegade Rider Rally. You other guys might have had fun, but we were tippin' and rippin' it!

We talked about the fundamental moves and board-performance concepts as you would in any clinic, but then we took it a step further. In a group of eight instructors who all knew how to do carved turns, we examined the elements of the Ultra Carve. The question became "How do you make turns where you lay it waaaaaay over, tip the board super high, and get that low-to-the-snow, toeside face-skimming and heelside butt-friction before coming back up for the slick edge change?"

By Scott Anfang



DAVE COFFY

Oh sure, when we went over the basics of a carved turn I got a few looks that said, "Yeah, whatever. I can do that, but I'll listen because I'm part of the group." But as we got deeper into challenging everyone to dig some serious ruts, the attention got more focused. Our goal was to do large-radius, carved turns with a cross-under movement for the edge change. The concept was new to some people in the group, but we played with it until it



COURTESY OF PAULA LEE

The 2006 rally was full of memorable rides, both on snow and in the famous but soon-to-be-retired Jackson Hole trolleys.

The key is to figure out what movement you can make to maintain alignment when you can't bend or extend your knees anymore.

all made sense. The sooner you get on the edge the longer you can ride it, but what happens when you want or need to ride that carve for a loonnnng time? Well, you need to make quick moves to get on the edge and slow moves to maintain pressure throughout the turn to extend the life of your carve. Put another way, if you get on the edge faster and are in a low body position right from the start of the turn you can help maintain pressure with a slow extension throughout the duration of the turn.

Okay, we got that and were ripping big, phat turns on this wide-open run, leaving trenches in the corduroy so deep that skiers were falling in! The next step was to answer the question of "How do I maintain the pressure and not just tip it up and ride the edge until I blow up?" The thing is, you blow up when body movement stops—so the key is to figure out what movement you can make to maintain alignment when you can't bend or extend your knees anymore. My message? "Do something else, but don't be static while you're hauling across the hill in a carved turn."

For toeside carves, we first got comfortable with touching our knees to the snow. But where do you go when your knees are down as low as they can go? You push the hips out over the snow, pull the shoulder back over the board, and push your shoulder blades closer to the spine while moving the hands over the heel edge. Next, we looked at options for the heelside carve. As the

group soon learned, when you're flexed as far down as you think you can go but want to maintain that heelside carved turn, it's time to open the lead shoulder (actually turning it slightly up the hill), drop the back shoulder as you max out your flex, lift your toes on your front foot, and press down with your toes on the trailing foot.

The moral of this storied day was this: when you have maxed out your huge gross motor movements, it's time to focus on the micro-management. In other words, don't just stand there. Work it!

This was a new concept for a bunch of folks, but by having these extra options everyone was leaving canyon-like grooves and laying it over farther. You could see the gleam of their teeth from the bottom of the run, which meant that the only thing bigger than their carves were the smiles on their faces.

So I ask you—Butch and K.C.—who really learned more useful stuff? The folks who flung themselves into Corbet's? The group who unwrapped boxes? Nah. It was my gang on the groomed, who got back to basics and can now carve up a run right down to the lodge at any resort in the world. You all might have earned bragging rights and come up with a few good bar stories, but we took carving, the skill every snowboard instructor has to demonstrate in order to get certified, to new performance heights—and snow-brushing lows.

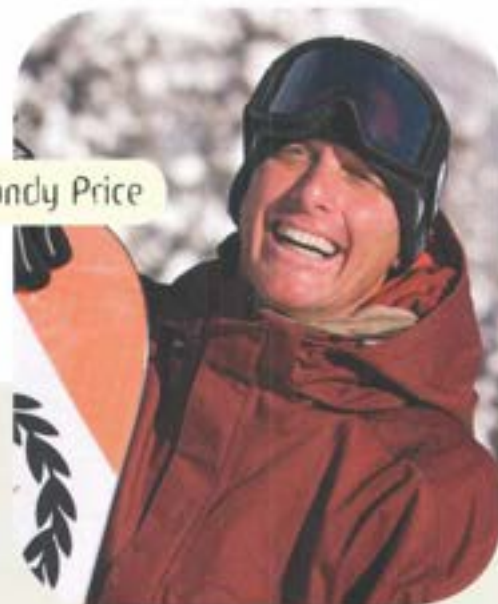
COACH'S POST-GAME SHOW

Hey, having made it to this point in the article, I hope you haven't gotten the idea that these guys don't get along or that they like to compete in head-butting contests. Well, actually they do like head-butting contests... but that's a different story and, in truth, we call it "helmet testing."

These guys aren't just teammates, they're friends. And like with most friends, there's always some competition. Not just for who can pick the sickest lines, stick the most stylistic trick, or lay out that carved turn that turns heads, but for who can stoke the most with a great clinic day. Anyway, you should know that although each of these Snowboard Team members claimed that his clinic was by far the best, I'm here to tell you they were all amazing.

Butch's day made for a thrilling rally experience. Every clinic has a few brain-dead, cliff huckin', bulletproof participants—and that kind of describes Butch, so how could that day not be exceptional? But you noticed that the group didn't just hop off the tram and launch. None of them had dropped that line before, so Butch got 'em warmed up. Yeah, 4,000-vertical-foot laps will do that.

By Randy Price



Then he looked at the possible options for entry, talked about the obstacles, and pointed out the potential for putting too much jump into the entry.

In the end, the most successful line was, as Butch put it, to actually drag their tails against the rock as they pivoted their

continued

continued from page 21

boards during freefall. Think about that. You're launching off a hairy rock-and-ice cornice into a scary-steep couloir, and the best line is to drag your tail on the rock as you freefall. No one's really bulletproof, but when those clinic participants dropped that line, Butch had them focused and ready for what lay directly below them.

Of course, K.C. also had a great day. When you let Jib Boy loose on a crew of people of varying levels—who care more about style in park and pipe than “huck height”—he gets all excited! When non park rats look at today's terrain features, they get scared, and they should! There are some big hits. But did you notice that with a group as diverse as the one K.C. was leading each person was working on tricks at their skill level. Some needed to just get on the darn features, others wanted to spin on, spin off, and press in the middle. By picking features that the whole group could play on, K.C. enabled the more skilled crowd to develop skill with no drastic consequences, and at the same time he helped the park newbies learn that it doesn't have to hurt to be a freestyler!

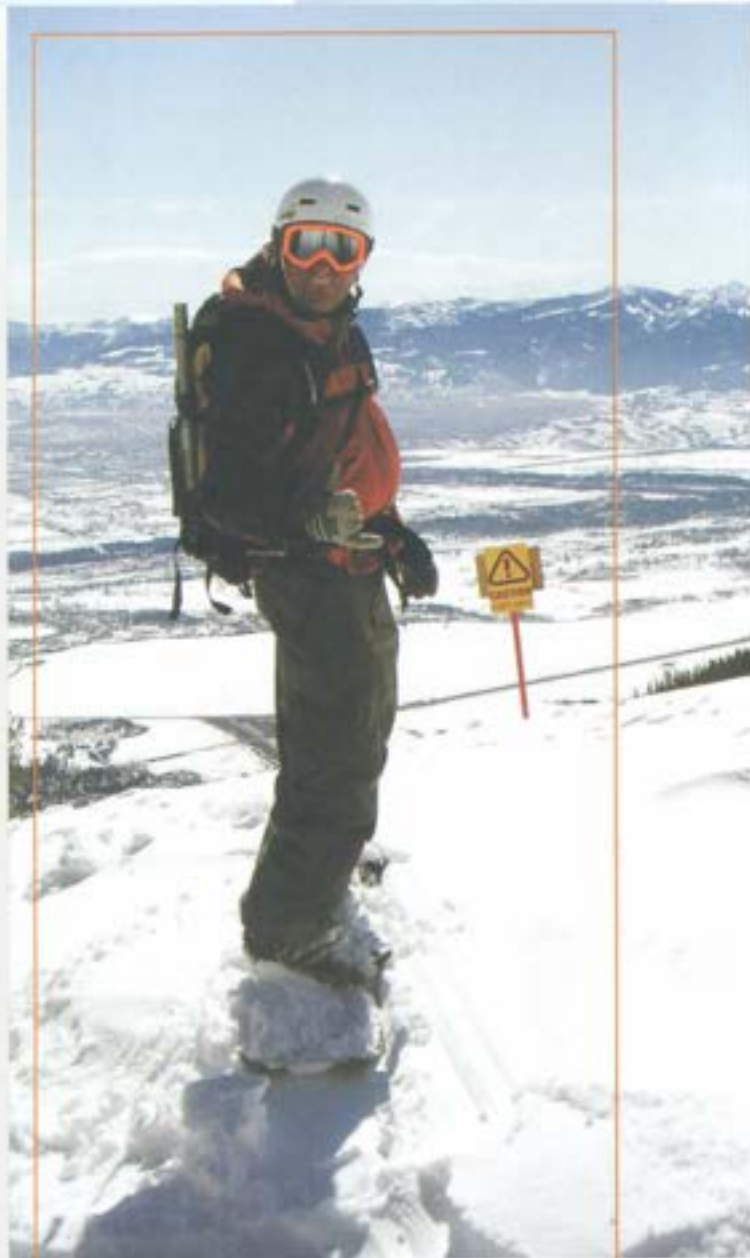
There's always the crowd that runs to steeps, and others who head to the park no matter how good the natural terrain is. But, as Scott put it, one of the greatest feelings on a board has got to be a clean, carved turn. It seems that sometimes we forget that riding a snowboard takes some practice, and that carving a turn really involves skill.

Scott's clinic was not just about tipping the board on edge and following the sidecut around. His people were draggin' knees on the toeside! That's putting some energy into that deck.

Think of most of the images you've seen of carved turns—the rider is laid out, almost straight-legged, with the hand reaching down for the snow. Well, at least the photographer likes that look. Now picture yourself with your ankles flexed enough to drag your knees as you rocket across the fall line. Scott took his crew out and worked on a skill that will serve them in the steeps, the pipe, the park, and the whole mountain.

Sure, I could tell you about Scott's tips regarding timing, intensity, and duration; the pressure control movements he emphasized; the advice he gave for cross-under V's and cross-over moves on long-radius turns. But I'd rather get out there and work on the image he created.

The Rider Rally at Jackson Hole was fantastic. The clinics were as varied as the people who showed up to play. Jackson is a great mountain, and to be there with a great group of friends is even better. Each year the event has its regulars and some who drop in because the timing works for their schedule. And by the end of the event, everyone is part of one happy, exhausted family with aching legs.



Whether perfecting their carves or just freeriding in epic terrain, rally-goers were all smiles all the time.

Next year's Rally will be held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Did you know you can spend an entire day at Steamboat in the trees, only popping out to get on the lift? And for the crowd that has to get some air time, there's a lift-served world-class pipe and park!

See you in the 'Boat, but by then don't expect the guys on the Snowboard Team to be any less competitive about out-doing each other with the ultimate in clinic experiences. ☑

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BY PHILLIP HOWELL

A RALLY RIDER

LIVES TO TELL THE TALE



I had the privilege of attending my first AASI Renegade Rider Rally March 27–31, 2006, at Jackson Hole Resort, Wyoming. We had fresh snow nearly every night, superb conditions, and a party atmosphere at the resort all week.

The Renegade Rider Rally coincided with the last weekend Jackson Hole's celebrated tram would be operating for public use. After 40 years, the tram is shutting down due to its age, limited lift capacity, and maintenance cost. The resort is still not quite sure how it will replace a lift that deposited riders at the top of a mountain full of double-black-diamonds and an expansive backcountry 10 minutes from the base. The first time I exited the tram and saw only one run suitable for anyone who isn't an advanced or expert rider—a long and winding cat track—I got what Jackson Hole is all about: steep and challenging terrain.

Eric Sheckleton, the AASI-Northern Rocky Mountain division rep who has been organizing this event every season since 1999, told me the Rider Rally started when the newly formed

AASI Snowboard Team decided to stage an event for snowboarders that would be similar to the PSIA National Academy. The first rally was held seven years ago at Big Mountain in Whitefish, Montana, and the concept was to offer a mixture of freestyle, freeriding, and carving. The goal, said Sheckleton, was to address all aspects of AASI's Y-model in a fun way that wasn't even remotely associated with certification. While organized and administered by Northern Rocky Mountain Division, the rally has been open to AASI members from throughout the country since the 2000 event in Big Sky, Montana. At that rally, the entire AASI Snowboard Team attended, as well as many riders who were about to try out for the next AASI team. Since those humble beginnings, the event has been held at Jackson Hole three times and once each at Mammoth, Breckenridge/Vail, and Snowbird. The rally has had a different flavor each year, based upon the strengths of the host resort.

At this year's event, 26 riders participated with five of six national team members and Coach Randy Price. About

Editor's note: This article is adapted, with permission, from a piece that originally appeared in the summer 2006 issue of The Central Line, the member newsletter published by PSIA-AASI's Central Division.

LEFT: OUTBACK IN THE 4 PINES AREA. RALLY PARTICIPANTS AWAIT THE SIGNAL TO DROP IN. BELOW: SNOWBOARD TEAM MEMBER MIKEY FRANCO PERFORMS SNOW STABILITY TESTS BEFORE TAKING HIS GROUP INTO THE BACKCOUNTRY.



half the participants were veterans of prior rallies. The vibe was like meeting with old friends to ride and have fun. The returning folks keep the event going and energized, Sheckleton said. As a newbie, I felt at home from the first moment, thanks to the friendly, down-to-earth attitude of the regulars.

The only rule of the rally is that there are no rules. The clinic schedule is laid out ahead of time based on participant requests, but participants can change clinics anytime they wish. Clinics may also be modified due to weather or snow conditions. Many times, riders decide to bug out halfway through the day, and that's okay. The clinicians and team members try to ride as much as possible and still offer an educational experience. Participants are asked to speak up if they want more feedback or clinicing, otherwise the group just rides hard.

If you're like me and take every opportunity to ride with a national team member at a clinic in your division once a season, you have not truly ridden with the Snowboard Team. You have to attend the Rider Rally to really gain an appreciation of these guys' skills and talents.



ABOVE TOP: CHAD JONES (LEFT), THE CO-ORGANIZER AND EMCEE OF THE 2006 RENEGADE RIDER RALLY, SHARES THE SPOTLIGHT WITH EVENT FOUNDER ERIC SHECKLETON. ABOVE: AUTHOR PHILIP HOWELL (FAR LEFT) JOINS THE GANG FOR A GROUP PHOTO AT THE TOP OF RENDEZVOUS MOUNTAIN. TEAM MEMBERS PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR ARE RANDY PRICE (THIRD FROM LEFT), CHAD FROST (FIFTH FROM LEFT), AND MIKEY FRANCO (FAR RIGHT).

Clinic topics included samplings from each of the major food groups (freestyle, freeride, and carving) unless there is a limitation of the mountain. A day off is scheduled for the middle of the five-day event so participants may take a break to see the sights or ride at their own pace with friends or family.

To give you a feel for what this year's rally in Jackson Hole was like for me, I offer the following diary account.

JANUARY 2006

I'm a little tentative about registering for the Rider Rally. I've heard how much fun it is, and riding at Jackson Hole would be great. But I'm a little nervous about going alone. Will I fit in? I'm from a little bump of a hill in Ohio. Will I be able to ride all that steep terrain?

FEBRUARY 2006

I did it! I signed up and made my hotel and flight reservations. I'm going!

continued

**WE SPENT THE WHOLE MORNING RIDING POWDER, TREES, AND GROOMERS UP TOP.
HIT THE PARK IN THE AFTERNOON AND WRAPPED UP WITH SOME SESSIONS
IN THE SUPER PIPE. WHAT A GREAT FINISH TO THE WEEK.**

continued from page 25

SUNDAY, MARCH 26

Arrived at Teton Village late evening Sunday. My room is nice, and it is starting to snow.

DAY 1

Kind of nervous . . . went to the Gabe Room at the snowsports school to register. Jan and Paula Lee greeted me. They gave me a great big welcome and asked me where I was from. I'm signed up for "Going Outback" with Mikey Franco today. Told Mikey I just flew in from Ohio and did not know if I was ready to hike the backcountry at 10,000 feet on day one. He assured me that the group would go at a pace we could all handle and not to worry.

10:00 a.m.—On our way to 4 Pines, we stop to observe hikers on a peak known as 4 Shadows. We notice two of them attempting to ski down the face of a spine with a sheer cliff hundreds of feet tall just below them. We watch in awe. (Mikey assures us that we will not be taking that route today.) Finally, they reach the edge, take off their skis, rappel down to the chute below them and ski out. So, this is Jackson Hole!

1:00 p.m.—We reach our destination, 4 Pines, after a couple of short hikes. We ride down one at a time in 2-foot-deep, nearly untracked powder. The rest of the day is spent above the Hobacks, riding steeps, trees, and Cheyenne Gully.

That evening: Skipped dinner and went to bed early.

DAY 2

More snow last night. I'm signed up for "Park and Pipe" with Butch Peterson. Found out they just cut the pipe. Spent most of the day hitting jumps in the beginner park and riding the super pipe. After hucking my body up and out repeatedly, Butch suggested I do some roll-outs to get the feel of riding the whole wall. Took a couple of runs later in the day in the natural halfpipe, Dick's Ditch.

DAY 3

Snowing again. This was our scheduled day off. I wanted to sleep in. Jeff Campbell, a friend that I met up with at the rally, calls me around 10:00 a.m. from his cell phone to say the powder is great up top. I race to get ready and meet him at the tram. We ride bowls, trees, and powder all day.

DAY 4

More snow last night. I'm signed up for "Steeps" with Scott Anfang today. We split into two groups, those who simply must ride Corbet's Couloir before they leave, and those who want something a little less scary. I take the less scary option. We head up on the tram and warm up on Rendezvous Bowl and Bivouac Woods. Next we start dropping into Alta Chutes, with

trees and rocks as bumpers, and the Laramie Bowl. Everyone feels challenged, but safe. At times, the snow was waist deep. I caught myself complaining the snow was too deep to turn in, but since it was steep I had to turn. Today showed me how safety-conscious the Snowboard Team members are. We were in a group of mixed abilities, yet everyone had fun, and the leaders kept it safe.

After riding today, the organizers put on an après event with pizza and beer. Mikey Franco and Jeff Stein, his partner from Worldwide Tribes, presented a slide show about their around-the-world snowboarding expeditions. Very cool stuff! I'm exhausted. It's another early-to-bed night for me.

DAY 5


Snowing again. I'm signed up for "Park and Pipe" again, this time with K.C. Gandee. The group wanted to take the tram again and warm up on Rendezvous Bowl before going to the terrain park. We spent the whole morning riding powder, trees, and groomers up top. Hit the park in the afternoon and wrapped up with some sessions in the super pipe. What a great finish to the week.

After the lift closed, grabbed a pitcher of Last Tram Ale and watched an outdoor concert with Toubab Krewe (a Phish sort of band) until the last rider was off the hill. Packed and in bed early again.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

Shuttle pick up and headed home. In addition to five great days on some of the most challenging terrain I've ever ridden, I learned about backcountry avalanche safety, how to use a transceiver, how to use a grid to find someone buried in the snow, how "rolling out" of the pipe helps you to learn to ride the whole wall, how to do dolphin turns, how to turn on steep terrain in deep snow, and how to drop into chutes. I also feel like my tree riding, powder skills, and pipe riding have reached a new level. Best of all, I made a bunch of new friends and look forward to becoming a regular—starting next year!

According to Eric Sheckleton, next year's Renegade Rider Rally will most likely be at Steamboat Springs, Colorado, in late March or early April. Steamboat offers great terrain, a great park, awesome trees, a fun town, and plenty of natural hot springs. It is also Scott Anfang's hometown, so we should have plenty of access to the facilities and secret stashes at the resort.

Oh, and as if you needed one more reason to attend, don't forget that the event counts for an education credit. 

Phillip Howell is an AASI-certified Level III snowboard instructor and clinician at Boston Mills/Brandywine Resort in Ohio and is on the education staff of PSIA-AASI's Central Division.



item #126



item #122



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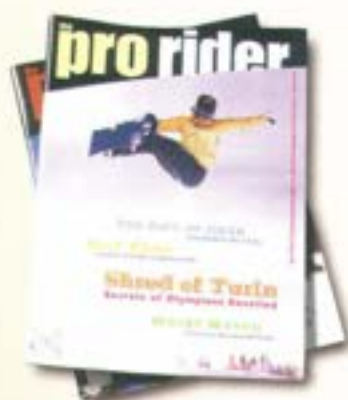
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dropping in on the freestyle scene

BY BUTCH PETERSON

Sometimes numbers can tell a story as well as words. According to the Snowsports Industry Association, sales of all-mountain boards dropped 27 percent last year while sales of freestyle boards jumped 34 percent (and these figures largely preceded the buzz generated by Olympic gold medalists Shaun White and Hannah Teter).

What about lessons? We'll let language take over here: "It's all going to freestyle," says Susan Muenchen, snowboard lesson coordinator at the Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen. Freestyle is "huge," agrees AASI Snowboard Team member Chad Frost, who adds that he often incorporates freestyle elements into beginner lessons. "This is a great way to spice up lessons for kids who don't want lessons," he says. "It can put a new twist on learning to show that sideslipping could lead to a John Jackson-like boardslide on a sick double kink. Toeside turns lead to backside 3s, and heelside turns lead to floaty frontside 3s. The list goes on."

Frost is not alone in mixing freestyle with basic skill development exercises. In fact, each AASI division is placing a greater emphasis on freestyle. Alaska Snowboard Education Chairwoman Ellen Twina says, "Each instructor has their own way of integrating little freestyle introductions into their normal lessons." Twina, for example, explains that "if some kids are getting the one-foot-out straight glide but other kids need more time, I like to encourage further learning with the kids who've already got it down by having them jump in the air, land, and then do the straight glide." Or, she adds, she will place bamboo



AUTHOR BUTCH PETERSON IS INTO THE FREESTYLE FLOW.

in the snow and have students straight glide over the wooden "rail."

Freestyle has become especially hot at areas lacking natural terrain features and that are close to urban centers. According to Snowboard Team member K.C. Gandee, the best example is Mountain Creek, New Jersey, which employs full-time park-and-pipe instructors. "Additionally," Gandee says, "mountains all over the East have begun competition programs that use instructors to coach kids on weekends and nights throughout the season."

Freestyle fever has also gripped the Midwest. "Ohio has a group of riders that are among the best street rail technicians in the country," says Doug Radefeld, a Central Division examiner and instructor-trainer at Ohio's Boston Mills/Brandywine. If the Buckeye State is making a run to corner the market on rails, upper Michigan is the spot for jumps and superpipes. Boyne Highlands in Michigan features a 630-foot-long superpipe. As Radefeld attests, "You run out of tricks before it ends."

With resources like that, Radefeld says there is an increasing demand for freestyle lessons, even in locales the X Games would never consider visiting. Radefeld fields "tons of requests" for coaches from parents whose children compete in United States of America Snowboard Association (USASA) local and national events. "Many of these kids are looking for coaching on riding at a higher level than most of our staff," Radefeld adds. To keep pace with demand, Boston Mills/Brandywine offers a six-week freestyle program for kids at any level. The course is so popular, according to Radefeld, a second night was added.

Naturally, with the higher demand and increasing skill level on the student side, many instructors are feeling the pressure to improve themselves. As Radefeld attests, "I also have a huge demand from instructors looking to ride and teach freestyle better. When I give a spin, rail, or basic freestyle clinic, it fills in minutes." Boston Mills/Brandywine is beginning a freestyle training program for returning instructors who desire to teach more freestyle lessons.

For their part, instructors also seem excited to explore the growing niche. "It is the next step in terms of answering, 'What else can I do to differentiate myself from all the other staff members?'" says Rob Bevier of the Eastern Division Snowboard Education Committee. "I think we'll see a bigger move for talented park and pipe kids wanting to play our game more than before. It will be great to get that fringe... involved and educated in how to teach a half-decent freestyle program."

By pursuing freestyle education, instructors at some resorts can garner more benefits than simply adding to their bags of tricks. At Aspen/Snowmass, "instructors get priority on freestyle lessons when they get their freestyle accreditation," explains Chris Brockman, lead trainer at the Ski and Snowboard Schools of Aspen. The exposure to freestyle safety, progressions, and diverse skills these instructors receive in



THOMAS ZUCCHETTI

THE SKY'S NO LIMIT FOR FREESTYLE FANATICS.

AASI clinics is also beneficial when teaching freestyle lessons.

how is AASI keeping up with demand?

At the national level, AASI has developed a number of resources to help instructors teach freestyle, including the *Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide*, articles discussing freestyle teaching and riding technology in *The Pro Rider*, and member forums on the aasi.org website. Beyond that, Snowboard Team members often conduct freestyle

clinics across the country, and many divisions have implemented—or are in the process of creating—their own freestyle accreditation programs.

The Rocky Mountain Division's freestyle curriculum, which was launched in 1998, is one of the oldest in the country. In the past eight years, this program has evolved to include three levels of accreditation: fundamental, intermediate, and advanced. "The fundamental level would show your ability to perform and coach at the

continued



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competitive level in amateur or regional snowboard competitions," explains Rocky Mountain Division Snowboard Committee Chairman Tony Macri. "The intermediate level takes a step up, showing your ability to ride and coach at the highest levels of amateur and regional competition. The advanced level would move you into the pro-caliber coach and athlete."

According to the Rocky Mountain Division's education staff, its freestyle accreditation is not a regimented system. Part of the appeal of freestyle snowboarding, after all, comes from the sport's individuality and creativity. Since no rider has the same style or does a trick exactly the same, the division recognizes that while it's wise to define some guidelines in order to separate the levels of rider proficiency, there's no need to require riders to perform specific tricks.

Although there are no mandatory tricks, Macri says that at the fundamental level,

single movement tricks such as 180s, 360s, and grabs—all with several seconds of air time over tables and at the lip of the halfpipe—are minimum expectations. For the intermediate designation, riders are expected to perform more advanced, multiple-skill maneuvers (540s and beyond) on the small- to medium-sized terrain park features and above the lip in the halfpipe. At the advanced level, multiple movements such as spins with grabs and multiple spins, as well as the largest terrain park jumps and big airs in the halfpipe would be expected. As Macri says, this accreditation "is the answer for those instructors who wish to be acknowledged for their abilities in high-end freestyle and coaching."

The Northwestern Division has a similar three-level program. The first level is "Foundations of Freestyle," or FS-1, which is accomplished by attending and completing the curriculum of a one-day clinic focused on coaching park, rails, and

pipe riding. The "Progressive" (FS-2) and "Advanced" (FS-3) levels can be attained through an evaluation process.

The Eastern Division has a somewhat different approach to help instructors prepare to meet the freestyle demand. The first component is freestyle accreditation. "This consists of four events that build off of one another: intro, park, pipe, and masters," says Gandee. "In these sessions, instructors practice using the ATML model and focus on sensory contributions in their instruction and feedback." There is also a one-day seminar called "Safe Coaching for Park and Pipe," which covers safe terrain selection, group management, and the basics of safe coaching practices.

The Central Division, meanwhile, is expanding its young freestyle accreditation. "It was only for snowboarding the last two years, but will be open to skiers this year," says Radefeld. Central's accreditation

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move students beyond imaginary limitations

BY CHRIS HARGRAVE

For many, snowboarding is all about progressing in the park, finding the perfect line through the trees, or just being one with a deep field of powder. So, you can imagine just how frustrating it can be to hit a plateau in performance potential. The rider knows where he or she wants to be, and has even been making steady progress toward certain goals. Then, the would-be phenom just gets stuck. Like a fly trapped in a car, he or she just keeps hitting the glass.

If the rider gets some solid instruction, however, that plateau can simply be a platform from which to launch the next phase of improvement.

This summer I was stoked to work with Carissa Comp, a talented athlete working at High Cascade Snowboard Camp (HCSC) on Mt. Hood, in Oregon. Since her point of focus—the halfpipe—happens to be one of my favorite areas in which to coach, we hit it off right away. The great thing about Carissa is that she rides the pipe with passion. She can spin, grab, and hold a line; but she sort of unintentionally glossed over some of the basics that are the key to supporting her true potential. She needed to correct some habits (movement patterns and stances) that she'd acquired in and out of the pipe that were limiting her choices of style. Carissa is a fun student because she listens attentively, works on what is asked of her, and smiles even when she is frustrated.

And she was frustrated. When we started working together she had begun to "hit a wall" and her progress was beginning to level out. That can happen when you ride pipe every day for a month.



CARISSA COMP WAS READY AND WILLING TO DO WHAT IT TOOK TO MOVE BEYOND HER PERFORMANCE PLATEAU.

She appeared to be stressed, but was likewise eager to learn and hear a fresh perspective. When I hear students make comments like "Maybe I'll never be that good," or "I just don't do that because it's not my style," I get a sense for what they are afraid of. When I see them struggle with accurate movements or resist speed, I know that they either don't understand

what to do or they are just plain scared to make a change. Recognizing fear and self-doubt in a student is a critical step in the coaching process because all athletes deal with it and a good coach can help them face it and persevere.

Carissa, like so many others who seek out snowboarding instruction, was no doubt saying to herself, "Even though I still

am progressing, I feel like I'm progressing much more slowly than before, and I can't break through to the next level. What can I do to get out of this rut?"

The way I see it, there are three things that truly limit a rider's potential: lack of skill, mental attitude, and fear. Carissa had the right attitude to achieve greater things in the halfpipe—provided she fine-tuned her technique a bit and built up her fundamental support structure. So I decided to balance my skill-based instructional strategy with some work on her general psyche. I knew she had what it took to progress, but if she had her doubts or trepidation we would need to dispel those in order to take the next step.

When working with students I find it critical to figure out their dreams, goals, fears, frustrations, physical limits, experience base, and behaviors. Why? If I really get to know them, I can direct all of my coaching toward their goals in a way they can understand. The more I know about their dreams (especially the ones they are afraid to say out loud for fear of seeming foolish) the easier it is for me to deliver my communications and action plans on their terms.

Carissa's goals are big. She has aspirations of competing at the highest levels and contributing to our industry in many ways. She also had some very specific goals in the pipe. She wanted to consistently increase her amplitude, learn how to spin linked 540s, and was hungry for a McTwist (the inverted pipe maneuver, not an item on a fast-food value menu). She wanted to expand her arsenal of grabs. In addition, she wanted to feel more stable and consistent throughout an entire run—rather than run out of gas and lose speed and amplitude toward the end of the pipe.

These were great goals to work with because they defined where she wanted to go and allowed me to build a complete plan to get her there. For her to achieve those goals she would need to develop her



COURTESY OF CHRIS HARGREAVE

CARISSA HAD THE FUNDAMENTALS DOWN, SHE JUST NEEDED REFINEMENT.

fundamentals in other arenas, such as flats, jumps, and freeriding. Then she would be able to accomplish the movements needed to allow for refined tactics in the pipe. And Carissa would need to move beyond any mental blocks that were standing between her and her goals.

upon closer inspection

I had seen Carissa ride pipe several times. She rode aggressive and strong like someone who spends most of their free time in

the pipe. As I watched her ride, I found myself evaluating her tactics and style. I think of tactics as the core of what a rider does, like the timing, intensity, and duration of the movements that create specific aspects of board performance and achieve the desired line. I see style as the combination of chosen maneuvers (tricks), good habits the rider relies upon, and even the bad habits for which he or she has to compensate.

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Road blocks and plateaus are often related to deficits in skill and technical understanding. Carissa had hit the proverbial wall because her style (tricks and habits) were no longer supporting rapid progression. She needed to strengthen and learn more of the little building blocks that would support the steps she was attempting to take every day at the pipe. But more than that, Carissa needed to feel more comfortable and confident in her ability to improve. While there was little fear in the way she attacked the pipe, Carissa did grapple with self-doubt and the nagging thought that she'd perhaps gone as far as she could go.

To find the right path to progression, every rider must measure how the mind manages fear and self-doubt. A person needs skill, talent, and a certain measure of athleticism to achieve physical feats, but he or she also requires mental commitment and confidence. If any rider can develop skill, and skill supports all areas of riding, what truly limits the rider? The answer is the mind. If I allow public opinion—or my own misgivings—to convince me that I can't do something, then I won't look beyond the tip of my nose for a way to change.

On the other hand, the mind also has great power for making things happen. Many an athlete paves the way for perfect performance by first visualizing themselves executing a perfect performance. So, while the mind may limit the potential of a rider, it also has the power to shatter previous expectations of one's maximum potential.

Once riders can identify their fears and roadblocks, a coach can then help them break on through to the other side. All athletes need to have confidence and control, and both of these are learned through experience, hard work, success, and failure. When riders plateau it is generally because they don't have the foundations and accurate understanding

in place to support the next step. The remedy? Build a program that develops the little things needed to support the big goal and make clear how each little thing can and will be applied to create success.

the path to progress

So, specifically, how did I help Carissa get past her qualms and barriers? My goal was to inspire her with accurate tactics and movements in the pipe, allow her to feel some immediate changes, then build her core (i.e., offer lots of little strengthening skills for her to rely on) by pushing her boundaries. There's something mentally affirming about the tangible sensation of a new physical experience in the pipe.

To help Carissa trust this process I was careful to create a solid plan that she could understand and follow, supported by a learning environment that enabled

And she was landing on the same edge from which she left the lip because she would be over-rotated in her toeside take-offs. This caused a counter-rotation move that blocked complete rotation in the air, thus making her incapable of rotating her upper body enough to lead her through the heelside air.

I started by asking her to narrow her scope a bit and focus on the first wall. Next, she and I were able to shift a bit to a shallower line across the flat bottom and up the wall. My goal for Carissa was to find the angle across the flat bottom and up the wall that would allow her to maintain all the speed that she brought into the pipe at her drop-in. It is critical that riders pick up the bulk of their speed from the start mound to the drop in and then maintain that speed through an accurate line (not too steep or too

A person needs skill, talent, and a certain measure of athleticism to achieve physical feats, but he or she also requires mental commitment and confidence.

her to put her trust in me. It is critical for students to buy into your process and even more critical that you don't push too hard once you have them.

My plan was to challenge Carissa's perceived limitations with immediate results. The best way to get immediate results with a talented rider in the pipe is through accurate alignment of tactics. With Carissa I immediately recognized that her line across the flat bottom was too steep, which created too much speed and made it hard for her to hold her line up the wall. Her stance was far too over-rotated on the heelside and countered on the toeside, which loaded her back leg and limited movement in the transitions.

shallow), using clean edging coupled with pumping (pressure control) movements to accelerate as desired. If riders pick up speed with a steeper line across the flat bottom, they will struggle to climb the wall and more than likely skid as they approach the vert, losing all the speed they just created.

I had Carissa work on finding a true line to her first wall, dropping in from both sides until she could maintain all of the speed that she carried into the pipe.

For Carissa to create an accurate line in the pipe we had to eliminate several technical inaccuracies. Carissa had a tendency to over-rotate her upper body and rotate too soon on the wall. We

found that she was landing on the wrong edge and was unable to pressure (pump) through her line as she dropped in. Her pumping movements were mis-timed on most of her landings (including the drop-in) and because she was not set up to land on her crossing edge (the new edge that would take her across the pipe) either too much extension or too much absorption near takeoff would create trajectory misalignment with the vert (e.g., she would deck out or land low in the tranny).

closer to line

Working toward solutions opened up a whole world of coachables to us. Rotation can cause so many nasty things when overused. For Carissa, excessive rotation of her hips and shoulders on her frontside (toeside) wall caused her to shift her core toward the tail of her board. She would over-flex at the hips, shifting weight too far inside the turn. As pressure would build up through the bottom of the tranny she would over-edge up the wall, and become "uprighted" in air. In addition, her twisted (over-rotated) stance created a strong separation of the upper and lower body at takeoff and led to an unwind-rewind type of airborne move.

I first explained how to achieve accurate tactics with her line: edging early as she dropped in, achieving her crossing angle by the bottom of the first tranny, and choosing a crossing angle that would allow for speed maintenance rather than deceleration or acceleration. Next we focused on controlling rotation in her approach and takeoff. Then we looked at accuracy in the edging and pumping movements from drop-in to first hit. By tweaking the timing, intensity, and duration bit by bit she cleaned up her line, smoothed out her movements on the walls and in the air, and increased her ability to maintain speed—which translates into amplitude. She felt immediate change and feedback. Cha-ching! Renewed



COURTESY OF CHRIS HARRIS

JIBS FACTOR INTO BREAKING SKILLS INTO SMALL, STYLISTIC MOVEMENTS.

understanding of tactics also gave her the ability to begin self-analyzing accurately, which means she now knew how to sense the right things and progress.

Carissa's stance in the transitions was off because she had created so much anticipatory rotation on her frontside approach and too much leading rotation on her backside approach to the transitions (that is, she was steering toward her

lead hips aggressively in the set up to a spin).

Once we cleaned up the rotary movements we could focus on changing Carissa's edging tactics. Early rotation (twisted-counter stance) on the frontside wall can cause over-edging in the up-transition and lead to landing on the wrong edge and/or edging late in the landing. While on the backside approach, opening the hips and

While on the backside approach, opening the hips and shoulders in a leading position toward the heels causes the wash-out or scrubbing in the transitions and at the vert.

heels). Basically, she never achieved neutral alignment while crossing the flat bottom, so there was no solid frame of reference from which to begin rotating. We worked on leading less into the drop-in and softening steering movements on the walls. She began to align during approaches, rotating less while achieving more accurate timing (the only time shoulders should

shoulders in a leading position toward the heels causes the washout or scrubbing in the transitions and at the vert. In an over-rotated/twisted stance, Carissa was forced to use big, body-over-board movements. From a closer-to-neutral stance she was more able to accurately edge with smaller lower-body movements. This brought a

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cleaner, more refined look to her takeoff/release movements at the lip. In addition, she was able to move to her new edge sooner in her landings, thus setting up a better line into the next wall.

Because Carissa and I spent time working out the small tactical details, she made a lot of progress. However, with her learning curve there was still some stalling. Something was missing. Strength? Talent? Not really. She needed to build up her support systems to enable


reinforce recovery from an overcommitted stance by teaching you how to shift your core balance from the tip or tail back to your center. Controlling fore/aft movements (foot to foot) will enable a rider to maintain perpendicularity on the wall. Flattening the tip and the tail of the board at different times is critical to releasing the climbing edge.

With Carissa, my main objective was to test her balance and knowledge of how to create strange positions and recover from them. If she could focus on the simple

pipe riding objectives. In all of this, the big picture is to give her all the tools she needs to ride how she wants to ride and convey the image that she wants to present.

Carissa originally came to me with some rigid barriers in place. She was trying as hard as she could to grow, yet not moving forward as quickly as she wanted. As a result, frustration set in and she started to believe that she was incapable of achieving her riding vision and goals. She began to shut down, lose a little bit of hope. I felt that my job as her coach was to point out that she was not hindered by her physical ability, but rather by her chosen riding practices and habits.

For me it was exciting to watch Carissa make connections each day in and out of the pipe. Her style of riding began to change because she was refining her movement patterns. And I know that she was overcoming her fears because she truly started to play in the pipe—and only self-confidence and skill allow a rider to achieve that plane. For me, there is really nothing more inspiring than a rider who is having fun while creating and enhancing their style in the pipe.

Every rider must find a way to progress that allays their fears and soothes their self doubts. The best way to achieve this growth is to accurately assess individual limitations and then take steps to move beyond those limitations. Plans to progress must include fostering the fundamental skills that support the desired goals. Over time strength and athleticism fade, while skill can grow more accurate with attention to the right tactics and movements. The real challenge is overcoming our own thoughts that tell us we can't succeed. 

Chris Hargrave is an AASI-certified Level III snowboard instructor as well as an examiner, freestyle accreditator, and year-round freestyle coach. Hargrave is also the author of PSIA-AASI's Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide.

With Carissa, my main objective was to test her balance and knowledge of how to create strange positions and recover from them. If she could focus on the simple stuff, her comfort level in general would rise everywhere she rode.

the leap to the next level. Only skill will support athleticism and talent. Skill is where the coaches' focus should remain when on the snow.

break it on down

Remember, roadblocks and plateaus can result from gaps in technical understanding and a lack of certain skills. For Carissa, this meant going back to the simple things that she missed during her early education in the pipe.

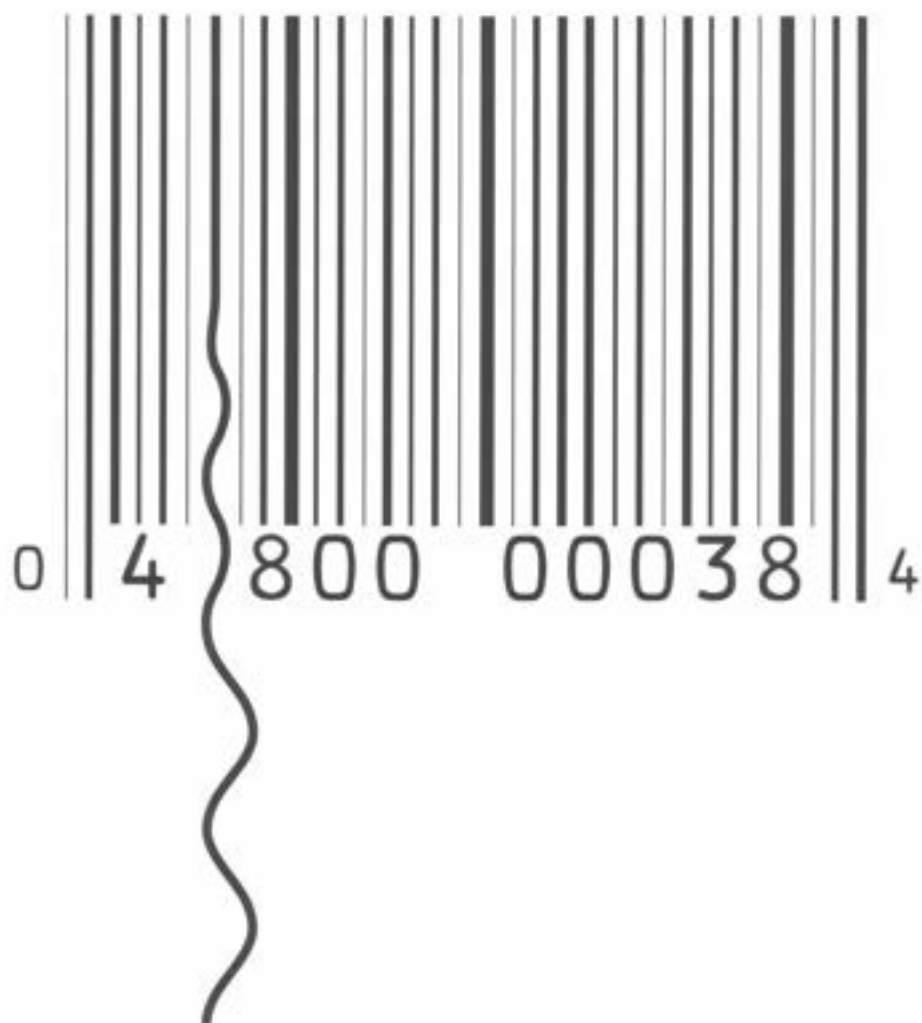
Every day on the way down from the park at HCSC, she and I would work on slow jibs. My goal was to break down the highest levels of riding for her into small (and very stylistic) movements and tricks that she could challenge herself with. We worked on her presses and butters, ollies and nollies, spins, tail taps, airborne edge changes, and more. I related each one of these drills to its application for developing a pipe skill. For example, nose and tail presses can

stuff, her comfort level in general would rise everywhere she rode. She would become more in tune with her body and board, giving her more options. And, she would increase her ability to create the types of positions (i.e., style) that she wanted. By establishing this confidence in her fundamental abilities, she would then be able to create and innovate.

Creativity is borne out of the ability to try something new. Without the appropriate movement base, how could Carissa know what she is capable of? By teaching her all available movement options, I wanted to give her a chance to choose her tactics.

where to from here?

From where Carissa and I left off, our goal is to continue building all of her strengths outside the park. This season we will focus on expanding her experience base with freeriding, jumping, rails, and jibs. In turn, these skills will support her



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need an off-season option? try wakeboarding

BY CHUCK ROBERTS

Summer. For many snowboarders, it's a season that comes too soon and lasts too long. While there are plenty of warm-weather activities that offer excitement and health benefits, what sport even comes close to matching the thrills and skills of snowboarding?

The answer, as an increasing number of riders are learning, is wakeboarding. With equipment, tricks, and even terminology that correspond with snowboarding, wakeboarding is a fun way to keep your skills sharp, retain muscle mass, and maybe even learn a new trick or two in those months when you're waiting for winter's return. Not only that, but learning to wakeboard will also help you more skillfully teach students who are experienced wakeboarders but are new to snowboarding.

Like its snowy counterpart, wakeboarding—which came to prominence in the late 1970s—is a relative newcomer to the extreme sports scene. In addition to the obvious traits of riding a shaped plank over H₂O in either its solid or liquid state, snowboarding and wakeboarding share other, more subtle similarities.

With the exception of body lean, wakeboarding's stance is similar to that of snowboarding. Photo 1a (on page 40) shows a typical wakeboarder's backward-leaning posture, which helps maintain balance on the water while resisting the pull of the boat. This wakeboarder's arms extend in the direction of travel, and his hands maintain a comfortable grip on the tow line while the upper body is slightly twisted to distribute the pull load on the arms. But compare the wakeboarder's stance overall with that of the snowboarder



in photo 1b; notice the placement of each rider's feet on the board and the way the hips align with the direction of travel.

Incidentally, the backward lean shown in photo 1a does not typically pose a problem to experienced wakeboarders who are learning to snowboard. In fact, the ability to ride switch on a wakeboard provides

plenty of opportunities to practice adjusting body lean. However, many wakeboarders trying out snowboarding may carry over the upper body twist used to hold the tow rope. Instructors will have to work with these students to attain the proper basic snowboard stance shown in photo 1b.

continued on page 40



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PHOTO 1A



PHOTO 1B



PHOTO 2A



PHOTO 2B

continued from page 38

More parallels between the two sports are evident in rail maneuvers. The wakeboarder in photo 2a has ridden up the entry ramp and hopped into a boardslide position on a slider (wakeboard rail). The snowboarder in photo 2b has glided from the takeoff ramp onto the rail in classic boardslide form. The skill sets between

the two are virtually identical (although, speaking from experience, crashes on the wakeboard slider are less painful than those on a terrain park rail). Because the wakeboarder accelerates up the ramp, thus leaving a little slack in the rope while performing the maneuver on the rail, the otherwise necessary backward lean is negated.

Following the ATML model, the takeoff—or the hop onto a rail—is a key component of launching a snowboard trick. Likewise, a balanced ride onto a slider while wakeboarding is not only integral to performing a trick, but helps promote the use of terrain park skills during the summer. The approach to a wakeboard slider requires a

continued on page 42



PHOTO 3A



PHOTO 3B



PHOTO 4A



PHOTO 4B

continued from page 40

good eye for lining up the entry, a skill that if practiced throughout the warm-weather months will keep you sharp for your first winter run through the park.

Jumping techniques are also similar. In

photo 3a, the wakeboarder has approached the jump straight, ridden up the ramp, and pulled up his feet for flight stability. The snowboarder in photo 3b has followed the same pattern. Many grabs and other tricks are analogous, if slightly limited

in wakeboarding due to the necessity of keeping one hand on the tow rope.

The resemblances continue in the butter slide shown in photos 4a and 4b. In addition to the similarity between how the

continued on page 44



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PHOTO 5A



PHOTO 5B

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promotes surface trick skills as opposed to big air skills, the execution of which require the solid connection to the board that bindings make possible.

The proper stance for both boards is similar, as are the maneuvers used to ride them without the benefit of bindings. The key is to maintain contact between the feet and the board when performing moves such as an ollie, which helps bounce the board up toward the body. Some tricks, however, like kick flips, require the rider to leave the board momentarily then re-establish contact.

Like their snow-specific siblings, wakeboards come in different styles for varying types of use. The middle wakeboard in photo 6, for example, is a conventional board with laced bindings. There are fins at each end of the board that provide stability whether riding regular or switch. The board at the right is a bindings-free wake skate, and the board on the left features a rounded, hourglass shape that is best for surface tricks and spins.

If you don't have a boat, jetski, or other suitable watercraft—and a buddy to drive it—there are a number of groups and clubs that offer the opportunity to both learn and excel at wakeboarding. So if you're searching for an off-season opportunity to improve balance, keep those snowboarding muscles in shape, and hone movement-related skills, why not give wakeboarding a try? Even though you'll be spending a lot of time in the water, you'll emerge from the long, hot summer a little less rusty than if you followed your normal routine of watching snowboard videos and praying for early snow. ☐



PHOTO 6

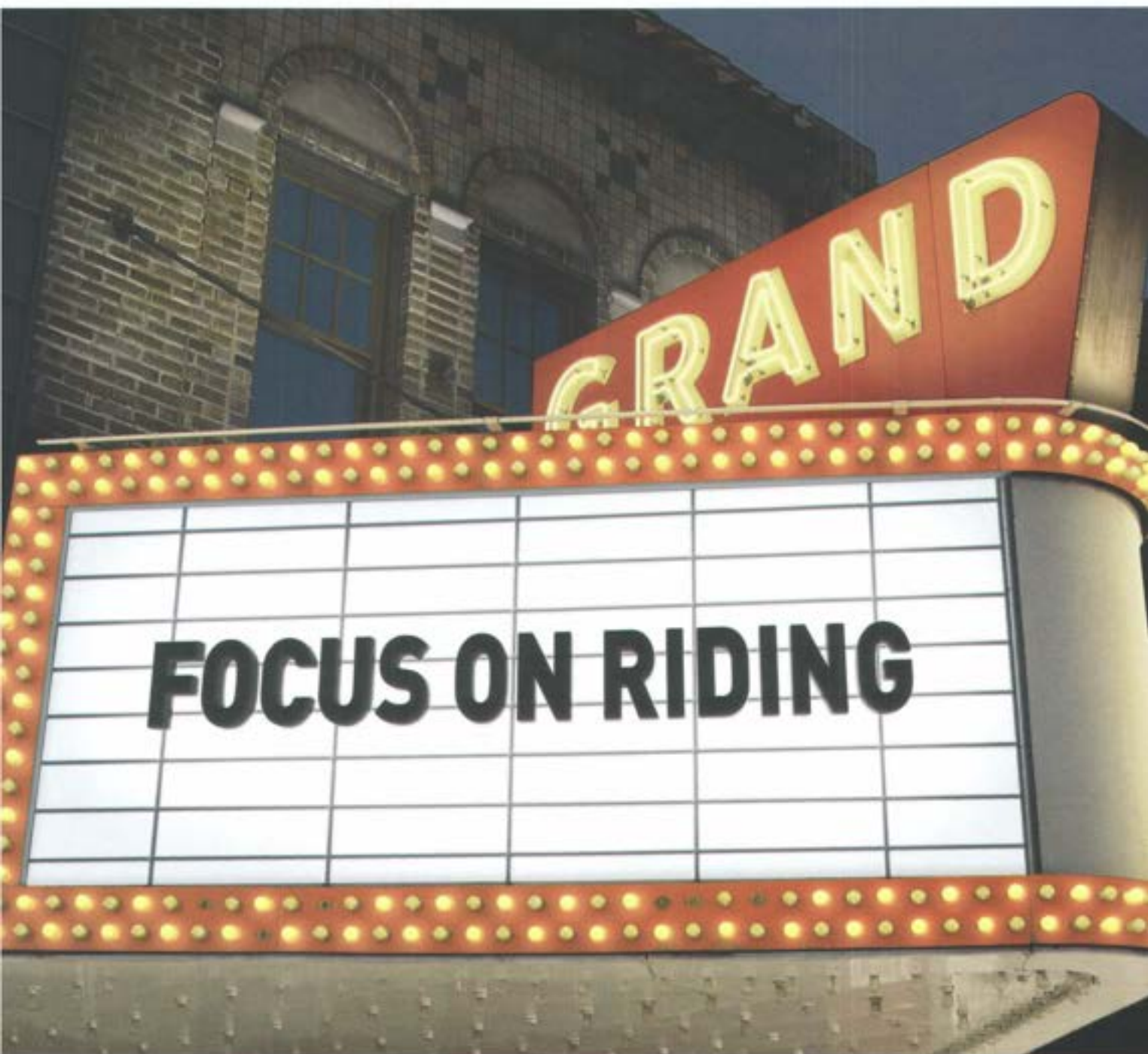
continued from page 42

wakeboarder performs the trick and how it is executed by a snowboarder, notice the likeness between the hourglass-shaped wakeboard and a snowboard.

For added challenge, try a wake skate, a small wakeboard without bindings (photo

5a) that compares with the snow skate (photo 5b), a binding-less snowboard that closely resembles a skateboard deck. Snow skates have been used at small jib parks, and they are a favorite with skateboarders because of the similarity in executing various tricks. Wake skating

Chuck Roberts has taught alpine skiing since 1970 and snowboarding since 1987. He is a PSIA-certified Level III alpine and AASI-certified Level II snowboard instructor at Wisconsin's Wilmot Mountain. He has been wakeboarding for more than 20 years.



ACTUALLY, IT WENT STRAIGHT TO VIDEO.



Yes, we freely admit it, *Focus on Riding* never made it to the big screen. The general public just wouldn't appreciate the wealth of information it contains for snowboard instructors looking to develop effective teaching strategies. Also packaged with the DVD are two bonus AASI products: The original AASI Snowboard Video, and an e-book, *Pathways to Superior Snowboard Lessons: The "Tiny Bubbles" Approach*. You can purchase the DVD at www.aasi.org or through the PSIA/AASI Accessories catalog. The *Focus on Riding* DVD. If you're a snowboard instructor, it is essential viewing.



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PSIA-AASI Board Elects New President, Officers

In an election held this past June at its annual summer meeting, the PSIA-AASI Board of Directors selected Ray Allard to serve as the association's president and chairman of the board. He replaces John Armstrong, who served in the position for the past six years and was unable to seek reelection due to term limits.

Board officers were also selected, with Eric Shekleton winning the race for PSIA-AASI vice president, Craig Albright getting the nod as operations vice president, and Jerry Warren becoming communications vice president. They join Allard on the Executive Committee, with Albright and Warren being new to that group.

Allard has a long history with PSIA-AASI. A ski instructor since 1960, he was certified in 1968 and has been an examiner for more than three decades. A course conductor and examiner for PSIA's Eastern Division since 1973, he also served as the

division's director from 1984-1999. Allard has been a member of both the national and Eastern Division's board of directors since 1997, and served as chairman of several committees and task forces, including the certification committee (1979-84) and PSIA's Publication and Technology Task Force (1999-2003). In addition, he served on the PSIA-AASI Education Advisory Council (2003). Although he claims to be semi-retired, Allard still works as an instructor/trainer at Vermont's Killington Resort. His wife, Gwen Allard, is a national leader in the adaptive snowsports field.

"I'm excited about our future," said Ray Allard upon winning his bid to lead the associations. "PSIA-AASI is financially sound, well respected within the snowsports industry, and ably served by a knowledgeable board and a talented staff—all elements required for moving the organization forward and continuing to offer our members a

large array of world-class benefits, services, educational materials, and programs."

He added that while PSIA-AASI is a stable and mature organization, its growth depends on staying abreast of new disciplines and appealing to a young demographic. "We don't plan on standing still," he said. "We will monitor the needs of our membership and the industry, utilizing new technologies to deliver our message and services. As always, we will continue to uphold our vision of 'inspiring life-long passion for the mountain experience.'"

Upon turning over the reins of the national board to the new leadership group, Armstrong said, "I know these directors will do a fine job for PSIA-AASI members and the association. They each have a strong commitment to education at heart and have a genuine passion for serving our membership. I'm more than confident that our vibrant organization is in good hands." ❧

PSIA-AASI Names New Executive Director

PSIA and AASI recently promoted Assistant Executive Director Mark Dorsey to serve as the associations' executive director. He replaces Stephen Over, who is retiring after 16 years of service at the administrative helm of the associations.

"The role of these associations has evolved and diversified considerably, and Mark's wide-ranging knowledge, as well as his skill in forging relationships within the industry will be extremely valuable as PSIA-AASI rises to meet future challenges," said newly elected PSIA-AASI President Ray Allard. "His experience and credentials in association management will help PSIA-AASI maintain long-term growth and stability."

Outgoing PSIA-AASI President John Armstrong concurred, adding, "PSIA-AASI is fortunate that through a partnership of senior staff and the board, we are facilitating an orderly and effective transition. The positive working relationship between Mark and Stephen Over will ensure that we don't miss a beat."

Dorsey's tenure with PSIA began in 1989, when he was hired to serve as the association's marketing director. In that role, expanded in 1996 with the formation of AASI, he is credited with enhancing publicity efforts, developing award-winning advertising and marketing programs and materials, and increasing non-dues revenue for the associations.

Promoted to assistant executive director in 2005, Dorsey launched a member-recruiting-and-retention initiative, as well as assisted in association operations while continuing to build strong sponsor and industry relationships.

Dorsey holds a master of business administration (MBA) degree from the University of Colorado as well as a Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). The CAE credential is ASAE's highest professional distinction, conferred only upon those who pass a comprehensive examination covering the field of nonprofit association management. ❧



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Seevers Takes Helm of PSIA-AASI Education Department

The Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) and the American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI) have hired Kim Seevers to serve as education director. She replaces Linda Crockett, who chose to pursue new interests after heading the associations' education department for 13 years.

"Kim's intimate knowledge of PSIA-AASI educational systems, products, and services—not to mention her strong work ethic—make her the ideal candidate for the position of national education director," said PSIA-AASI Executive Director Mark Dorsey. "I couldn't be more pleased that she stepped up to fill the position."

"I'm very excited about this opportunity to make a difference in ski and snowboard instruction on a national scale," said Seevers. "Challenges motivate me. I look forward to helping create educational programs, materials, and certification processes that benefit the entire membership, and the industry."

Seevers most recently served as the program director and head ski team coach for the Adaptive Sports Foundation in Windham, New York. A veteran of PSIA-AASI, she earned her Alpine Level III

certification in 1986, and became a division clinic leader and examiner 10 years later. Seevers was director of education and programs for PSIA-AASI's Eastern Division from 1998–2004, during which time she developed and implemented certification programs; participated in multiple strategic planning, certification, and education committees and task forces; authored several manuals; and served as a reviewer for numerous publications developed by the PSIA-AASI Education Foundation.

Before working with the PSIA-AASI Eastern Division, Seevers was the athletic director for the Grier School for Girls in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, from 1983–1998. She attended Pennsylvania State University, where she earned a master's degree in physical education, with an emphasis in performance assessment.

PSIA-AASI President Ray Allard had high praise for Seevers' qualifications while also expressing gratitude to her predecessor. "Linda Crockett led the education department with great skill for more than a decade, and I know Kim will continue that strong tradition," said Allard. ☘



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Authors contributing to *The Pro Rider* can give themselves a pat on the back, having helped the publication earn an APEX Award of Excellence in a competition sponsored by Virginia-based Communications Concepts.

The winter 2006 issue of *The Pro Rider* won in the category of "Magazine & Journal Writing." The national competition drew 796 entries in the category for Magazines & Journals, with 13 titles awarded a Grand Award and 48 given Awards of Excellence. ☘

bulletin board continues on page 50



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Accident Claims Life of Former Snowboard Team Member

Bruce Sato, 45, a member of the AASI Snowboard Team from 1992 to 1996, was tragically killed June 4, 2006, in a kiteboarding accident on Washoe Lake in California. According to a news account in the Sierra Sun newspaper, Sato had hitched into his kite and was preparing to step onto his board when a gust of wind caught the parachute-like kite and lifted him upwards of 100 feet into the air. He crashed into a vehicle in a nearby parking lot, and was later pronounced dead at the scene.

Sato enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the snowsports industry, starting at Pennsylvania's Ski Roundtop in the early 1980s. He then moved west, through

the years serving as instructor and staff trainer at Mammoth Mountain, as supervisor and staff trainer at Squaw Valley, and as ski school director at Mt. Hood Meadows and Mt. Bachelor. Most recently he worked as supervisor and head trainer for exam candidates (both ski and snowboard) at Squaw Valley. Throughout that time he served as division trainer/examiner for PSIA-AASI's Western Division.

If you teach snowboarding, you have likely been influenced by Sato's work. In his many years of service with PSIA and AASI, he took a leadership role in the development of educational resources for snowboard teachers, including contributing to some of the earliest PSIA snowboard



BRUCE SATO

manuals, developing national standards for snowboard instructors, and directing/producing the 1995 PSIA *Snowboard Images* video.

An avid outdoorsperson, Bruce brought an unbridled passion and enthusiasm for the mountains to his work—directly touching the lives of many thousands of people. ❄️

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welcome beginners

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BY CHUCK ROBERTS

Having introduced yourself to your beginning freestyle class, you ask your eager students what they want to work on, and find that they're clamoring to do Cork 5s, tweaked with a tail grab.

Wow. You've got to admire their spunk, but you know this trick is well beyond their capabilities at this time. So, how do you teach them basic yet essential freestyle moves while maintaining their enthusiasm? The answer lies within, or, more precisely, on top of the fun box.

Wide, mistake-tolerant, and relatively easy to negotiate, fun boxes provide a great opportunity to teach exciting moves—such as boardslides, lipslides, surface spins, and ollies—that instill the basics of freestyle while promoting all-around riding skills. As with virtually all teaching methodologies, a logical sequence of easily mastered steps can help students progress along the learning curve while minimizing uncertainty and fear.

getting ready

Your students will likely be itching to make a beeline for the terrain park, but you'll first want to introduce a few basic freestyle moves, such as ollies, surface spins, and nose and tail presses on gentle terrain outside of the park. Also be sure to cover the rules of park safety and etiquette. Having laid that groundwork, the next stop is the fun box.

To accommodate beginning students, set your sights on a straight box that's relatively low to the ground. Kink boxes, C-boxes, and gaps are not your best options. If a suitable elementary feature isn't available, you can even create a "practice



SNOWBOARD INSTRUCTOR BEN PRESTON IS STYLIN' ON THE FUN BOX.

feature" by painting a box-like rectangle in the snow. (While students will be able to work on board alignment and body position, one drawback of this approach is that students won't get a feel for adjusting to a different sliding surface.) As illustrated throughout this article, another option is to use a portable terrain feature,

the construction of which is outlined in "A Moveable Feat," winter 2005.

Whatever type of fun box you choose, make sure it aims down the fall line and doesn't tilt one way or the other. Beginning freestylers may ride the box slowly and will tend to slide off to one side if it's tilted or not aligned with the fall line. Also, be



PHOTO 1

sure to show students how to inspect the feature for any gouges, exposed screws, or delaminations that can cause problems for riders.

Once you've settled on a feature to use, it's time to bring on the students. Before letting them jump on, however, take a moment to review park safety and etiquette, and introduce basic freestyle moves such as ollies, surface spins, and nose and tail presses off to the side of the feature. The next step in the learning progression is to have each student statically stand on the fun box (photo 1), so they can get a feel for correct positioning of their board and body. Using two hands, you can often adjust the alignment of a student's board along the long axis of the feature by simply adjusting the position of the upper body. To do this have the student apply forward and rearward pressure to the board for positioning. You can also ask him or her to do this for nose and tail presses. Next, slowly pull the student along the fun box so he or she can experience the sensation of sliding on a non-snow sur-



PHOTO 2

face. At this point ask the student to pivot the board clockwise and counter-clockwise while maintaining a stable upper body, an exercise that helps prepare the rider for future boardslides and lipslides.

opening moves

Once you've completed an assisted introduction to the feature, a good first dynamic move to teach your budding freestylers is the 50/50. This move, a straight glide along the long axis of the box, is a trick that can be divided into the four major components of the ATML model: approach, takeoff, maneuver, and landing. Ask students to start off facing the direction of travel and in balance, with their weight centered over their feet, their hips aligned with their feet, and their knees and ankles flexed (photo 2a).

On the approach the snowboard should be lined up with the box, and the rider should be looking along its long axis. Explain that it's necessary to perform a slight extension motion or a hop to get up onto the feature, and once aboard the student will need to adjust his or her stance for the increased or decreased drag on the board due to the surface material of the box (photo 2b and c).

If the drag on the board increases while the rider is on top of the box, adding a little more flexion in the trailing leg can help shift the CM slightly aft to prevent a forward fall. (And I do mean shift the CM *slightly*, since you don't want your students to get in the habit of riding in the back seat.) If the box's surface is significantly more slippery than the snow, flexing the leading leg more can shift the CM forward to help the rider maintain balance.

These opening moves are important because they can help students line up with the box and get a feel for how a snowboard interacts with its surface. Since there's not a significant gap between the surface of the snow and the box's top as the rider crests the feature, some students may simply want to start off by riding directly onto the box. You should, however, eventually encourage students at some point to use a definitive "takeoff" in the form of a hop or ollie when it's time to learn additional tricks.

The shots of real students in photos 3-6 (on page 54) provide a prime study for movement analysis. In photo 3 the rider demonstrates good form by keeping the hips

continued



PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5



PHOTO 6

continued from page 53

and upper body aligned along the feature's long axis. Knees, hips, and ankles are also flexed with the CM between the feet.

The rider in photo 4 attempts to correct a bad line by using a slight heelside turn, but in the process exits the feature. Counsel students to ride off the feature if they have a poor lineup, rather than struggle to stay on. Edging the board is virtually ineffective on a box and can lead to a fall.

The young rider in photo 5 mounted the box misaligned with the long axis and, rather than fight it, simply rode off the side. Riders who initially have difficulty with proper alignment will benefit from looking toward the end of the fun box as they mount it.

Looking at the student in photo 6, you

can see excessive upper body twist to such an extent that the hips are almost facing in the direction of travel. Such positioning can cause the rider to unintentionally pivot the board across the direction of

travel. The problem here is that the rider is trying to align the upper body and hips with the snowboard, and learning to avoid making this adjustment may require

more practice performing a straight run. Additional corrective teaching techniques can entail aiming the leading hand, hip, or shoulder toward the end of the box in order to improve alignment. Although a rider's torso may not always react to hand movements, for some students it could prove to be a helpful exercise. For instance, simply pointing the leading hand at the nose of the board and the trailing hand at the tail can often help eliminate twisting of the upper body while freeriding. Hand movements can also serve as indicators of issues relating to core movements, so be on the lookout for them.

The next step in the progression is to practice the 50/50, but this time have riders use a slight hop to get onto the feature. Remember that in ATML methodology, the hop will essentially be the takeoff. The hop prepares the student for jumping into the boardslide position, since steering onto the box is difficult due to the discontinuity between the snow and the box's solid upper surface.

There are many ways to perform the takeoff/hop. One way to do it is for the rider to extend both legs as he or she ascends the entry ramp, then quickly flex both legs and ankles to get a little air while transitioning to the box (photo 7 on page 56). If you have previously introduced the ollie, students who are comfortable with the move can ollie onto the

**Additional corrective teaching techniques
can entail aiming the leading hand, hip, or shoulder
toward the end of the box
in order to improve alignment.**

box. To review, have the rider approach the feature with a very slight edge that's lined up with the long axis of the box. The

continued on page 56

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PHOTO 7

continued from page 54

rider then takes off using a hop or ollie, lands flat, slides along the long axis of the feature, and exits in the straight run.

At this point, it's important to develop a good takeoff ollie/hop since a lot of terrain park features have a gap between the entry ramp and the box itself. Such gaps require that the rider get air. The student in photo 8 is performing a good takeoff with air, a move that can be used in other situations to help him negotiate different boxes and rails. Note also that the rider's upper body is slightly rotated with respect to his lower body, a positioning that often occurs when riders primarily use the upper body for jumping. Advise your students to retract the legs in order to add stability to the jump.

To add variety and a little challenge to your progression, have your prospective park rats perform a nose or tail press while doing the 50/50. The student in photo 9 has hopped onto the feature and is performing a tail press by shifting his CM aft and lifting the front of the board with his front foot. If the rider wanted to perform a nose press, he'd shift the CM

forward and lift the tail of the board with the trailing foot.

crooked grinds

Once your students are comfortable with the hop onto the box, the next step in the progression is an elementary 45-degree boardslide or 45-degree lipslide, which are sometimes referred to as "crooked grinds." Since the maneuver requires a hop and rotation when mounting the feature, teaching the appropriate takeoff is essential. During the approach, recommend that the student use a slight heelside or toeside edge that will act as a platform for the takeoff.

In photo 10 the rider is approaching with slight toeside edge engagement and will perform a frontside lipslide. A frontside approach calls for slight toeside edge engagement with the line of the box in front of the body for takeoff. The backside approach, on the other hand, usually requires a slight heelside edge engagement with the line of the box behind the body for the takeoff. Some riders make the approach without engaging either edge, but that's a rarity. Remember, frontside ver-



PHOTO 8



PHOTO 9

sus backside deals with the approach only.

After takeoff, when the nose of the board rotates over the feature, the move is considered a boardslide. When the tail rotates over the feature, it is called a lipslide. (For more details, see "In Limbo with Lingo? Come to Terms with Terminology," winter 2005.) Ask the student to ride toward the feature while maintaining the direction of travel along the long axis of the box and using slight edge engagement (photo 10a).

The rider will need to hop onto the box using counter-rotation of the lower body with respect to a stable upper body (photo 10b). The lead shoulder must be aimed down the box so that the rider can hop back into the straight glide position shown in photo 10c. Counter-rotation

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHUCK ROBERTS



PHOTO 10



PHOTO 11

helps keep the overall body rotation in check so that the student can jump off the box's end while maintaining his or her original position and direction of travel.

When the student hops off the end of the feature, the twist tension in the body that's released by jumping or unweighting

will help align the board in the direction of travel upon landing. Features such as the one shown in photo 10 are close to the ground and short in length and don't require much flexion and extension. For higher and longer features, the movements required will need to be more dynamic.

After your students have performed a few crooked grinds, encourage them to try full 90-degree frontside lipslides such as those shown in photo 11. Their approach should feature a slight toe-edge engagement, a hop onto the feature (photo 11a), and a counter-rotation of the lower body with respect to the stable upper body that stops the rotation at 90 degrees (photo 11b). To complete the maneuver, the rider needs to hop back to the straight glide position (photos 11c, d). Make sure that the riders remember to maintain knees over toes and keep the CM low for best results.

working toward mastery

Photos 12–16 on page 58 provide more opportunities for movement analysis. Photo 12 shows a rider in relatively good position for the crooked grind with the lower body counter-rotated against the upper body and the rider sliding along the long axis of the feature. The student's CM was slightly aft but I figured it would become more neutral with practice, which it did.

The student in photo 13 hopped too early and engaged the entry ramp of the feature with the toe edge. Be sure to caution your students not to be too anxious to jump to the boardslide position. Advise them to be patient and time the hop near the top of the entry ramp onto the feature.

Photo 14 captures a classic problem for beginning freestylers: the "stiffy" boardslide that often results in a backward fall. Edging the board on a box is not very effective compared to edging in snow. Because edging has always worked for the student on snow, however, he or she will often edge the board in an attempt to shift the CM forward. Unfortunately, the friction generated on plastic is not the same as that generated on snow. To help shift students away from even trying to edge on a feature, emphasize knee and ankle flexion and make sure that they keep their knees over their toes.

continued



PHOTO 12



PHOTO 13



PHOTO 14

continued from page 57

In many cases such edging is also caused by simply allowing the board to get ahead of the torso after takeoff, which then puts the student up and onto the board's trailing edge. To avoid this situation, encourage students to retract the feet after takeoff and keep them under the torso during the initial flight and landing.

Photo 15 depicts a crooked grind that lacked a proper lineup prior to mounting the feature. Once the rider chooses a line, he or she has to live with the choice for the duration of the trick. As in the 50/50 maneuver, when you see an incorrect lineup with the feature ask the student to exit the feature and try again.

The ill-chosen lineup wherein the student slides off the feature (as shown in photo 16) is not necessarily a hopeless situation. The rider in such a position might be able to salvage the trick with style by merely shifting weight onto the foot that's over the feature. For a visual of such a salvage job, see photo 17a in which the rider is malaligned and basically riding off the feature. By shifting the CM over the feature (photo 17b), the rider can balance the board while on the feature and possibly complete the trick.

For students who are quick studies, you can ask them to try a 180-degree spin on the box. Encourage an approach to the



PHOTO 15



PHOTO 16



PHOTO 17

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHUCK ROBERTS

feature by using a toeside edge engaged with a bit of pre-windup followed by a hop onto the feature that involves rotation rather than counter-rotation (photos 18a-b), then releasing the pre-wind. The rider needs to allow the spin (photos 18c-d) initiated by the prewind to continue, before exiting in the switch position (photo 18e). This move is essentially an extension of the lipslide (as shown in photo 11) with rotation substituted for counter-rotation. The rotation provides more angular momentum to help the rider spin 180 degrees in order to complete the trick. Table 1 is a review of the progression.

table 1

progression overview

- Static exercise on box holding the student's hands
- 50/50 flexion/extension while riding onto box
- 50/50 hop or ollie onto box
- Crooked grind
- 90-degree boardslide or lipslide
- 180 flat spin, exit switch

conclusion

Teaching beginning fun box tricks is an excellent way to introduce your beginning freestyle students to terrain parks and their features. Moves on the fun box require alignment and positioning as well as the vertical and rotary movements that provide the basis for riding features and even performing freeriding.

The fun box is wide and tolerant of many of the errors beginning riders commit, and it is also probably the easiest rail type feature to master. By using it students can gain confidence and experience a sense of accomplishment by learning basic tricks and having a great time in the process. Photo 19 documents a student performing his first 50/50 on a typical fun box in a terrain park, after a lesson

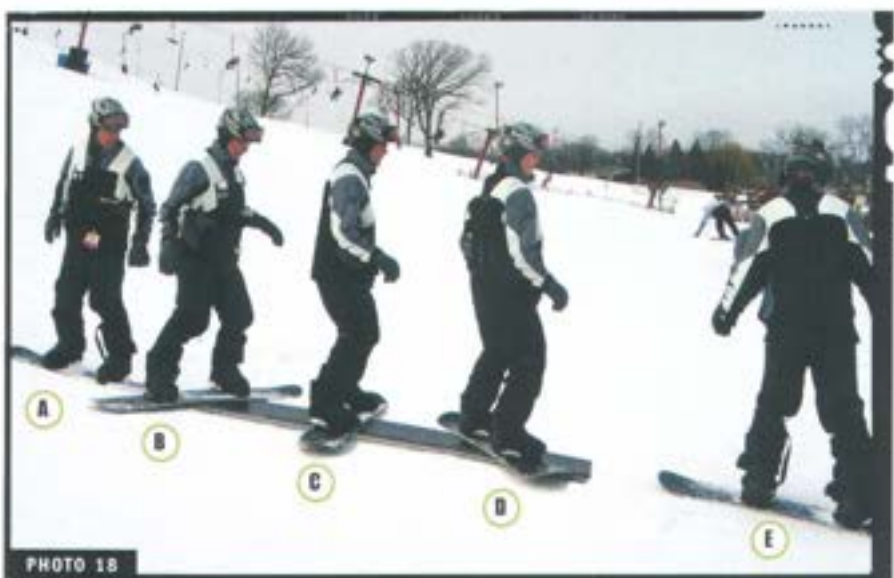



PHOTO 18



PHOTO 19

that uses the progressions described in this article. Accomplishing such a feat is an achievement that can get your students psyched with regard to freestyle. With luck, your students' enthusiasm will be contagious and you'll be just as stoked teaching them how to ride on features. 

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Chuck Roberts has taught alpine skiing since 1970 and snowboarding since 1987. He is a PSIA-certified Level III alpine and AASI-certified Level II snowboard instructor at Wisconsin's Wilmot Mountain.

TRAVIS



COURTESY OF AUDRA NINTZ

AUDRA

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hosted an 18-year-old female instructor intern at Schweitzer who came from a high school program in Ohio.

STEPHANIE: I think to get more women involved there should be more women-specific clinics and instruction. That would definitely help. These are usually pretty popular, even with instructors.

DO YOU SEE ANY SHARED CHARACTERISTICS IN WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO TAKE SNOWBOARD LESSONS?

PAULA: Fun-loving, athletic, willing to try something new. And for women who have been skiing for years, a new challenge. When in Minnesota, I developed a progression for adult women: "low impact, low/no slam." We would do a two-hour lesson and then have wine and cheese on a week night, or lunch on a weekend. It was great fun. I have also seen some take a lesson because their boyfriends or families want them to try it, versus them wanting to do it. That can be a difficult place to start from.

ANGELA: Too many are scared because they think it's an "extreme" sport. Too many take advice from boyfriends who have never taken a lesson and insist on inefficient technique and can't imagine a girl would know better. I would like to see more ladies excited to learn a fun new sport for themselves and somehow appeal to the physical creativity in women. It doesn't have to be crushing . . . but that can be pretty fun too.

AUDRA: Fear and hesitation (obviously I am pointing out the negative first). Some ladies are so worked up and apprehensive before even getting to the lesson that the battle is already

half lost before I say my first words. Fear is such a hindrance, but that's something that is applicable in all aspects of life. If one is afraid to even attempt to swing into the fall line, there is no chance of any edge change. That is partially where my job comes into play. I am there to show them that there is nothing to be afraid of. After some esteem-boosting, it is amazing to watch women progress in their different learning styles and stages.

I also see desire, interest, curiosity, and everything in between. There are a lot of younger girls I have the privilege of teaching whose burning desire to learn is similar to my own. When people are having fun, they learn so much more—whether they realize it or not.

STEPHANIE: I don't see any consistent specific characteristics in females who take lessons, and I'm a behavior specialist with a masters in psychology, so I'm pretty sure I'm not missing anything!

TRAVIS: Many of the girls who take lessons are trying to keep up with their boyfriends, husbands, brothers, or sons. That's not everyone, but it does account for many of the girls I have encountered.

DOES ANYTHING EXTRA NEED TO BE DONE TO ENCOURAGE FEMALE STUDENTS TO STICK WITH A SPORT THAT IS, STATISTICALLY SPEAKING, STILL DOMINATED BY MALES?

AUDRA: Yeah. Tell everyone "girls rip!" I am still sticking with my thought of representing your love for the sport through your actions and your poise. You are a teacher, an instructor, a coach, a friend. You be the encouragement. Maybe stick to the sport because it is male dominated. Boys ride too. So what? That's

WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG TO ADDRESS THE WOMEN-SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT ISSUE? THINK ABOUT THE LOST SALES—EQUIPMENT AND LESSONS—THAT HAVE OCCURRED DUE TO MISSING THE FOCUS GROUP OF WOMEN AND GIRLS.

no reason for chicks not to. How is this different from a lot of other sports? It's not. Just more fish in the fish bowl, I say. More options and choices. How is that a bad thing? Who complains of too much eye candy?

DANI: As it is, the retention rate for people taking first-time snowboard lessons is incredibly low. As resorts in the industry continue to find ways to get people to come back, I hope that more females will find reasons to try the sport a second or third time and eventually become instructors.

TRAVIS: I think there needs to be an emphasis on the other aspects of snowboarding, the ones that are outside the terrain park. I think the public view of the sport is that of high-flying tricks and big tech rails, which may not appeal to the average person.

MINDY: Tons! We are fun to have around and can keep up. Why did it take so long to address the women-specific equipment issue? It seems as if all involved with snowboarding continue to market to the trendiness and not to the sport. Soccer has figured it out, why can't snowboarding?

One day, hopefully soon, someone will wake up and see the opportunities they have been missing. Think about all the lost sales—equipment and lessons—that have occurred due to missing the focus group of women and girls. I will never forget my first backcountry trip; my first drop into a superpipe; my first, second, and third powder runs; becoming an examiner; watching my daughters each become passionate riders; and now the opportunity to share my passion for snowboarding with men, women, and kids.

PAULA: Equal opportunities, pay, and treatment.

HOW HAS AASI HELPED YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS?

ANGELA: The skills and knowledge I've gained through AASI I could never get anywhere else. My strength as a rider would not be where it is today without it.

KATIE: Having my AASI certification has enabled me to receive work visas so I can work here in the U.S. I have also taught snowboarding in Las Leñas, Argentina. At our ski resort, pay is determined partly by certification level, so AASI has helped me earn a decent wage at a profession I love.

MINDY: I have achieved levels in my riding and teaching I

never imagined possible. Where I thought the ceiling was five years ago is now the floor.

AUDRA: AASI gave me guidelines, options, explanations, and opportunity. I am so glad there are organizations like AASI and PSIA out there. I think it simplifies the learning process and makes it fun.

JODIE: The AASI certification structure helped me to work toward achievable milestones over the years. It helped me stay motivated and keep learning. It helped me reach a higher level of pay too!

STEPHANIE: Well, I get paid a lot more now when I teach or work, which is key. I have a life and career outside of riding, so if I am going to teach, it needs to be justifiable for me financially.

TRAVIS: AASI has helped me achieve my goal of never working at a desk. I can be a professional at having fun.

WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING ABOUT THE LEVEL III EXAM?

HOLLY: Not being scared of the examiners. We spend a great deal of time looking up to them and putting them on a pedestal. A lady from my home mountain who went for her alpine Level III explained to me that they are just people too, and they were once on the same level we are. That made all the difference in the world.

TRAVIS: Learning to think outside of the canned answers from the manuals. It took me awhile to start piecing things together in a web instead of the standard A-B-C linear answers.

BELENDA: Learning to relax. I am my own enemy. I usually choke during exams no matter how prepared I am.

MINDY: The freestyle element of the exam. Being female, a parent raising children (i.e., injuries would have huge consequences), and in my 30s, there were no mentors, and the 20-year-olds did not understand why I would not just huck myself. Many instructors have learned from teaching me. I was a "new" type of student to them.

PAULA: Freestyle (park and pipe). Even our clinicians didn't do it well yet at that time.

continued

THE BEST ADVICE I CAN GIVE IS TO RIDE HARD AND LOVE IT. THE COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING USUALLY COMES EASIER FOR US LADIES.

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HOW DID YOU OVERCOME ANXIETY AND DEAL WITH THOSE DIFFICULT PORTIONS OF THE EXAM?

STEPHANIE: Practice, practice, practice.

AUDRA: I just had to remember that I knew how to teach because I am passionate about riding. Sometimes I would get stressed about all the technical aspects and stuff I felt I had to memorize.

BELENDIA: By believing that it didn't matter if I passed or not, that life goes on and there will be other opportunities.

HOLLY: Once I stepped onto the snow, I decided to do my best and have fun. People are people, and examiners are there to help you pass, not to fail you.

DANI: I rode bumps as much as I could that season. When everyone else was avoiding them, I was embracing them.

JODIE: I snowboarded a lot in the lead-up to the exam. I did a lot of training in the most difficult in-bounds terrain I could find. I rode with people who were better than me.

MINDY: Sucking it up, breaking freestyle elements down further than instructors in my area had, and working with instructors to break the elements down to baby steps before putting them back together.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO STICK WITH ADVANCING UP THE RANKS WITH SO FEW OTHER WOMEN AROUND? IF SO, HOW DID YOU PERSEVERE?

AUDRA: Nah, it wasn't even really a factor. In many sports growing up, it was either coed or more male-dominated. I think most guys respect women who advance in their sport. Well, besides that class of guys who get defensive because they feel you're threatening with all your kickass snowboard skills. The only guys worth having around are the ones who respect you and help you learn what they know and are encouraging of your endeavors. I have always felt support from my male comrades.

DANI: I don't think it was the lack of women that made it so difficult to advance, it was simply difficult.

ANGELA: When I was little, I was stronger than the boys. I have had a hard time realizing the differences in physical strength as an adult. This helped me move up the ranks because I never believed the "guys better than girls" idea. In fact, I fight it whenever I can.

KERRI: I spoke with the female ski examiners a lot.

MINDY: The difficulty for me occurred due to men at the time not understanding that women ride men's boards and equipment differently than they do. Sometimes, they tried to correct my riding when the corrections needed to occur with the equipment. If your foot is not long enough to hit the sweet spots of the board (toe and heel) then how can you make a board respond as if your foot does reach the sweet spot? The same problem can transfer to boots and bindings.

In the last few years, these problems have been improved or corrected with women-specific lines. But several men still miss this issue when women show up on their brothers' or boyfriends' equipment and the problem is not addressed. If a 10-year-old shows up with his dad's equipment, what happens? I have encountered several men who did everything they could to discourage me, but I have met just as many men who have encouraged me and been my cheerleaders/mentors the whole way.

TRAVIS: I was in a smaller snowsports school with a close group of instructors. Many of us went through the series of exams together. I have never felt different because I'm a girl and/or because I was the only girl on the snowboard side.

PAULA: I had a very fun and supportive husband doing clinics and exams with me, and to bounce ideas off of. Seek a ride and study buddy, and a mentor if possible.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO CURRENT LEVEL III CANDIDATES?

ANGELA: The best advice I can give is to ride hard and love it. The communication and teaching usually comes easier for us ladies. Physical strength is also important, and it helps you understand the movements better.

BELENDIA: Hang in there and don't give up! If this "old lady" can do it, you can too!

TRAVIS: Ride, ride, ride. When you're exhausted from a long day of teaching, go ride some more or run a clinic. Mental and



PAULA



ANGELA

physical stamina are key. The exam can feel like the longest three days of your life if you're not prepared.

DANI: If you have the opportunity to give clinics, do it. Ride with your coworkers and analyze each other's riding together. Most of all, go into the exam with the attitude that whether you pass or fail, you're going to walk away with something. It will be the best learning experience you can have as an instructor.

HOLLY: The Level III has a high riding standard, though it is a teaching exam. I believe that the more time the candidate spends preparing for his or her teaching, the higher the likelihood of success.


JODIE: Ride a lot so you can go into it with confidence, and make sure you do not neglect the written, teaching, and movement analysis side of things. Some of the best riders fail certification exams because they are unprepared for all of the elements of the test.

KATIE: Confidence and presentation are the key elements. Be

confident about everything you say. Be able to back it up. Don't be afraid to ask questions and put forward your point of view. The fact that you are a girl gives you no disadvantage. Be strong and healthy going into the exam.

PAULA: Participate in the exam as if it was a clinic and have fun.

STEPHANIE: Study! The sickest riders often fail because they get cocky and don't study. Know your pro knowledge and teaching.

AUDRA: If an instructor has confidence and knowledge combined, she becomes a mighty instrument. I think snowboarding is a personal thing. Teaching snowboarding encompasses such a large spectrum—body, mind, and soul. Embrace all three and give it your all. 

Ellen Twilame is an AASI-certified Level II snowboard instructor and former president of the Alaska Division. She lives in Girdwood, Alaska and teaches snowboarding at Alyeska Resort.


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process is similar to a Level I exam, in which the first day features a teaching clinic as well as coaching and practice for the riders. The second day focuses on the exam.

Because the prerequisite for this program is Level I status, Radefeld says, "it opens it up for a lot of people." He adds that clinic leaders look for solid airs off a small table-top jump with grabs, 180s in both directions, a 360, halfpipe riding to the lip in a superpipe, and 50/50s on a box. The advanced freestyle accreditation requires a 540 in either direction, board-slides, and consistent air in a superpipe.

But launching a freestyle program can be challenging. "We have not had the demand we hoped for with our current program—which was snowboard only—so we changed it to a multi-disciplinary program," says Central Division Snowboard Committee Chairman Jack Hurst. In an effort to get snowboarders and skiers to work together, the new program is designed for both and modeled after the *Park and Pipe Instructor's Guide*. "The current education staff who are heading this project and leading the groups have to be proficient in both [skiing and snowboarding]," Hurst adds.

Adding to the struggle to create freestyle programs is the lack of consistency among the types of freestyle terrain available at areas across the country. Some resorts still see little value in establishing freestyle terrain, while others may not have the resources or tools to keep their terrain properly maintained.

So where does freestyle go from here? For now, there seem to be no signs that its popularity will taper off. Which leaves riders, educators, and area management free to write the next chapter of the story. 

Butch Peterson is a member of the AASI Snowboard Team. When not teaching students and training instructors at Aspen/Snowmass he likes to send himself into orbit on Buttermilk's big booters and the superpipe.



What Tricks? What Level?

While different divisions have slightly different standards and levels, in general they are on a similar thread. Providing details on the standards of all divisions is beyond the scope of this article, so I'll limit this to a summation of the standards in my own division—Rocky Mountain.

First introduced in 1998, Rocky Mountain has the oldest freestyle accreditation program among the divisions. Each accreditation level regards teaching and movement analysis to be just as important as riding proficiency. So if you are planning to become a candidate for accreditation in Rocky Mountain Division, here are the riding standards. If you're not a member of Rocky Mountain, check your own division's website.

Rocky Mountain Fundamental Accreditation Riding Standards

Fundamental freestyle candidates should be able to ride safely in a terrain park environment and demonstrate a variety of basic maneuvers on several park features.

In the halfpipe, candidates should show a full run from drop-in to finish with flow and a variety of tricks and be comfortable getting to the lip of pipe with a variety of grabs on both walls. They should expect to display basic spins and be able to roll in on both sides of the pipe.

Candidates should also expect to display confidence in clearing small jumps with a variety of grabs. They must also perform basic rotational tricks (180s or 360s) on small features. Airs on medium jumps may also be required, as well as boardslides and 50/50s on small rails.

Rocky Mountain Intermediate Accreditation Riding Standards

In the halfpipe, candidates should be able to show a full run from drop-in to finish with flow and a variety of tricks with consistent air above the lip of the pipe (1 to 3 feet). They should also perform a variety of grabs on both walls, spins off both walls with grabs, switch take offs and landings, and midpipe drop-ins and roll-outs on both walls.

Candidates should be confident in clearing medium jumps with a variety of grabs and perform "out of standard" flight-path airs. They should expect to perform 180s and 360s with grabs on medium features and switch takeoffs and landings on medium jumps; straight air over large jumps; and a blending of two or more movements on small and medium rails.

Rocky Mountain Advanced Accreditation Riding Standards

The advanced freestyle candidates should be able to ride safely in a terrain park environment and demonstrate a variety of complex maneuvers on all park features. In the halfpipe, they should be able to show a full run from drop-in to finish with flow and variety of direction, tricks, and difficulty; and show consistent air at least 3 feet or more above the lip of the pipe. In addition, it's expected that candidates demonstrate a variety of grabs on both walls with airs, with body and/or board out of standard flight path. They should also perform spins beyond 360 on both walls with grabs, demonstrate the ability to begin or finish tricks riding switch stance, drop in midpipe and roll out on both walls with moderate speed and dynamic movements, and complete switch runs at or above the lip of the pipe.

Advanced candidates should be able to demonstrate jumping over large terrain features with a variety of grabs, move board and/or body out of standard flight path, and perform a variety of spins (180s, 360s, and beyond) with grabs on medium and large jumps. They should also be able to take off and land switch on large jumps and blend two or more movements on all rails.

—Butch Peterson



Freestyle Accreditation: What Divisions Offer What

- **Alaska:** Not offered.
- **Central:** Offered for snowboard instructors, called "Freestyle Accreditation." Levels are Fundamental and Advanced.
- **Eastern:** Offered for alpine instructors, called "Freeride." Offered for snowboard instructors, called "Freestyle." Levels are Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Includes two days on snow, and all courses must be taken in order. Training materials include a course outline with summary. Materials are found on the Eastern Division website: www.psia-e.org.
- **Intermountain:** Offered for alpine instructors, called "Park and Pipe." Only one level for alpine. Offered for snowboard instructors, called "Fundamental Freestyle." Levels are Fundamental Freestyle, Intermediate,

and Advanced. Materials are on the Intermountain Division website: www.psia-i.org.

- **Northern Intermountain:** Not offered.
- **Northern Rocky Mountain:** Offered for snowboard instructors, called "Accredited Freestyle Educator" (AFE). Levels are Basic and Intermediate. Materials are based on Rocky Mountain Division offerings and are found on the Northern Rocky Mountain Division website: www.psia-nrm.org.
- **Northwest:** Offered for alpine and snowboard instructors, called "Freestyle Accreditation." Alpine levels are Fundamentals (Level I) and Intermediate (Level II). Snowboarding levels are Foundations of Freestyle (Level I), Progressive Freestyle (Level II), and Advanced Freestyle Accreditation (Level III). Training is based on the

ATML model, Smart Style, and materials found at www.psia.org and www.freestyleterrain.org. Snowboarders also receive educational handouts.

- **Rocky Mountain:** Offered for alpine instructors, called "Alpine Freestyle Accreditation." Alpine levels are Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced. Offered for snowboard instructors, called "Snowboard Freestyle Accreditation." Snowboarding levels are Fundamental, Intermediate, and Advanced. Materials are found on the Rocky Mountain Division website: www.psia-rm.org.
 - **Western:** Offered for alpine instructors, called "Freeride Accreditation." Training based on materials found at www.psia.org.
- Butch Peterson



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We invite the submission of feature articles, technical pieces, instructional tips, and departmental material. If submitting via e-mail, send it as a Word attachment to tpr@aasi.org. By snail mail, send it to *The Pro Rider*, 133 S. Van Gordon Street, Suite 102, Lakewood, CO, 80228-1700. Be sure to include your address, daytime telephone number, and social security number. We also encourage authors to submit images to accompany their articles. Color slides and prints are preferred, but high-resolution digital images are also acceptable, provided they are at least 300 dpi at a size of at least 4 x 6 inches. All submissions are reviewed for technical accuracy, and those accepted for publication go through a thorough editing process. For more information, please call 720-963-2627.



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AREA AFFILIATION:
MT. BRIGHTON

AAST CREDENTIALS:
LEVEL 1 (ALSO COMPLETED THE
"TRAIN THE TRAINER'S CLINIC")

AGE: 29

MOST TREASURED POSSESSION:
MY WEDDING RING.

How did you get hooked on snowboarding?

I saw photos of people Snurfing in an old *Ranger Rick* magazine at our cabin up north when I was a kid, and I wanted to try it. I was sure I would be able to do it, even after seeing just one short article, and that belief never left me. A few years later, Mt. Brighton allowed snowboarding, and I got my chance. Never looked back!

What led you to become an instructor?

To be honest, I was stopped by the ski school director while walking in from the hill one day and asked if I would teach a lesson. (Back then board instructors were few and far between.) I agreed, and I've been teaching ever since.

What's your favorite thing about being a snowboard instructor?

Meeting new people and helping them get better. I love watching my students improve and grasp an understanding and ability in the sport they didn't have before—it's an amazing feeling!

In the context of a lesson, what's the best thing that's ever happened to you?

I met Nikolas Lindstrom (a Detroit Red Wing hockey player) by giving his son regular private lessons.

And the most heinous?

I tore my ACL in an advanced lesson for CMU at Caberfae Peaks.

What song title best describes your first day as a snowboard instructor?

The Beatles' "Fool on the Hill."

What song title best describes your philosophy on life?

Joe Walsh's "Life's Been Good To Me So Far."

What's the biggest sacrifice you've ever made for your profession?

I skipped competing in several events (including Nationals) in order to work with students on their competition level and help them improve.

What's the best advice a fellow instructor ever gave you?

James D'Angelo showed me that movement analysis is priceless.

What's the best advice a student ever gave you?

Never give up on a dream.

If a movie were made of your life as a snowboard instructor, who would play you?

Seth Green.


Describe the perfect day of teaching.

45 degrees, bluebird sky, middle of a weekday (smaller crowds), working with an advanced student in a private lesson on park or boardercross.

What did your parents really want you to do with your life?

They wanted me to be an engineer or something like that. My mom still asks me when I'm "getting over that snowboarding thing." They don't understand the passion behind riding at all.

Finish this joke: How many snowboard instructors does it take to change a light bulb?

Who needs lights? We can drink in the dark! 

When the temperature drops...

When the snow is blinding...

When performance is critical...

When excellence is
the only option...



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