Director’s Turn

Now You Think You Are a Professional 
Ski or Snowboard Instructor

By Len Bauer
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III
AAI Snowboard, Level II

Director for 20 years
30+ years at teaching
U.S. Ski Coach Assoc.

The first priority should be good skiing and/or snowboarding skills, right? Wrong!!! Expert skiing and snowboarding ability is not necessarily what it takes to assure our guests a quality and safe experience, nor is it what it takes to assure our guests are coming back, (which is after all one of our responsibilities.)

The most important skills an instructor can have is the ability to relate to people and kids! Empathy and good people skills. The ability to gauge reactions, an understanding of the student’s dependence on the instructor, the ability to motivate and to communicate in clear and simple terms are some of the assets you must have if you want to be respected as a professional instructor. Safety first.

Our guests already assume you can ski or snowboard. But anytime you wear your parka or pin you also become the expert and trend setter. You are now looked at as a role model. Because at your high visibility you become Sugar Mountain’s representative and sales agent for the entire industry! You help shape the skiing and snowboarding future of most guests you teach. Your most important function as an instructor is to provide our guests with the safest, most enjoyable experience possible. Treat our guests with respect. Guests are not an interruption to our work – they are the reason we are here.

Your general knowledge of the sport, the level of your personal skiing and snowboarding skills, your appearance, conduct, attitude and dedication, are only factors which determine your degree of professionalism. Constant
assessment of yourself and continuing improvement of your people skills and skiing and snowboarding will assure you the high standard our clients are expecting from you as a Sugar Mountain instructor.

Here is a way you can rate yourself as a Sugar Mountain instructor. If your client was to answer “yes” or “no” to the questions below, how many “yeses” would you get?

- Made the lesson fun and safe.
- Had professional attitude.
- Had enthusiasm and interest.
- Was friendly and courteous.
- Had presentable appearance.
- Presented material clearly.
- Gave individual feedback.
- Helped your skiing and snowboarding.
- Did you feel welcome?
- Will you take another lesson?
- Were you advised at your next lesson level?
- Were you told of the skier/snowboarder’s responsibility code and the importance of safety?

From the Top

By Witold Kosmala  
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III  
K2 Ambassador

If you ever wanted POWER, then you got it as soon as you got your job at the snow sports school. You are looked at from the moment you arrive at the mountain till the moment you drive away. Everyone looks at you: your employer as well as guests – lots of them. You have power to make guests have a great time on the mountain and get them hooked to the sport, or to turn them away so they will never come back (to any ski area.) Your employer gave you the job trusting that you will do all in your power to promote the sport, look after guests’ well-being, and teach them needed skills. Of course, for you having to carry such a load your pay should be 10 times the way it is, but we won’t get into that. Our Director wrote above about being professional, and Gordon Carr in his article below writes some more about what we should do in and out of a lesson. Face it, we have a very stressful job. And there is no place to hide. We can’t even find a secluded corner on the mountain to practice a little drill for ourselves. On some mountains instructors are equipped with GPS so that supervisors can easily find them. But, in actuality, don’t you just love being an instructor, sharing your love of skiing/riding with others? (Read the article that follows.) How about meeting people with different walks of life? When you are an instructor, it is not about you any more – it is about others. That’s what dedicated teachers are all about. But, as the saying goes: “We cannot hold a torch to light another’s path without brightening our own.” The bottom line is that teaching others should be so very rewarding to us. (Now you know why the pay is so low.)

Our mountain opened for skiing and riding on November 12. Awesome! What a great season we are going to have! Among many things to look forward to is our Pre-Season Ski Clinic on December 9 – 11. On the top of the clinic’s coaches is 1994 Olympic Gold & Silver Medalist Diann Roffe and 2010 US National Super G Champion Keely Kelleher. The SugarFest is also that weekend with a long list of activities, including ice skating presentation by 1992 Olympic Figure Skating Silver Medalist, Paul Wylie and a Consumer Demo.
I am so pleased to bring you this NEW issue of Peak Performance, which is loaded with valuable information, all in a completely redesigned format! I thank present, past and the future contributors to our publications. Their support, time and sharing of information is truly appreciated. The same goes to my son Konrad who edits these publications (and also is responsible for the redesign) as well as to Bill Delligatti who designed and manages our website www.peakperformance.highcountrywebsites.com.

We are happy to provide you now with even/odd pages for double-sided printing. Remember that all previous issues of Peak Performance are also posted and downloadable from my web page found at www.mathsci.appstate.edu/~wak/.

Doug Washer suggested that we also include a little section on a “Pet of a Month.” So, all you skiers, riders and skaters, send all your correspondence and photos of your pets (dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, lamas, ferrets, cows, pigs, chickens, snakes, birds and what have you) to me at Kosmalaw@bellsouth.net.

Have a super season. Enjoy your Holidays and welcome the New Year with hugs and kisses.

**Main Course**

**My Love For Skiing**

*By Witold Kosmala*

*PSIA-E Alpine, Level III*

Yes, I have a true love for skiing, but here right now it is all about Bob Muran. I met Bob Muran many years ago on the slopes in New York. He was my PSIA-E examiner and coach. What really impressed me about him was his huge smile and his Love for Skiing that was projecting out of his whole body. Sure, his excellent skiing was very impressive as well, but that we expect out of our examiners, just like their knowledge of the sport. Bob says that “if I accomplished anything in my life, it was because of my Love for Skiing. I suffered many disappointments, set-backs and many injuries, but the Love for Skiing was always my guiding light. Today, as colder weather is up on us, I am getting all excited about the prospect of wind in my face and delicate balance of sensations as I take a run down the Mountain.”
Bob (Maciek, in Polish), agreed to undergo this interview. His in-depth knowledge of American, Canadian, and European ski school teachings seemed like a great topic to discuss and bring to our readers. Without further ado, here is Bob.

Question: Mr. Bob Muran, thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. You were my PSIA coach many years ago. I enjoyed you and learned a lot from you. You are one of those people never to be forgotten. Truly, one of a kind with so many talents. So now, years later, I am honored to converse with you again.

Bob: Hi Witold. I am honored and humbled to be able to talk to your readers of Peak Performance about my involvement in skiing. It’s been my passion for past 60 years and continues today. When we met, I was a full time examiner for PSIA and travelled up and down East Coast and conducted Ski Instructor’s Courses and Exams for Level 1, 2 and 3 candidates, as well as Exams for potential new members of Development Teams and Examiner’s Training Squads.

Question: Bob, were you born in Poland, and if so, when did you leave Poland and, in few words, how did you end up presently in Canada?

Bob: I was born in Warsaw (Warszawa), Poland and started skiing when I was 7 trying to make a turn on little ski hills in Bielany, Warsaw. Couple of years later, a ski coach from Kolejarz Ski Club asked me to join the Club and few years later I was ski racing. After a race in Cortina Di Ampezzo, Italy, I failed to make a train back to Poland, and ended up in Austria, waiting for immigration to USA, Australia or Canada. Canada responded first and so I went to Toronto, Canada.

Question: Can you say a few words about your involvement with Polish Ski Federation known as Polski Zwiazek Narciarski (PZN)? Also, is PZN a federal organization or private?

Bob: After many years in ski business in USA and Canada, I have met many Polish Ski Instructors working in USA, and one of them that has maintained contact with (PZN) suggested that PZN brings me to Poland, to conduct Polish Ski Examiners’ Training in Zakopane, Poland. Some 250 Polish Ski Examiners attended from all over Poland, and I ran the training on rotating bases and introduced Canadian Ski Instructors’ Alliance progression as well as PSIA skill development concept. The training went very well and as a partial impute of my visit (I would like to think, ha, ha), year later, PZN has rewritten their Ski Instructor Training Manual. PZN is a Federally supported organization. Funding for its activities is nominal.

Question: Is it the PZN that oversees the ski instruction in Polish Ski Schools? Can you elaborate on this?

Bob: Yes. The training and preparation of ski instructors is actively promoted to assure uniform system that students’ progress can advance at any of many Ski Centers in Poland. There is annual unification training for all examiners and senior instructors to maintain standards in all ski schools in the country.
Question: Can you tell us about your involvement with the skiing industry in the United States? How about your involvement with the Professional Ski Instructors of America (PSIA) organization?

Bob: After number of years as a Racing Coach and Ski Instructor, I got promoted to Ski School Director at Horseshoe Valley Ski Resort in Barrie, Ontario and than at Honey Pot Ski Resort in Toronto, Ontario. When at Honey Pot, I was asked to assume a position of Ski School Director at Sterling Forest Ski Centre in Tuxedo, NY. I joined PSIA and passed my Level 1, 2 and 3 exams, understudied for one year under Joe Wood, Willy Tate, Sue Spencer and many other senior examiners, and shortly after passed exams to become Examiner for PSIA-E. While being very active in PSIA, I got promoted to position of Marketing Director of Sterling Forest Ski Centre. To bring skiing to our customers I build portable ski deck that I rolled in to shopping malls, universities, concert halls and T.V. studios, where I could ski and teach skiing to large audiences. My Ski Deck Show become so popular that I was invited to perform at Rockefeller Square, Madison Square Gardens, International Ski Show at NY Coliseum (where we won Best Booth award) and many universities, colleges and shopping malls in NY, NJ, and Connecticut. As a result of those Ski Shows, skier traffic at Sterling Forest Ski Centre has improved dramatically and many TV station have asked us to bring our Ski Show to their studios. We have performed at AM New York, New York at Noon, Wanderama Show (National Syndication) and many other local TV shows, and I have thought to ski on TV Ed McMinn of Johnny Carson Show, Deanna Merrill, Lee Leonard and many other Movie Stars and TV personalities. The biggest highlight was to teach skiing at Sterling Forest Ski Centre Mark and Nelson Jr. Rockefeller (children of Nelson Rockefeller when He was Vice President of the USA). While when not busy promoting skiing and Sterling Forest Ski Centre, I was very involved in conducting events and exams for PSIA. I returned to Canada and after 1 year sabbatical I was asked to participate in Medonte Mountain Ski Resort in Ontario, Canada in a position of Vice President and Managing Director. In 3 years of my involvement we have Quadrupled Revenues and went from 250 members to 5.000 members, invested millions of dollars in infrastructure and put Medonte Mountain Ski Centre on the map. While in Canada, I still conducted many events and exams in US and I hope that my contribution to PSIA was to instill quality of ski instructors in skiing skills, teaching skills, presentation skills and professionalism.

Question: Can you tell us about your involvement with the skiing industry in Canada? How about your involvement with the Canadian Ski Instructors’ Alliance, (CSIA)?

Bob: I was Fully Certified in Canada in 1965, become a Certified Racing Coach in 1966 and was involved on
Board of Directors as a Chairman of the Ski School Directors Committee, served on Ontario Ski Council as a chair on Ski School Committee, served as an Examiner on Level 1 and Level 2 courses, coached racing and trained ski coaches.

Question: Not to get too in depth, can you tell us differences between operations of PZN, PSIA and CSIA?
Bob: PZN is very influenced by French, Italian and Austrian Ski Schools both in skiing technique and their approach to conveying information. PSIA has wonderful people skills approach to overcome any difficulty without insisting on performance. CSIA is very strong on skiing skills, with little humanistic skills.

Question: Can you tell us differences between certifications and certification processes between these 3 organizations?
Bob: PZN: 3 levels (Assistant Instructor, Instructor, Instructor Trainer). PSIA: 3 levels (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3), and than Development Team, Examiner Training Squad, and Examiner. CSIA: 4 levels (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4).

Question: In the European countries, do you think ski schools would prefer hiring Polish fully certified skiers or those from this continent, and why?
Bob: I think it’s a level field. Quality ski instructors, as long as they can demonstrate great people skills and solid skiing skills, get hired. Polish Fully Certified Ski Pros ski Alps as much as their European counterparts, so they are acclimatized to Big Mountain Skiing. Ski lessons in Europe last all day with miles of terrain covered in a single run. European ski teaching is based on mileage with few words to address the problems.

Question: Can you tell us what “Ski with Bob Muran,” given on your “winter” website http://www.skiwithbob.com/ is about?
Bob: My web site has been running for past 10 years and I use it to keep Skiing Community involved in skiing. My “Learn to Ski” videos are being watched by hundreds of potential skiers, and it generates many of my private students that I Coach every year. It also serves as a documentary of ski trips I run to ski resorts all over the World. My Spring Trip this Season will be to Whistler, BC in Canada (our 10th return) and I will be happy to accommodate skiers, instructors and readers of your Peak Performance.

Question: Your website also states that you are a licensed pilot. Do you fly yourself to the mountain slopes, or ever take ski groups with you?
Bob: I have flown over lots of parts of North America and accumulated over 2700 hours in my Cessna 172
Skyhawk and later Grumman Tiger. While at Sterling Forest Ski Area in Tuxedo, NY, I would fly in from Toronto to Spring Valley Airport and back. It would save me some 4 hours of travel time if you considered taxi to the Airport, delays on departure, taxi ride from LaGuardia to Tuxedo, NY, etc. To check on skier traffic at other ski areas I would fly over them and take photos of their parking lots. It allowed for quite accurate assessment on amount of business my competitors were doing. So flying has become an important tool in assessing my business in relation to my competition.

Question: Your website mentions that you are also a Canadian Coast Guard Licensed Captain. So, curiosity took me to your “summer” website http://www.torontocruises.net/. It is incredible, you are a man that simply never stops. I know that your 65-foot Long Island Princess does not deal with skiing, but perhaps it does. After all, you are the man that you are because of all the things that you do. So, can you tell us a few words about your summer activities as a Captain?

Bob: In Summer I operate a small Cruise Boat offering Lunch and Dinner Cruises. We are licensed for 120 passengers and I can operate my vessel with a crew of 3. I am the Captain and Engineer, and there is a First Mate, Bar Tender and one deck hand. We offer Exclusive Group Cruises (minimum of 60 guests) and Public Cruises where we accept as few as 2. We also run school outings, church groups and social clubs cruises. This keeps us busy from April until October when it gets too cold to sail. We do Special Cruises for ski clubs, ski shops and ski reps introducing new ski products. It allows me to keep in contact with skiers I get to meet and introduce them to my private coaching and to one of my ski trips I run during the course of ski season.

Question: I hate to stop this interview, but maybe just one more question. In all my memories of you and all the photos that I ever see of you, even when ski racing, you always have a smile on your face. Truly a wonderful virtue. Do you always face life with a smile on your face?

Bob: When you do what you love, it’s natural to smile. I am so excited when I am skiing that I smile from ear to ear. Life is short, it’s imperative that you enjoy what you are doing. In winter I can’t wait to go skiing; in summer I can’t wait to get on my boat. I am very lucky to do what I love, and be able to support myself and my family. I look forward to every new day with excitement and anticipation.

Bob, thank you again for speaking with us. Your answers were a learning experience for me and I am sure the same goes with all our readers. Thank you again for sharing your Love for Skiing.

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**Monkey See, Monkey Do**  
*By Gordon Carr*  
*PSIA-E Alpine, Level II*

All parents have wished that the old saying, “Do as I say, NOT as I do!” was correct in childrearing. But it is most certainly not true. Children copy parental behavior… Monkey See, Monkey Do is more the order of the day not only in parenting but also in snow sport instruction. We are much more important to our learning snow sport guests than we imagine and they watch everything we do! Also, as instructors in the flashy Ski and Snowboard School parkas, we are under scrutiny by the general skiing and riding public when on our trails more than we think.

If for no other reasons than the above we should always be cognizant of our general behavior and decorum when in uniform; we are ambassadors, the visible representatives of our Sugar Mountain. People notice and watch us. And we also need be “on our game” in our skiing and riding when on the trails in uniform because all Sugar Mountain’s guests notice how we behave AND how we ski and ride. We really ought to be a cut above the general public in skills. We, by our skiing and riding panache, ought to be visible advertisements for the Ski and Snowboard School. We ought, by example, make guests want to take lessons so they, too, can negotiate our slopes with ease and fluid grace.

During our lessons on slope our skiing and riding behavior and our technical precision in executing skill maneuvers are even more critical. Our classes are closely watching how we are moving on these new (to them), awkward, and slick boards. Arguably they are watching as much or more than they are listening. So we come to
the “demos.” What is the old saying... “One picture is worth a thousand words?” This is as TRUE as the quote starting this article is UNTRUE! I once taught a group of five Finnish young people in a Learn To... lesson. They were recently arrived students taking an English as a Second Language course at a local college, basically knew no English and I certainly knew no Finnish (well maybe...”sauna”). Yet all five learned to balance, glide, turn both ways, stop 3 ways, and ride the lift, laughing themselves silly the whole time. I would point to my (appropriate) body parts, make a specific move or action, and then I would point to them to do the same move. They quickly got the idea. The absolutely transformational insight for me was that this group “got it” more rapidly than typical “English speaking” groups! Apparently I “waste” a lot of time talking about “stuff” which I believe I need to say but probably which is only marginally related to Newbies actually learning the dynamic balancing muscle moves and basic skills in skiing. No doubt at more advanced levels there are instructions, feedback, and explanations of maneuvers and outcomes which are necessary for a student to properly perform advanced skill sets or tasks. But at the initial learning level, I think a case can be made that students are learning much more through imitation, modeling, and vicarious learning by watching us than from what we say.

Hence, our demonstrations (the DEMOs) of how to do a skill maneuver and what successful performance should “look like” are absolutely critical when introducing NEW muscle movements in a snow sport class. And in a Learn To... class, most all movements are new to our guests. For this reason, it is important that as much as possible in our skiing and riding we need to be presenting a picture of what the skill under focus should look like when done correctly. Sure, in Learn to Ski, many of us ski backwards when assisting a very tentative learner down a crowded slope for safety reasons. Reducing their fear does decrease muscle rigidity and makes fluid dynamic balancing more likely, but we need remember that the visible picture we present when skiing backwards is not a Demo and is NOT directly helping them learn to balance and glide.

PSIA/ASSI Educational materials stress the importance of framing our instructional presentation in all three learning modalities, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (see, hear, and feel). This insures we reach as many people with widely disparate preferred learning styles. (See PSIA/AASI’s Core Concept Manual for more in depth coverage of learning styles and the implications for our teaching.) I acknowledge the value of these varied modalities of presentation, but it is my opinion that underlying everyone’s preferred learning style is a reliance on the visual modality as primary. We are all primates and primates are visually oriented learners; hence the Monkey See, Monkey Do.

There is another reason why our Demo’s are so important for our classes. It is of little value to our learning guests to see us pop off a few slick carved turns in a Learn To... class. We don’t need to “prove” we are good riders/skiers. Our learning classes already probably think too highly of our ability. What our learning guests need to see is an accurate demonstration of what the new moves under discussion “look like” when performed correctly. The less experienced the class, the more specific and detailed we need be in calling attention as to what to even look at in what we are demo’ing. “While I do _______, I want you to watch what I am doing with my ______ and what is happening in the_____.”

Also on a practical level, when we teach a lot of Learn To... classes this notion of presenting an accurate visual picture of what “beginning skiing and riding” looks like means we should be willing to ski a lot of wedge turns for skiers and a lot of “________” for beginning riders (you riders know what to put into the blank.) We can’t always do this; there are many circumstances which require us to scrape boot soles, speedily catch up to an impending disaster, climb back up the hill to assist a needy fall, etc. But it always needs be in the forefront of our thoughts to ski and ride the “picture” we are trying to teach whenever possible.

True, we shouldn’t be carving turns in beginning classes and I don’t often see that. But of all the things I am guilty, and which I sometimes observe in other instructors, are sloppy floppy, a little of this and a little of that, hands in the pockets, polishing the sunglasses, or half-baked wedge christie turns with a lazy crossover and a sloppy finish maneuvers on the Magic Carpet or Easy Street. Granted, these trails are easy for us; we can get down them forward, backward, or side slipping. But that diminishes the fact that for our beginning guests these very trails can be frighteningly difficult. We need to give them the tools to negotiate the trails safely and with enjoyment and one important way is to ski or ride the “picture of how it should look” when skiing or riding with beginner moves. If you are on Easy Street challenging guests to develop wedge christie turns, you ski wedge
christie turns, but just a bit more fluidly and precisely. Down on the Magic Carpet area, let’s face it, you have to do many things (talk about multi-tasking) to get the guests moving. But when you can, ski and ride the entry skill (wedge turns for skiers) whenever possible.

There is an opposite side of this “present a visual image” coin; one that can help us gain insight into what muscle moves a guest might be making when they are blocked from “getting” a new skill or maneuver. Ski or ride behind the struggling guest and let them give YOU the visual picture of their movements. Then you deliberately try to copy their movements, try to reproduce the collection of ineffective muscle movements which are resulting in an inefficient execution of the learning task. If you can reproduce their movements, then by really attending to your internal feelings, you may gain some insight as to what muscle movements are holding the guest back. Then with this understanding perhaps you can be more effective in designing and presenting the exercise or drill which will get them over the hump.

By the way, all this visual learning, modeling and vicarious learning stuff isn’t just mumbo jumbo. There is pretty good scientific evidence that athletes’ pre-performance observations of other athlete’s actions affects eventual performance. You don’t want to watch “yard sales” and other unsuccessful runs right before you ski in a race. You don’t want to visualize losers and wipe-outs right before the start gate! It is also why beginning skiers and riders should only look at great performers on the upper slopes; yet ask beginners and most of them report looking at the catastrophic disasters and falls. It makes sense; wipe-outs are easy to recognize even for beginners but the subtleties of real high level skiing and riding can escape their limited conceptual awareness. What I tell beginners (and I do tell them this) is “Don’t spend time looking at all the people who are falling unless it is a spectacular wipe-out!” (You have to endorse some looking because if it is a great yard sale, everybody looks). At this point everybody nervously laughs because I’ve exposed their inner secret, their fascination with THE FALLS and their fear that they will look just as awkward.) I continue, “Rather, spend time watching someone coming down the trail who is skiing like you’d like to ski!”

So, the full range of our skriding (I’m tired of repeatedly typing “skiing and riding”). I think I read this new word somewhere; don’t remember where. The “i” is long like in stride.) To repeat, the full range of our skriding visual images of what we are teaching can have a positive impact on our lesson outcomes. The most effective instructors are able to accurately perform both efficient and inefficient maneuvers, correct and incorrect skriding actions whenever needed. The former to provide a visual picture of what a skill move should look like, the latter to gain insight into what particular muscle moves a guest is making which might be holding them back from further improvement. As a final thought and to repeat myself (which old people do a lot), when in uniform, and especially in classes, never skride in a floppy sloppy fashion. In the classes try as much as practical to skride the exact skill maneuver which you are currently teaching the guest to perform.

THINK COLD!

Ski Racing

My Thoughts on FIS’s Attempt to Ruin GS

On Aug. 18, 2011, Ted Ligety posted on http://www.tedligety.com/ the following blog. Reprint permission was granted. For your information, later in August, due to racers and ski industry’s requests, FIS has changed their new 40-meter rule to 35. Ted has a blog on that change as well, but did not indicate his permission to reprint. His write-up is interesting and has other side ideas. Reading it on his website is encouraged.

There’s a lot of talk out there right now about the new FIS ski regulations to be implemented in 2012- most specifically the GS radius minimum. I’ve spoken out against the new rules which include a new guideline stating that GS skis cannot be less than 40 meters in radius (whereas the current rule is 27m). I have even joked that Michael Von Gruenigen and Alberto Tomba were going to come out of retirement and use their old skis. Although, there is just one problem with that- their skis from the 90’s wouldn’t be legal.
For the past 17 years, GS ski radius hasn’t changed much. In 1996, World Cup racers were skiing on skis with a similar radius to today—with a 28 m radius. Three years earlier, in 1993, Rainer Salzgeber, the Head Race Manager who raced in the 90’s, said he raced World Cup on skis with 32-meter radius. To give you context of the times, “Schlinder’s List” and “Sleepless in Seattle” were in theaters and the first President Bush was handing over the keys to the White House to the newly-elected Bill Clinton. You would have to go back to the 80’s to find 40 meter radius skis. That’s the radius FIS wants everyone from me to 15-year old boys to be racing GS on. Wave good bye to the sport’s progression of arcing the cleanest possible turns.

I write this article now because today I finally had the chance to try a prototype of the 40m GS skis. And quite frankly, they suck. I felt like Phil Mahre circa ’84. Try as I might, I could not get the skis to come around without a huge slide and step. Warner Nickerson also tried them in the course. As I watched him fight his way down through the course, I could only think about how much the scene reminded me of the silent black and white films from the early days of skiing. At the bottom of the run, Warner said he was worried he was going to straddle every gate because the tips were so long. To have any chance of making the next gate, he had to go recklessly straight and then awkwardly slide. Might I say ‘dangerous’?

There has been a lot of talk that ski racing has gotten too dangerous. Leading that discussion is the sport’s international governing body; yes, of all people, FIS. The truth is, ski racing is a dangerous sport: always has been and always will be. And don’t get me wrong, I’m all for safety and taking the precautionary measures to avoid needless risks. But when I ask myself if GS is “super” dangerous in the relative sense of things, the answer is NO. In the last two years, there has been a grand total of three injuries among the skiers of the GS elite (ranked in the Top 30); and I wouldn’t contribute any of the causes of these injuries to the equipment. For example, Thomas Fanara tore his ACL in Beaver Creek in ’09 because the gate panel hooked/wrapped him in the gate then sent him flying (also note, the snow conditions were that very grippy man-made snow); Marcel Hirscher broke his ankle due mainly to poor hill preparation (he was running #2 and there was a huge unmarked hole in the ice that he stuffed his foot into at full speed); The third injury of the past two years was Benni Raich’s ACL tear that happened racing in a dual in which men and women were running the same course (men and women ski a different line resulting in a sharp groove at the bottom of the turn which caught Benni’s ski twisting him up and not letting him release the energy out of the turn). If you ask me, three injuries in 2 years is an acceptable level of danger—especially considering equipment was not at fault.

Unfortunately, I don’t remember the era of 40-meter skis very well so I cannot provide good examples of GS skiers hurting themselves based solely on the radius of the ski. But I do remember greats from the era like Marc Girardelli, among others that had countless numbers of injuries skiing on the straight skis. FIS should be reminded that racers have injured themselves in every era of the sport and chances are, they will continue to do so. When you have a 195cm, rigid lever firmly attached to your foot, there is a good chance of hurting yourself if you fall, no matter the sidecut or radius.

FIS claims that slowing down the racers (via drastic equipment modification) will make the sport safer. But the reduction in speed when using longer radius skis is inconsequential. When you crash, what’s the difference if you are going 90kph or 80kph or in downhill, 140kph to 120kph? Plus coaches are now going to set straighter because of the new rule changes so speed/danger really won’t decrease anyways.

It should be noted that FIS doesn’t exactly have the best track record in making smart, safer equipment rules. For example, just a few years ago FIS lowered stand- height and widened the skis- putting more force on the knee and body, which resulted in more injuries. Narrower skis would have been the right move in that instance and is
the only part of this new round of rules they got right.

If you want to slow down the sport then don’t allow tight suits and make us wear normal ski clothes like skier-cross- I don’t like wearing my race suit anyways. Another idea is to make an off set rule for GS so that courses are set with rounder turns.

I obviously must seem very biased when it comes to GS rules since things have gone very well for me in recent years. And to be honest, if the rule changes truly were safer and wouldn’t ruin the sport, I’d be all for them even if it were to my disadvantage. But from where the new rules stand now, I don’t see any added benefit to the interests of skier safety. If anything, I fear these new rules will drain all the fun out of the sport and will deter future generations from picking up a pair of race skis when they head out to slopes. Ski racing is a unique sport in the way it balances of finesse and well-rounded athletics. From my and Warner’s experiences skiing on these new skis, the new rules will favor brute strength and size, think Aksel and harm smaller athletic skiers like Fanara and Hirscher. I hope these proposed rule changes are just a ploy by FIS so they can say they made an ‘attempt’ to make the sport safer. Otherwise, I better dust off those Sarajevo Olympics VHS tapes and start studying that legendary Phil Mahre and Ingemar Stenmark step.

-Ted Ligety

P.S. Feel free to repost or print this at will.

Ted Ligety is a US champion alpine ski racer. He was the 2006 Olympic gold medalist in combined and the three-time World Cup champion in giant slalom (2008, 2010 and 2011). Ligety won the gold medal in the giant slalom at the 2011 World Championships. Through March 6, 2011, he had eight victories (all in giant slalom), 25 podiums, and 68 top-ten finishes in World Cup competition.

FIS is used in all the skiing countries as an abbreviation for the International Ski Federation.

How to Improve your Racing Times?

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

Racing brings a new dimension to your skiing and riding. It will test many of your abilities and make you realize how free-skiers and riders “shop” practically for every turn. In fact, all European Ski Schools and some PSIA Divisions use racing as part of their certification exams. It is always fun to see improved runs down a racecourse. Here is a short list of things that you may consider worthy of practice. They all will improve your performance.

- Attack from the very beginning. That means even before you leave the starting gate. Practice your starts. Make your body move down the hill before you trip the clock on.
- Get moving fast, don’t wait until the slope gets steeper. Practice skating.
- You are moving the slowest at the beginning of your turn, so do most active steering at that point. This results in “comma” turns.
- Use your poles to help in turn initiation. (See page 7 of October 2011 issue of Peak Performance.)
- Watch in particular the gate that precedes a flatter portion of the course. If you slow down there, you will pay for it all through the flat section and lose oodles of time.
- Don’t tuck if you will not straighten out properly afterwards. Be sure to extend your body forward using your core muscles, otherwise your skis will run, you end up on the tails, start the next turn too late and loose all the saved time that you gained in the tuck.
- Don’t overturn around the last gate.
- Keep relatively narrow stance. It will make you go quicker from edge to edge.
Coaching Tips

Wedge Christie/Spontaneous Christie
What is Actually Happening?

By Mike Hicks
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III
 Trainer for the Ski School at Whitetail Resort, PA

This is absolutely the toughest area of skiing to understand, comprehend and demonstrate properly. Wedge Turns are fairly simple steer the ski and stay in balance. As the skills develop add in pressure, which will promote edge. Christie turns are complicated. Just like any turn there is the preparation/finish of old turn, initiation, middle of the turn and finish/preparation for the next turn. Let's start with the turn entry.

If you think of a wedge turner they initiate the turn by steering and then we try to have the student add in pressure control by extending and flexing through the turn. In a wedge turn you are on opposing edges, why is this? It is because your center of mass never leaves the space between your feet. If you would take a plumb bob and attach it to your center of mass you would never see it go outside of your boots. The edge your skis are on is the edge closest to the end of the plumb bob in the snow. So at the end of the old turn the wedge Christie turner has their center of mass inside of both skis and they are on corresponding edges. To get started or initiate the turn they extend towards the new turn, just like any turn should, but they do not extend aggressively enough to go from 2 edges to 4 edges (skis flat) to 2 edges, this would be a parallel turn. What the wedge Christie turner does is extend enough to release the uphill edge but not the downhill edge. In doing this opposing edges are engaged. These opposing edges along with staying on the downhill ski, due to security and comfort, allow the uphill ski to be steered without steering the downhill ski. Therefore the wedge initiation is created.

It is not a push or step of the uphill ski. It is not a rotation of the uphill ski but it is a steering/guiding of the uphill ski. To work on this initiation have a friend watch the uphill ski at turn initiation. Does this ski track where the tail follows the tip? If so that is good and accurate movements. If the ski smears, or the tail rotates uphill then there is too much rotation involved and there are not accurate movements of the body to create a turn. This accurate movement is something that is very lacking in most of our skiing anywhere on the mountain. If you cannot do it correctly in the Christie demonstration then you will have a very tough time doing it free skiing.

Now that we have the turn started and we are in a wedge how do we get back to parallel? This is a little bit easier in my mind to understand. If any of us would take and force a wedge turn on blue terrain you will feel how hard it is to do. When it takes force to keep the wedge is when the skis should be brought to a parallel situation. Now how does that relate. If you are trying to ski a wedge Christie turn we can feel that same stress in our legs when the ski naturally wants to come to a parallel situation. Now why does the stress happen. If you think about when you are skiing, pressure increases on the legs and body due to terrain and speed. The faster or steeper it is the more pressure there is. To manage the pressure we move our center of mass inside of the turn and flex. A wedge Christie skier does not have as much pressure but it is still there and the easiest way to manage it is to move the center of mass. This movement is crucial as it will flatten the inside ski and allow steering to parallel, not slide the ski in, but steering under foot. This steering under foot is the exact movement we all should be teaching in the level 1 lesson. Bow ties in boots and bow ties in skis is the exact same movement, rotation/steering under foot. As the center of mass moves it releases the edge and brings the skis to parallel and a skidded finish results. All to be repeated again and again linking turns.

Peak Performance
To work on your steering again grab a friend and have them watch your inside ski, or matching ski. Is it steered to parallel? Is it lifted and placed to parallel? Or is it slid to parallel? It needs to be steered and there should not be a change in stance width. One stance width throughout the turn is ideal.

### Narrow Wedge or a Braking Wedge?

**By Witold Kosmala**  
**PSIA-E Alpine, Level III**

**Should we teach beginners a narrow wedge or a braking wedge? Besides, what is meant by a “braking” wedge?**

First we need to define the terms “narrow wedge,” “big, wide wedge,” “gliding wedge” and a “braking wedge,” and then we can decide what it is that we should teach beginners and when. **Narrow wedge** is when your feet are about 8 inches apart and both feet are pivoted inwards so that tips of the skis are just about one or two inches apart. Any wedge narrower than that is also considered narrow. **Big wedge** is when your feet are wider apart than your hips. **Gliding wedge** is when you ski (glide) in a wedge straight down the fall line. Due to skier’s weight, length of the skis, size of the platform angle, size of the edge angle, size of the wedge, size of the space between the knees, amount of the pressure on the skier’s ball of the foot, pitch of the slope, texture of the snow, condition of the bottom of the skier’s ski, sharpness of the ski’s edge, and so on, one skier may be losing speed while gliding down another may be gaining speed. **Braking wedge** is when you are slowing down when wedging.

Every size of a wedge provides skier with a solid platform to stand on. Skis form a triangle, which gives skier a security and stability, whether narrow or wide. However, the differences between these two are quite dramatic. Narrow wedge will take a skier faster down the hill if pointed down the fall line, but will make turning usually easier and will not involve movements that will eventually need to be unlearned. Some students will have no trouble making their wedge wider, bigger, in order to slow down, whereas others will not be able to do that. Remember, if the student is slowing down, then they are using a braking wedge. A narrow wedge can also be a braking wedge if the student is slowing down while gliding down the slope. If your student makes a big wedge to slow down, but by doing so they collapse the knees making them touch each other, and that in turn makes the skis get on a very high edge which gets awkward to deal with since it easily gets locked in into the snow and makes the skier ski off to one side, then the instructor should correct the student and have them narrow down the wedge even if the student says that they cannot control their speed when wedge is narrower. Tell the student that they will control the speed by turning, but they will not be able to learn how to turn if the wedge is so big. Be sure to help them control the speed either by holding them from the front, by catching them, or taking them to a flatter terrain.

It is recommended to demonstrate students a narrow wedge. If narrow wedge suffices, then try not to teach the student a big wedge. If you do, student might think that they should ski in a big wedge, which is not true. Big wedge brings a beginning student a number of limitations, wrong ideas and incorrect moves. A big wedge will make it difficult for the skier to turn since they will have too much weight on the “inside” ski which is actually pointing in a different direction than they will want to go. To get around that, student will need to lean to the outside of a turn, reach for the outside knee to put more weight on the outside ski which is supposed to turn them in the correct direction. All those “airplane” turns, reaching for the outside knee exercises, etc. should be avoided at all cost. As the skier gets better, all those moves will have to be replaced by opposing moves of the body to the inside of a turn, and will be hard to learn. (It is similar to a kid turning on a bike with training wheels, and then replacing leaning to the outside of a turn by leaning to the inside of a turn after those training wheels are taken off.) Wider wedge will create an awkward “A” frame stance and put strain on the knees. Furthermore, it decreases shin’s contact with the boot cuff. It is ineffective to teach a big wedge if later student will have to unlearn it in order to improve their skiing abilities. It is a dead end direction to go with a student, or worse, since student will eventually have to replace those moves by their opposites.
Don’t misunderstand all this – good skier should be able to perform a big wedge when needed, but here we are talking about a beginner. Also, if the student’s wedge is just a little on the big side, but no funny angles are formed and this student seems to be comfortable with the size, you might wish to let it be, and instead of correcting the wedge size, try to move on to teaching how to turn. After all, we, instructors teach a wedge to our students not so they become great wedge–skiers, but as a stepping stone on the way to parallel skiing.

Some people cannot do a big wedge due to weak legs or luck of flexibility. Try to take these people to a slope with very gentle pitch, or ski in front of them backwards so you can hold them by the poles, which are held sideways by both you and the student. Move to teaching turning as soon as you possibly can.

So, the bottom line is: teach whatever wedge will work best for the given situation. “Best” takes into account a wedge that provides safety, makes the guest happy and skiing is fun, gets the job done without introducing unnecessary moves, does not create bad habits for the student.

Varying the wedge size is a good exercise to do, especially for those students that feel comfortable with one size already. Start going straight down a gentle incline with skis parallel to each other. Slowly begin to make a wedge. At first you will need to pivot each foot toward its big toe side. This can be done until tips of the skis get within inch or two of each other. Then, to make your wedge wider, you will need to laterally move your feet wider apart while pivoting each foot so that ski tips remain 1 – 2 inches from each other. As you do this your inside ski edges will get pressured more into the snow, create more friction and cause a louder scraping against the snow. If you were going faster and faster, this wider wedge might not slow you down. It just might perhaps make you go down at a constant speed. But, if you do in fact slow down, then your wedge is called a braking wedge. Note that your movements from narrow wedge to a big wedge are awkward and should not be taught unless necessary.

Reasons for the varying size wedge exercise:
- Improving edge control.
- Needed for skier’s versatility.
- Another way to slow down or stop.
- To understand beginners better. Some beginners perform a big wedge and others don’t. You need to know whether to correct them or not.

Questions and answers.

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**Teaching a Ski Lesson 101**

*By Witold Kosmala*  
*PSIA-E Alpine, Level III*

When assigned an hour long (one and a half hour long if the group is large) beginning ski lesson, we start with a person that might know nothing about the sport, mentally and physically. Or worse, they know only what they have seen racers do on TV. If we want our lesson to be considered a success, at the end of the lesson we should expect of us, professional ski instructors, to have taught that guest how to slide down a bunny slope in a wedge exhibiting a proper stance, gently turning from side to side, being able to stop, and most of all – them having a great time. That is a high expectation and not always reachable. Sometimes this is due to a guest, but more often it is due to our poor teaching abilities and our inappropriate frame of mind.

What follows in this *Ski Lesson 101* is a checklist of “stepping stones” you might consider using in your lesson that is made up of guest(s) that never skied before. Remember, these are only suggestions. Depending on the guest, snow conditions, and pitch of the slope you might need to skip over some of these and/or perhaps replace some of these with different drills. It is very important that the guest knows that skiing is a foot action, that we ski with our feet.

When you are assigned a lesson briefly introduce yourself, check if your guests have all the equipment in order, including sunglasses, gloves, and other appropriate clothing. Be sure they have a lift ticket so there will be no problems when you get to the lift.

Choose the most appropriate spot on the hill. Walk with your guests toward it and try to learn their names as soon as you can.
The flatter the spot on the hill the better. Every minute spent on a flat area is equivalent to several minutes on the bunny slope. Here you can go through the foot drills. You might wish to check with the Ski School Director whether your poking the snow is permitted. If not permitted, bypass these drills.

- Walk in the boots by putting the heel down first.
- Walk in the boots with your toes out (making herringbones).
- Walk in the boots with your toes in, pigeon toe.
- Walk in the boots sideways.
- Just stand and talk about a proper stance. If they don’t have skis on then they will have to have balanced stance.
- Stand still, pressure the heels into the snow and move toes from side to side.
- Stand still, pressure the toes into the snow and move heels from side to side.
- Stand still, move toes from side to side as well as heels from side to side by pivoting foot in the middle of the boot. When lifted off the snow there should be an image of a bow-tie. These are called “bow-ties”.
- Stand firmly on one leg and draw half moons with the other (using the hip.) These half moons should go in 2 different ways on each foot.

After short lesson on how ski bindings work, have your guests and yourself put right ski on and go through a number of maneuvering skills, like walk in a straight line, walk with toes out, walk with toes in, try sliding more than walking, make circles in both directions, make figure eights. In making circles ask your guests not to lift the ski from the snow. What a great place to see edges and steering at work. You can also do one-leg races and sidestepping. One-leg races are like riding a scooter. Have them hold imaginary handlebars, flex the body over the ski and push with the other leg.

When guests get better, make circles larger, where one part of the circle is higher up on the hill so that there will be a gentle ascend and descend. This will give your guests a chance to use their poles, do little step-ups and little gliding.

Next, put that right ski on the left leg and do it all over again. When that is done, go get the other ski and mount it on the other leg. Now go thru suggested tasks again. When they do large circles, going up this very gentle hill gives them a choice of side stepping or walking up with toes out (herringbone.) On the downhill (which is practically not there,) ask them to use a tiny snowplow position with skis flat on the snow. (We also call this position a wedge.) Show them how the ski plows the snow. At this point you should be about 30 to 35 minutes into the lesson, unless you are working on an incline, like on the magic carpet slope. In that case many previously discussed maneuvering skills will need to be bypassed.

Next step is to introduce a bullfighter’s turn and side stepping higher onto the hill. If their stance is wrong, tell them how to fix it. Make sure that they stand relatively tall with flexed legs, gently rounded shoulders, arms out so elbows are in front of their belly button and head looking straight ahead, not down at their skis. They need to look where they wish to go (ski to.) Their knees should not touch each other and their shins should touch the front of their boots. Make sure boots are buckled and you cannot put your fingers between their boot and their shins. Thighs should not be rock-hard. If they are, have them move their upper body more forward.

Eventually you will like to have your group of students stand side by side and form a line. This way they all can watch your demos and hear you talk. They should stand across the hill and facing away from the sun and perhaps a blowing snow gun. Go to the top of the line, as if you were a student yourself and ask them to watch you. Here is your demo: slide forward 3 feet by pushing with your poles, make half of the bull-fighter’s turn, face down the hill, start to slide when ready, and ask them to make a little snowplow (wedge) after they get going. If the hill is flat enough they will not fear the need to stop at the end. Looking at your demo they will see that you just run out of speed. Sometimes they do not see everything that they should in your demos, so point out that they muscually need to keep the skis out at an angle so they will not cross. Demos are very important. Have them hold the poles so they touch their thighs just above the knee.
Don’t go very far. Come back, go back up the hill and show again your students what to do. After a few quick demos ask your students to imitate you. The first student to go should be the one highest up on the hill. After that person goes, the rest of the group should sidestep so the next person will get up to the same spot that the last person skied from. You should be on the bottom of the group making sure each person gets your attention. As each person goes, you give them a running commentary. Corrections should be short and to the point. When they are done with their run, tell them what to concentrate on during the next run. Make sure there are not too many things for them to think about.

Sometimes your student will get going too fast for their liking. In that case, grab them under their shoulder. If they stick out their pole toward you, step to the side and let them go by. You do not want to get poked. If they were to go too fast and hit another person, hurt themselves, or go off the trail, call to them to sit to the side, or fall. Sitting back will not always slow them down enough due to slick clothing. Sometimes on a steeper terrain you might need to get in front of your guest, being backward to the slope and facing them. Have them put their poles sideways (yours can be sideways as well) and you both hold them. This way you can make your guest slide down the hill very slowly. Be sure they have firm arms so they do not fall back and slide between your legs. Test the grip by moving your arms together with their arms forward and backward before you start sliding down.

After everyone can glide down the hill in a wedge, try forcing an automatic turn out of them. If possible, avoid the word “turn.” It is better to say, “follow my line” or “stay in my tracks.” Go down the hill yourself backwards drawing a line on the snow with your poles. First, going straight down and then slightly deviating from the fall line in both directions. Ask them to keep their ski tips on the line. It is best if they follow your poles as you both slide down the hill. Good chances are they will follow the line, unless deviations are too big and the line will look like turns to your students.

Make sure they can turn in both directions and slow down before you take them to the magic carpet, unless it is a private lesson and/or you feel like magic carpet is/was appropriate. Explain how to ride the magic carpet before loading. They can watch some other skiers loading it and riding it. Especially to the kids, tell them not to wiggle nor to look back. Tell them what to do in case the carpet stops and then starts up again. There are chances that it might jerk, so they should anticipate that. Also, tell them to lift their poles up as they get to the unloading area. This way they will not trigger the carpet to stop.

Try to bring your guest(s) back right before one hour is up. Don’t ever leave them on top of a hill. Concluding remarks are very important. Point out how much more they can do now than at the beginning of the lesson. Tell them what to do next. Tell them what you can teach them in the next lesson if they were to sign up for one. Don’t be late for your next lesson.

Here are a few things that you should avoid. Don’t tell your students to squeeze their knees together. Don’t tell them to make their wedge big. Don’t tell them to push tail of their outside ski out in order to turn. Don’t do airplanes where student holds arms to their side and reach to the outside of the turn to help them turn. Don’t tell your students to pressure outside foot since they do not know what that means.

And, lastly here is the most important point and it pertains to you. Are you yourself trainable? Are you humble enough to take a pointer from others, or do you think you are so good that your teaching needs no improvements? Are you open-minded? Can you adopt your lesson to fit a given terrain? Can you adopt your lesson to fit individual guests depending on their mental and physical needs? Can you “sell” your love for the sport? You should never even be impatient with your guests, use unkind language, and be indifferent and uninterested. Avoid phrases like “I already told you.” You should give your 100% to each lesson and never look tired.

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This and That

**TAKING A SKI/SNOWBOARD TRIP?**

If you are flying out for your dream winter vacation perhaps to a big mountain, here are a few things that you might wish to consider.

- If you have custom ski boots, put them in your carry-on bag when going on a plane.

Peak Performance
• Airport security officials will not let you carry through a full water bottle. You can take an empty bottle through the security check points and then fill it with water at the gate.
• If you plan to rent a car, take a little windshield ice scraper in your suitcase. You might be glad you did.
• When renting a car, try to get a remote car door opener which can make your car beep. After a heavy snowfall, you will be able to locate your car easier. It is no fun scraping a car just to find out later that it is not yours.
• Don’t stand the skis up against a car since more than likely they will slide to the side and damage car and themselves as they hit the ground. The best thing is to lean them against the rear bumper. Just make sure they don’t get caught when closing the trunk.
• Always strap the skis together so that an edge of one ski does not damage the base of the other. Use straps that prevent edges of the skis touching each other. This way if damp, they will not rust.
• When carrying your bags up to your hotel room take an elevator if one is available. Or, walk up the stairs slowly to avoid getting dizzy due to thinner air and being tired from the trip.
• Hydrate to:
  1. sleep better at night
  2. prevent elevation sickness
  3. make up for dry air
  4. keep your performance up to par
• Keep your hotel room cool. Sleep on breathable sheets to help you rest and be ready for the next day on the slopes.
• Take to the slopes your cell phone in a plastic bag along with some money and an ID.
• Do not put any snacks in your pockets that will freeze rock hard. For one, you will not be able to bite them, and secondly, they can break your ribs in a crash.
• Ski the first day at lower elevations. Most mountains have plenty of slope variety at lower points of the mountain as well. Get yourself acclimated so your trip off the top will not turn to a disaster due to thinner air and elevation sickness.
• End each day on a good note. Remember to save yourself enough energy to finish your last run safely.
• Always determine a meeting point with friends ahead of time. Do not depend on the cell phone since you might lose signal, there might be a switchboard overload, it may decide to quit working on you or on your friends or other unexpected problems may occur.
• Sign kids up for lessons in a ski/snowboard school. You will get a chance to be free to go where you want to go, kids will learn new “tricks,” and then they will be eager to show them to you.
• Remember: down the hill does not always mean closer to the lodge.
• Night life and daytime slopes do not mix.

By Witold Kosmala

Turn to Wisdom

LIFE IS:
• Life is like a rainbow. You need both the sun and the rain to make its colors appear.
• Life is like a parachute jump. You have to get it right the first time.
• Life is like a Ferrari, it goes too fast. But that’s ok, because you can’t afford it anyway.
• Life is like a dogsled team. If you ain’t the lead dog, the scenery never changes.
• Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving.
• Life is like a sharpie. If you make a mistake its permanent.
• Life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end the faster it goes.
Thoughts for the Month

• How about something philosophical for a change? Are you trying to become a better skier and/or rider? If so, why? If not, why not? What do you want to do with all your skills and why? What is it that drives you?
• OK, so now you are on snow all clicked into your skis and ready to go. What is your first move? (It is very important since your second move depends on your first.)
• Is it important what your head and arms are doing when skiing, or is it all in your feet?
• In honor of the 93 anniversary of Armistice Day (also known as Remembrance Day) November 11, 1918, here is a quick quiz: In the mid 1960's, in the hey day of ski area expansion, which State had the most ski areas? Which State had second most? Answers are on the last page. (Submitted by Gordon Carr.)

Elaborations on last month’s Thoughts for the Month.

How good is your eye? I just finished skiing down a slope at Mammoth Mtn., I stopped and my brother Andrzej took this photo. Can you tell what kind of slope I just got off of? How can you tell?

Answer: You cannot see it on my left hand, but you can on the right. My pole strap is hanging below my glove and it is not wrapped around my wrist. That indicates that I was skiing the Trees. For safety, since poles can get caught on the tree limbs, you should always remove your pole straps from your wrists when skiing dense tree slopes.

Can you name some sports or activities which require sudden spurrs of energy, explosive moves, alternated with movements of drastically lesser intensity?

Answer: Here are a few:
• Skiing and riding (snow and water)
• Tennis
• Racquetball and other court games, like handball
• Volleyball
• A number of Track and Field sports
• Weight lifting
• Baseball/softball
• Golf

What is the mission of Sugar Mountain?

Answer: This is taken from the Sugar Mtn. website: “The mission of Sugar Mountain Resort is to serve our customers in the most professional, friendly and accommodating manner possible. We strive to make Sugar Mountain Resort the most enjoyable recreation facility in the South.”

Sometimes you look down from a chair lift and you see nice skier tracks on the snow, but they get narrower in the transition. Can you tell what the skier was doing?

Answer: The word “narrower” between the turns suggests that that’s exactly what happened, the skier narrowed the stance. This can be done by poorly developed leg technique, by lateral movement of the feet, by vertical extension, by excessive tip lead of the uphill ski, by sitting back, by not completing turn with the uphill ski, and the list goes on. But, since it says that the tracks are nice, perhaps none of these are true because the stance did not actually become narrower. Perhaps the skier was very dynamic and laid very nice turns, faced large amounts of pressure and to counteract it the skier had to move the body (hip in particular) toward the center of the turn. That angulation moved hips closer to the snow, thus separating the skis up and down, but not the stance. Legs of this skier could have been in fact touching. Look at my brother Andrzej’s photo. His legs are actually very close together. When he “stands up” his feet will be only a few inches apart, definitely leaving narrow tracks in the transition.

If the above photo is rotated 90 degrees, we can easily see how narrow Andrzej’s stance really is, but tracks are wide apart.

Should we teach beginners a narrow wedge or a breaking wedge? Besides, what is meant by a “breaking” wedge?

Answer: See an article earlier in this issue.
Funny Turn

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A SKI OR BOARD INSTRUCTOR WHEN...

- You'd rather sleep in your gear on a couch because, lets face it, do you really want to have to put it all back on in the morning?
- You hate taking your group inside because you know once they take their gear off, you'll never be able to recognize them.
- When everyone thinks you went tanning, but it's just your face that got sun.
- You cant imagine ever spending full price on your equipment, softgoods, passes, or food at a lodge ever again.
- You constantly analyze other people's skiing/boarding even though it's your day off.
- You do your job because you love it and not because it's not the best paying job in town (though in my experience, it never is the best paying job...)

Mike Hicks, thank you for amusing us with these statements. We can all relate to them. Mike was a ski instructor at Whitetail Resort, PA now for 20 years and going strong. He is an awesome skier and a wonderful person. Mike is a PSIA Alpine, Level III certified trainer for his ski school.

Pet of the Month

Princess Frieda Carolina von Carr of Castle Carolina relaxes on her hearth between jousting matches. Her canine armor stands at ready behind her. So far, Frieda Carolina 3 – Opponents 0!

Which State had the most ski areas?
Which State had second most?
Answer, Most – New York 89!!!. Second most – Michigan 60!!!