Last two seasons our Sugar Mountain slopes opened on November 17. When will it be this season do you think? We had one nice cold spell, and then a usual “Indian summer” after that. We had a pro night at local ski shops. Hopefully we attended some dry-land sessions, have been going to the gym, have been riding a bike, have been reading about our sport’s technique, practiced imagery, and looked for new equipment. Local stores are getting loaded with merchandise. Like squirrels we are preparing for the season. Are you one of us? Will you be ready when the slopes open, or will the first on-snow training put you into a lengthy recovery?

Don’t forget that our newsletters are posted on my ASU Web page

www.mathsci.appstate.edu/~wak/

Thanks go to all of you that communicated with me and have contributed to this, previous, and future issues of Peak Performance. I encourage you to write me and to send your items to Kosmalaw@bellsouth.net. I look forward to seeing you all soon in person.

Education

Feedback: An Important Part of the Learning Tree

By Gordon Carr
PSIA-E Alpine, Level II

In the March 2009 Peak Performance (great new title, Witold) I wrote about a
dimension of feedback related to the stage of learning in which we find our snowsports students. In that article, I suggested that what we say and how we say it should be related to the phase of learning which is happening with this student at this moment. These three phases are **CONCRETE, ASSOCIATIVE,** or **AUTONOMOUS.** From this perspective, specific instructional feedback about the performance of muscle movements should be clearly differentiated from motivational “high 5s” feedback.

There are additional ways to conceptualize instructional feedback which may be helpful to review. Perhaps most obviously, feedback can be either **CONCURRENT, IMMEDIATE,** or **DELAYED.** When **CONCURRENT,** instructional information is given to the student while he is actually performing the motor activity, muscle movements and skill tasks which we are teaching. It frequently can happen during a “call down” in a group class when each student, in turn, is skiing or riding to a specific spot (usually toward the instructor), performing a specific task or drill and the other students are waiting to perform until called down. This kind of feedback can be either instructional and specific or motivational as discussed in the March 2009 article and is clearly of great value to students learning new motor skills. They are getting information about their actual performance of a new motor movement while it is happening and can make modifications “on the fly”. Also the coach can point out and help the student notice the effect these subtle changes have on snow tool performance while it is happening. This kind of feedback can be used extensively and fairly easily during private lessons when we are able to ski/board along side or behind our student and give this ongoing information to them to improve their skill performance. We do need to be conscious of the fact, however, that too much constant “chatter” can be distracting. Maintaining that balance between occasional instructional feedback and time for independent practice by the student is key. When it comes down to it nothing replaces mileage and smileage! You can’t talk someone into a new learned motor behavior. In group lessons, when all students are skiing/boarding down a trail to a designated meeting point, it is more difficult to give concurrent feedback as the listening members may not be clear as to whom you are talking and we cannot be close and alongside each member of the class. We may be focusing upon one student, but it is easy for us to forget that ALL our students are listening and watching EVERYTHING we say and do. We are far more important to our student guests than sometimes we realize. That is also why, when possible, we should ski or board using the skills and motor movements we are instructing. We should always be giving accurate demonstrations of the principles and skills we are teaching at the skill level of the student. Let them know how the movements should look and what it takes to make the snow tool move in specific ways. Maybe we can ski/ride just slightly advanced of their level, but probably we should never perform at our highest level of skill. It may be tempting to “show how well we ski or board”, but it does the student who is learning initial balancing and turning skills NO GOOD to see us making perfect, effortless turns. They already know we’re good (and probably sort of idolize us too much anyway).

**IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK** is given, as you might expect, immediately upon the conclusion of the students’ performance of the skill or motor movement being developed. Students are skiing/boarding toward you, away from you, or to a designated meeting spot and upon gathering together, after this independent practice, you provide specific feedback about their
performance. This can actually be pretty difficult to do, and in our inability to observe and analyze each and every student’s performance this is often when we fall back on those good old motivational HIGH 5s! I personally find it very difficult to observe and specifically comment on more than 3 or 4 students’ skill performance. I have also known only 3 or 4 very experienced coaches (and this includes many PSIA clinic leaders) who can observe a group of 7 or 8 skiers, and then give detailed and accurate feedback about their performance. Those who do this well are truly awesome! Skill level plays a part here…“a newbie’s” performance errors are easier to spot, remember and give immediate feedback upon than it is to observe the subtle nuances of high level performance by a group of really good skiers. Others may disagree with this last point and I may just be showing my own lack of coaching experience and skill.

A special note is in order about a common and (to me) infuriating habit of some instructors and trainers (and, yes, also some PSIA clinic leaders). Does anyone else remember being given instruction about a specific motor skills like e.g. simultaneous tipping of BOTH skis to initiate a turn, and then upon gathering with the coach to have him comment upon your POLE USE!  Good Grief! I was having hard enough time focusing upon the tipping of skis…poles?  I might as well not have had them! Or I could have had them in my…OH Well!  You get the point.  WHEN YOU ASSIGN A TASK TO A CLASS, GIVE FEEDBACK ABOUT THAT TASK OR SKILL!  Ignore trivial and other unrelated movements.  If you find that everyone in the class is making totally inappropriate and ineffective movements you may have to assess your lesson plan or the terrain you are using as a teaching arena. Most students really do want to learn to ski/board and really are trying to perform new muscle movements which we are teaching. When they are focused upon specific muscle movements, they probably are totally unaware of other unattended to movements, so feedback about those other moves is less than helpful. If I’m the student, I feel sucker punched when this happens and at least for a while you’ve lost me!

Finally, DELAYED FEEDBACK is almost never very useful to beginning students. Delayed feedback occurs after a time interval has passed between when the student performs the movement or task and when you give the instructional feedback. The longer this time delay, the less helpful the feedback. Arguably IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK necessarily involves some number of minutes of delay as students finish skiing/riding, but IMMEDIATE feedback is given as soon as possible. By DELAYED, I mean a long period of time or number of runs has occurred (“You remember on the last trail, when you were half way down, your turns would have been…..if you had……!”)  After any appreciable time passes, students’ awareness of specific muscle movements is long gone and any feedback, other than motivational, “Hey, that was great” does little good. This may be controversial, but I believe, that DELAYED feedback is only helpful to experienced skiers/riders when you, as a coach or trainer, have been instructing “tactics” about how to handle a specific portion of the trail or unusual snow conditions AND these experienced instructors are attuned to and can sustain awareness of their personal performance.

So, these are some additional ways to conceptualize feedback…hope it has been helpful. Remember, OUR GUESTS WATCH EVERYTHING WE DO AND HEAR EVERYTHING
WE SAY even when we think we are only casually talking with a fellow instructor in lift lines. We are always onstage and consequently need to be professional in our conduct and behavior or we risk providing “unintended negative feedback” to Sugar Mountain guests!

Enough already! I write this in late September and with great anticipation realize that last year we were skiing and riding SIX WEEKS from now. The words for today:

COLD AND SNOW

Choosing the Right Equipment

By Witold Kosmala
PSIA-E Alpine, Level III

Choosing the right equipment is one of the most important choices we, the snow sports instructors are going to make. Our life may depend on our choice, and for sure the quality of our skiing/riding will greatly be affected. Remember, skiing and snowboarding is much different than golf in a way that one pair of skis, or one board, needs to take us down the hill no matter what comes our way. In golf one can choose a different club for each stroke. That cannot be done with skiing/snowboarding. One piece of equipment is all we can have for that particular run. When a ski area is small and every run takes us to the lodge, we can change our equipment more freely, but when we go on a big mountain, we better choose our equipment wisely.

So, how do we go about choosing our equipment? The first step in this process is to decide what we are going to use this equipment for, or mostly for. Are we going to use it for teaching? If so, who, what, and where? Are we going to use it for racing? If so, what, how, where, and on what kind of snow? Are we going to stay mostly in the park? Are we going to be mostly free-skiing? If so, where, how, on what snow, and what type of turns will we be mostly doing? When we know the answer to all these questions, then the choice of a ski/board is greatly narrowed down. But what if we have many needs. Are we going to invest in a dozen skis/snowboards? Some do. Some have to. But if one is a typical snow sports instructor with limited income, one might be able to invest in only one or two (pairs of) boards. So which ones are they going to be? Well, I cannot really decide for you. But, I can tell you few things that might help you in making the decision.

Often skiers/snowboarders have an incorrect way of looking at the equipment. Like, parents will often get larger shoes for kids so that the kid can “grow into them.” The poor kid keeps tripping over their toes because the shoes hang out so far in front, and then they are worn out before the shoes fit properly. How sad. But, a little of “growing into it” is good, if it is indeed
just a little and that growing takes place before the shoe wears out. But, not all shoes can be “grown into,” depending on the need and style of the shoe. The same is with skis and boards. For our personal reasons we often want to get the piece of equipment just a little above our abilities so that we can grow into it without having to make another purchase. This approach will work if we know what equipment will let us do that. Just like with kids’ shoes.

So, take for instance a person who is a pretty good skier, upper intermediate, and invests in a racing ski hoping to move up to the next level of skiing. This person does not realize that this racing “horse” needs to be ridden just right in order to perform. One wrong move can derail the person, who will pay for their mistake instantly. There is not much of “growing into” in a race ski. In fact, wrong moves will not be tolerated and often that ski will not even indicate what wrong move was made.

Here is another scenario: there is an intermediate skier who also wants to move up to the next level. But, they understand that an intermediate skier “should” ski on an intermediate ski, so they invest in one. They are afraid of getting a ski that is beyond their abilities (which is correct and incorrect at the same time). Well, then they will always be an intermediate skier and they will enjoy their equipment, which will insist that they stay at the same level.

How about if you are a female and you found out that now ski industry recognizes that females deserve their own skis, which are made just for them based on extensive research, and you get a pair of those skis. Well, if you don’t choose wisely you might be disappointed.

What about those of us that are planning on going to a PSIA event this season, or better yet, to a certification exam? Now what do you choose? I will tell you, choose one outfit that will do it ALL. OK, so there is not one out there, but there are those that will do all of it reasonable well, perhaps better than many other outfits. Many of you know that I am a K2 Ambassador, so you know that I will try to push a K2 product on you. OK, so I will, but only because I believe in it. And of course, I am not the only one. If a ski takes up a whole cover page of the Ski magazine, it cannot be all bad. Here I am talking about K2 Apache Xplorer on the cover of the September 2009 issue. K2 skis are recognized as the most versatile all-mountain skis on the market (same goes for the boards). The K2 Apache Recon was named two-time “Ski of the Year.” And the K2 Apache Crossfire will take you around the turns that will make you think you are on a racecourse. These skis will do what you want them to. And, if you make a wrong move, they will forgive you. They will make you a better skier. They are designed for experts, but will tolerate less skilled ones and will help them move up to a higher level. You can “grow into” these skis.

In the PSIA Fall 2009 publication of 32 Degrees, on page 32, Mike Porter has a wonderful article, which discusses what kind of ski is good for what kind of skiing. All kinds of measurements are discussed that give good idea what type of ski you might want. I strongly recommend reading it. For PSIA exams you will need to know the content of such an article. And believe me, Mike Porter knows what he is talking about. His expertise ranges from be-
ing on K2’s product development team for 29 years to being a head coach of the PSIA Alpine Team for 16 years.

So, take the task of selecting the right equipment for yourself seriously. Think about what kind of a ski/board you want and for what purpose. Talk to friends and sales people in ski shops who deal with many skis/boards and are very knowledgeable. Read reviews and demo the product. (There will be a Demo Day during SugarFest December 12–13, if you can wait that long.) In addition, don’t forget to ask for a professional discount. Remember, your life might depend on your choice.

Your Responsibility Code

Here it is. Memorize it. Live by it. On PSIA exams they will make you quote it.

1. Always stay in control.
2. People ahead of you have the right of way.
3. Stop in a safe place for you and others.
4. Whenever starting downhill or merging, look uphill and yield.
5. Use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
6. Observe signs and warnings, and keep off closed trails.
7. Know how to use the lifts safely.
8. If you have a collision on the slopes resulting in injury to yourself or another skier, you must stay at the site until Ski Patrol arrives.
9. DO NOT ski/ride slopes too difficult for your ability.
10. All skiers are responsible for their equipment and belongings; the resort is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen equipment.

Don’t be mistaken. When you make big turns at a high speed and someone runs into you from the back while you are cutting across the hill, court might not pronounce the other person guilty because they ran into you from the back. You might be guilty for cutting in front of them without yielding. Snowboarders, always watch your heel-side turns.
Here, at Sugar Mountain, our “never ever” guests, also known as “newbies” sign up for one hour long beginning ski lessons, mostly for group lessons. They are not signing up for a “babysitting,” but for an experience that hopefully will be educational and hopefully will change their life, (for better, of course.) They have certain expectations and so should the instructor. Some lessons are “generic” and others are “specialized private.” In specialized lessons our guests want an instructor to address a specific issue, so let’s focus on “generic” lessons. But, before I get started, I need to comment that in EVERY lesson our guest’s well-being is of outmost importance, then comes safety, then fun and love for the sport, then success of the lesson’s task at hand, all in that order.

When we are assigned a beginning ski lesson, we start with a person that might know nothing about the sport, mentally and physically. 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 teach that guest how to slide down a bunny hill in a snowplow position, gently turning from side to side, and being able to stop. That is a high expectation and not always reachable. Sometimes that is due to a guest, but more often it is due to our teaching abilities and our frame of mind. What follows is a checklist of “stepping” stones you might consider using in your lesson that is made up of guest(s) that never skied before.

- 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.

- Choose the most appropriate spot on the hill. Walk toward it, have guests follow you, and try to learn their names as soon as you can.

- The flatter the spot on the hill the better. The ideal spot on our mountain is the one where the carousel is located. Every minute spent in that area is equivalent to at least 5 minutes in the magic carpet area.

- 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. When guests get better, make circles larger where one part of it 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.

Now put that right ski on the left leg and do it all 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 uphill gives them a choice of side stepping or walking up with toes out (haring bone.) On the downhill ask them to use a snowplow position with skis flat on 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. When on top of the little incline, have them make half of the bull-fighter’s turn, face down the hill, start to slide when they are ready to go, and ask them to make a little snowplow 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 push the skis out to the side. Demos are very important.

- 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 slightly deviating from the fall line in both directions. Good chances are they will follow, unless deviations are too big and they will look like turns to your students. You might want to reread my article “Skier’s First Turn” that appeared in the February 2009 issue of Newsletter.

- 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 you feel like magic carpet is appropriate. 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. Don’t be late for your next lesson.

- This 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 individual guests depending on their mental and physical needs? Can you “sell” your love for the sport? You should never ever 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.
In PSIA Fall 2009 issue of *32 Degrees* on page 60, Jessie Halverson says how ski industry’s health depends on how effective instructors are in hooking newbies to their new sport. He says that the future of the ski industry depends on how effectively we can inspire a greater return rate among beginners. If we, the instructors can make newbies better skiers/riders, they will enjoy themselves better. No one likes to fall all day long and go down the slope in fear. In his article Jessie gives suggestions on how this can be done. He strongly recommends to

- limit group lesson size to seven students. (At Sugar we have days when up to 20 students are assigned to a beginning instructor.)

- group lesson participants by athleticism.

- staff beginner lessons with experienced instructors.

- financially reward such instructors.

He stresses that, and I quote, “For all age groups, at the end of the day, if the fun doesn’t exceed the hassle and money spent, we lose them.”

The “never ever” skiers make up a good lesson. They do not have bad habits that need to be broken. Every step should be a success. Now, go out there and make us some more skiers.

**Proper Straps Do’s and Don’ts**

*By Doug Washer*

*PSIA-E Alpine, Level II*

*AASI-E Snowboard, Level I*

Here is a silent lecture. Learn from my pictures.
Sharpen Your Edges

Help the snowmakers out and solve this problem. (The answer is on the last page.)

Pipe A can fill a pond in 12 hours. After it has been used four and a half hours, Pipe B is also used, and the pond is filled in another four and a half hours. How long would it take for the Pipe B to fill the pond by itself?

Turn for Wisdom

- “Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.”
- “Don’t confuse wealth with success. Don’t confuse comfort with happiness.”
- “Talk slowly, think quickly.”
- “Don’t judge others by their relatives.”

Thoughts for the Month

- What is the difference in turning old style roller skates with 4 wheels on each corner and turning on in-line skates? Is there any connection to skiing?
- In skiing, what is the difference between steering and pivoting?

Don’t Sideslip, Stay Healthy

- Eat healthy and take vitamins. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
• Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

• Cough and sneeze away from others, and if you are sick – stay home.

• Blow your nose in a tissue at least once a day to clear out any possible bacteria. For the same reason gargle your throat with salt water once a day.

• Eat hot soups and drink warm drinks.

• Sleep to retain immunity and increase susceptibility to colds.

• Be physically active, and manage your stress.

• For more information talk to our staff nurse, Michelle Bauer.

Announcements

PSIA-E has several events scheduled in North Carolina. Check out the Event Schedule at:

http://www.psia-e.org/ev/schedule/

for dates at Beech and at Appalachian Mountains.

ASU Ski Team is sponsoring a movie entitled “RE:SESSION” produced by Teton Gravity Research. It will be shown on Nov 1 and 2 at 7:30pm in IG Greer on ASU campus. The doors will open at 7pm. They will be having door prizes. Admission is $5, and well
worth it. You will see skiing like nowhere else.

- Daylight Savings Time ends first Sunday in November. This year it is on November 1. So, don’t forget to set your clocks one hour back and tell your kids they can sleep one hour longer.

- November 1 is also All Saint’s Day. Do you know what that is all about? Also, do you know why the previous day to that is Halloween?

- November is a Good Nutrition Month. That is interesting considering that November 4 is National Candy Day, November 5 is National Donut Day, and November 26 is National Cake Day.

- We want to welcome Doug MacLeod back to Sugar Mountain. Doug was the Ski School Director during the season 1989 – 1990, and a ski instructor prior to that for many years. It is so good to have Doug back on our staff. We all will benefit from all his experience and knowledge. He is Alpine Level III certified.

- There is another sad note. Mr. Erich Siegfried Bindlechner, 73, passed away Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2009, at the Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, in Myrtle Beach, S.C. He was born Nov. 4, 1935 in Innsbruck, Austria. Mr. Bindlechner moved to the United States in 1963 to Killington, Vermont to be the Assistant Ski School Director and Ski Racing Coach. In 1969 he moved to Sugar Mountain to be the Ski School Director and Director of Public Relations. He moved to Myrtle Beach, S.C. in 1985 to pursue his career as a Real Estate Broker and retired in 2008. He loved spending time outdoors, photographing nature, hiking in the mountains, walking on the beach, gardening, skiing, scuba diving and traveling to his favorite places, Austria and Hawaii.

- I am very sad to report that John Holder lost his Father on October 13 due to a severe heart attack. Gene Llewellyn Holder, was born in Richmond, VA in 1932 and died at the
age of 77. He was a lifetime IBM'er. A visionary by trade as Senior Planner. He was devoted to his family, loved boating, both water and snow skiing, collected BMW’s, a dirt biker, day trader, fisherman, frat boy, and master advice giver. His advice wanted or not will be missed forever. Gene died doing what he loved, trying to get anything old running again, this time it was his Boston Whaler, as he prepared for an outing with his grandsons on a weekend, a voyage he never got to enjoy. By God's grace he did not suffer, although deep inside he must have sensed something was not right with his heart. He unfortunately never troubled anyone else with how he was feeling.

Marketplace

- The ASU Ski Team has their annual Swap Shop in the Price Lake Ballroom at the Student Union on ASU campus. It will be Nov. 9 – 13, 11 AM – 4 PM, except on Friday. On Friday it will last until 7 PM. You should check it out. You can buy and you can sell.

Funny Turn

So, Whose Business is it, Anyhow?

Last season I had been teaching three teenage kids Learn to Ski on the Magic Carpet Slope, when I noticed a little 3 or 4 year old girl in the lift line who was sobbing and crying her eyes out. My class was doing great, laughing, really getting into this glide and slide thing when we got to the carpet for the third trip, so I thought I'd be the Good Samaritan ski instructor and see if I could help the little girl’s mother out. I skied up to them casually, kneeled down and said, “What’s the matter, sweetheart? Don’t you want to learn to ski?” The tears stopped and with absolute distain on her face, the little girl looked up at me and replied, “What do you think, buster!!”

Oh! Well! Sometimes you’re the windshield and sometimes you’re the bug! Maybe next time...

By Gordon Carr

Answer to snowmakers’ problem:

18 hours.

Pictures thanks to:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_summer
http://michaelkhong.com/whatsinseason/graphics/pumpkin.jpg

The First Thanksgiving, oil painting by Ferris. A typical “Indian Summer” day.