

BUYER'S GUIDE

INSIDER INTEL FROM THE PROS THAT KNOW

WINTER 2020



DON'T GUESS!

The truth about what gear works—and what doesn't.



SKIS • BOOTS • BINDINGS • POLES • INSOLES • KID'S GEAR & MORE!

WHEN YOUR BOOTS FIT BETTER, YOU SKI BETTER



AMERICA'S BEST
BOOTFITTERS.COM

POWERED BY MASTERFIT

SHOP PROFILES | SKI BOOT REVIEWS | FITTING ADVICE


MASTERFIT
UNIVERSITY
Certified Bootfitters

NORTHEAST

Connecticut

Wethersfield
The Alpine Haus
(860) 563-2244

Massachusetts

Newton
Boston Ski+Tennis
(617) 964-0820
Wachusett Mtn.
Mountainside
Ski & Sport
(978) 464-2300 x4
Westborough
Boston Ski+Tennis
(508) 616-2024

New Hampshire

Newbury
Bob Skinner's
Ski & Sport
(603) 763-2303
Plymouth
Richelson's Feet First
(800) 371-3447

New York

Ellicottville
Mud Sweat n' Gears
(716) 699-8300
Glenmont/Valatie
Steiner's Sports
(518) 427-2406
New York City
U.S. Orthotic Center
(212) 832-1648
Rochester
Foot Performance Ctr.
(585) 473-5950
Windham Mt.
Boot Lab at
Windham Mt. Sports
(518) 734-4300 x1190

Vermont

Killington
Northern Ski Works
(802) 422-9675
Ludlow/Okemo Mt.
Northern Ski Works
(802) 228-3344
Ludlow/Okemo Mt.
The Boot Pro
(802) 228-2776
Stowe
Inner Bootworks
(802) 253-6929
Stratton/Bromley
Green Mountain
Orthotics Lab
(802) 875-1122
Warren/Sugarbush
Alpine Options
(802) 583-1763
Warren/Sugarbush
Mountainside
Ski Shop
(802) 583-9299

MID-ATLANTIC

New Jersey

Morris Plains
Pelican Sports Center
(973) 267-0964
Westwood
Mount Everest
Ski Shop
(973) 945-0054

VIRGINIA

Leesburg
Pro-Fit Ski & Mtn.
(703) 771-7669

SOUTH

South Carolina

Columbia
Southern Ski
(803) 556-4949

Texas

Austin/Dallas
St. Bernard Sports
(512) 320-1999
(214) 357-9700

MIDWEST

Illinois

Chicago & Barrington
Viking Ski Shop
(773) 276-1222

Michigan

Ann Arbor
Sun and Snow Sports
(734) 663-9515
Plymouth
Sun and Snow Sports
(734) 927-0007

ROCKIES

Arizona

Flagstaff
Humphrey
Summit Ski
(928) 779-1308

Colorado

Aspen/Snowmass
Thotic Shops at
Aspen Sports
(970) 618-2530

Boulder
Boulder Orthotics
(303) 709-6364

Breckenridge
A Racer's Edge
(970) 453-7600

Golden
Boot Mechanics
(303) 916-6498

Pagosa Springs
Ski & Bow Rack
(970) 264-2370

Steamboat
Springs
One Stop Ski Shop
(970) 879-4916

Telluride
Bootdoctors
(970) 728-8954

Vail
Skibootfitting Inc.
at Vail & BC Sports
(802) 379-1014

Idaho

Sandpoint
Alpine Shop
(208) 263-5157

Montana

Big Sky
Grizzly Outfitters
(406) 995-2939

New Mexico

Taos Ski Valley
Boot Doctors
(575) 776-2489

Utah

Park City
Park City
Boot Room
(435) 901-2562

Salt Lake City
Daleboot
(901) 487-3649

Wyoming

Jackson/
Teton Village
Jackson Hole
Sports
(307) 739-2687

WEST

California

Berkeley
California
Ski Co.
(510) 527-6411

Big Bear Lake
Goldsmith's
Boardhouse
(909) 866-2728

Studio City
Ski Net Sports
(818) 505-1294

Oregon

Mt. Bachelor
Gravity Sports
at Mount Bachelor
(541) 382-2442 x2119

Portland
Next Adventure
(503) 233-0706

Washington

Seattle
Alpine Hut
(206) 284-3575

5	ROPE DROP
6	SILVER MTN. RESORT, IDAHO
9	2020 SKIS: RIDING A WAVE OF INNOVATIONS
11	HOW WE TEST SKIS
12	“LIGHTER IS BETTER” <i>and</i> GETTING SKINNY

2019-20
**SKI
REVIEWS**

14	FRONTSIDE SKIS
22	ALL MOUNTAIN EAST SKIS
30	ALL MOUNTAIN WEST SKIS
36	BIG MOUNTAIN SKIS

35	CARRY GEAR LIKE A PRO
42	REVEAL YOUR INNER SELF: BUYING NEW GEAR
44	SKIS DEMYSTIFIED
48	ADVICE FOR FIRST TIMERS: TAKE A LESSON!
50	KEEP YOUR GEAR IN SHAPE
52	TIPS FOR SUCCESS—GEAR FOR YOUR KIDS
54	THE SKI TEST TEAM
57	HOW TO PICK YOUR PERFECT POLE
58	HOW TO GET FIT FOR SKI SEASON

2019-20
**BOOT
REVIEWS**

64	FRONTSIDE BOOTS
66	ALL-MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL BOOTS
83	ALL-MOUNTAIN WALK BOOTS
90	ALL-MOUNTAIN FREERIDE BOOTS
97	BACKCOUNTRY BOOTS

61	2020 BOOTS: LIGHTER. AND RIGHTER!
62	HOW WE TEST AND SCORE BOOTS
69	A CUSTOM BOOT FOR EVERYONE?
72	IS THERE A RIGHT WAY TO BUCKLE YOUR BOOTS?
75	CUSTOM BOOTS STRAIGHT FROM THE FACTORY
79	SOCK IT TO YOU!
82	BINDINGS MADE SIMPLE
85	INSTANT IMPROVEMENT: GET A BETTER INSOLE
93	MIRACLE ELIXIR: CUSTOM BOOTFITTING
98	THE BOOT TEST TEAM

THE MASTERFIT BUYER'S GUIDE TEAM

PUBLISHER / EDITOR IN CHIEF
STEVE COHEN

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR/SKI TEST DIRECTOR
JACKSON HOGEN

BOOT TEST DIRECTOR
MARK ELLING

MANAGING EDITOR
ISEULT DEVLIN

COPY EDITOR
PEGGY SHINN

IT/PRODUCTION MANAGER
BRIAN FRIAS

ART DIRECTOR
SUE YARWORTH

PHOTOGRAPHY
BRIAN ROBB

MORE INFO AVAILABLE AT MASTERFITMEDIA.COM AND AT REALSKIERS.COM

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



realskiers.com

© MASTERFIT ENTERPRISES, INC. 11 MAGNOLIA RD, BRIARCLIFF MANOR, NY 10510 USA.
(914) 944-9038 INFO@MASTERFITINC.COM

Another Buyers Guide?

Actually, we like to think of ourselves as the **other** buyer's guide. One that delivers candid advice from renowned authorities who also conduct America's most respected ski and boot tests. Like it was "back in the day" when the legacy ski magazines reigned.

In the ever-shrinking world of ink and paper, ski magazines have either ceased to exist, or contracted dramatically in size. At the same time, surviving publications substantially cut the resources they devoted to product testing. It's expensive, time consuming and requires a unique expertise to execute. We believed the skiing public deserves better.

Inside the Masterfit Buyer's Guide to skiing, you'll find practical advice not just on what to buy, but how to buy it. For example, we'll walk you through the first five minutes of how your boot purchase should go, show how to easily get your boots on and off, and talk about how you should select a binding.

If you're new to Alpine skiing or haven't skied in a few seasons, you'll find the Masterfit Buyer's Guide to be an invaluable resource. Even the most experienced ski enthusiasts will pick up a tip from one of our 20 advice columns, and all skiers can learn about what's new for 2020 from our ski reviews and boots reviews.

Readers hungry for more detailed analyses of the season's top skis and boots are invited to visit our [Realskiers.com](https://www.realskiers.com) and [Bootfitters.com](https://www.bootfitters.com) websites for more in-depth reviews and commentaries.

WHO WE ARE

What do we know about ski gear? Well, we're the folks who used to run gear test programs and write and edit the country's premier ski publications in their salad days.

Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Steve Cohen was executive editor of Ski Magazine for 15 years. He started the first ever independent on-hill boot test program in 1988. He's now the CEO of Masterfit which also runs the snowsports industry's bootfitter training centers, Masterfit University, and America's Best Bootfitters, the organization of top ski shops that specialize in fitting.

Editorial Director Jackson Hogen has been the voice and owner of Realskiers.com since 2013. He has been conducting ski tests since 1987. He was gear editor at Snow Country magazine at its peak and has worked for several major ski suppliers in executive positions. He ran our ski test and wrote our ski reviews as well as many of the how-to articles in the Buyer's Guide.



Boot Editor Mark Elling is a world-renowned bootfitter and the curriculum director at Masterfit University where he spends most of the fall teaching other bootfitters Masterfit-developed techniques. He coordinated every aspect of the world's only comprehensive boot test and wrote our boot content.

You will see that Art Director Sue Yarworth made our pages look great. What you won't see is the irreplaceable IT and logistical support supplied by Brian Frias. Recognizing all who contributed to the Masterfit Buyer's Guide would require several pages as more than 125 highly-experienced and insightful skiers tested skis and boots for us. You can find rosters of our frontline gear grunts here.

- [OUR SKI TEST TEAM](#)
- [OUR BOOT TEST TEAM](#)

Finally, managing Editor Iseult Devlin was the heroine who pulled all the disparate elements of the Buyer's Guide together and made our content sing. She is the former editor of Skiing Trade News, at one time the industry voice of skiing. It, too, is sadly defunct.

That's an easy segue to why we're coming to you in this digital magazine format. Quite simply, we recognize that it's the way people get intel today. The days of waiting for the Merry Mailman to drop a ski pub in your snail mail box are just about over. We hope you enjoy this portable, always-available Buyer's Guide and our one-click links to deeper dives on the gear we covered. We've built this Buyer's Guide to provide you with as much knowledge as possible when you head to the ski shop to gear up this season. The better suited your gear is for your individual needs, the better you will ski. The better you ski, the more you enjoy skiing. And that's what every skier wants, right?

Please share your thoughts about this Buyer's Guide with us at info@masterfitinc.com. We plan to make this an annual affair and want to know what you'd like to see as we move forward.

Best wishes to all for a glorious ski season.

–*Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Steve Cohen*
–*Editorial Director Jackson Hogen*

BOOT TEST 2019 HEADQUARTERS:

SILVER MOUNTAIN RESORT, KELLOGG, IDAHO

Still The Best Ski Resort You May Never Have Heard Of

We returned to Silver Mountain Resort in Kellogg, Idaho in April 2019 because of its on-hill boot test headquarters where we could access a variety of terrain directly out the test center's doors, great late season conditions and killer base village accommodations. As a bonus there's a fun indoor water park in the base village and great restaurants like the Hill Street Depot Pub or Radio Brewing Company within walking distance.

If you've never heard of Silver Mountain Resort, you've probably also never heard of its previous name, Silverhorn, or its name before that, Jackass Ski Bowl, which opened in 1967. Part of our original reason for moving the test to Silver Mountain two seasons ago was to see how the place is running under the vision of its new owner. In one of those rare ski business success stories, a Silver Mountain pass-holder, Tryg Fortun of Seattle, WA, purchased the area in 2016 with the simple goal of making the Silver Mountain experience better for guests without significantly increasing the cost of a lift ticket or season pass.

Fortun's vision notwithstanding, the ski experience there is already a good one—so long as you like skiing untracked pow, especially in steep, open trees and without crowds. We don't want to make Silver Mountain sound too good, lest we irritate the locals, so we'll end this promotional paragraph with the mention that all the chairs remain old-school fixed grips which we kinda liked for some needed rest, a chance to fill out test details and the fact that the chairs always ran.

In addition to America's Best Bootfitters being excited to return again for another Boot Test do-over, by the end of our test many of our testers and brand partners were already talking about returning to Silver mid-winter during a fat pow cycle! With adult day tickets at \$58 and early-bird pricing for adult season passes at \$429, we think Silver Mountain remains one of the last great ski area bargains in the country.

—Mark Elling



realskiers.com

JOIN
TODAY!



READ THE **FREE** NEWSLETTER THAT INSIDERS TRUST

UNBIASED * UNRIVALED * COMPREHENSIVE * REVIEWS

The heart of Realskiers.com is composed of **ski reviews** – 100's and 100's of ski reviews – presented as part of a comprehensive methodology that helps every skier find the perfect ski.

But ski reviews are only the beginning of all Realskiers.com has to offer. **Every ski and boot brand** reviewed is subjected to a complete analysis, both from in terms of its history and its current collection. **Every ski category** is described in vivid detail, so skiers can navigate the vast, confusing forest that is today's ski market.

Realskiers.com also provides **a complete education** in how every facet of the ski world works, including product manufacture, design, skier safety, instruction, boot fitting, market trends and everything else skiers need to know.



*Oh happy days.
Windham Mt. Sports (NY) master bootfitter Marc Stewart.*

2020 SKIS

Ski Test: *realskier.com*

Ski Test Director: Jackson Hogen

2020 SKIS: Riding a Wave of Innovations

BY JACKSON HOGEN

After hitting the pause button on new product introductions last season (less than 25% of the 225 models examined by us were new), ski makers came out firing in 2020, with a robust 37% refreshment rate. While there are a number of established model family extensions—such as Nordica’s addition of two new Enforcers and Blizzard’s Brahma 82, along with existing model upgrades such as Salomon’s QST series and Atomic’s Redsters—entirely new designs have popped up all over what was already a diverse marketplace.



NEW MODEL COLLECTIONS INCLUDE:

Fischer RC One
Elan Wingman
K2 Mindbender & Mindbender Alliance
Kästle FX & FX W
Liberty evolv
Line Vision
Rossignol React & Nova
Salomon S/Force

And this list doesn’t include Völkl’s Titanal Frame, introduced just last year in the M5 Mantra and applied this year to two of the best new models to debut in 2020, the Kendo 88 and Deacon 84. The wave of new models and fresh designs signifies there’s still a viable, hotly competitive market that demands innovation as the price of admission.

The abundance of quality skis available this season is both encouraging and daunting. With so many succulent items on an oceanic menu of options, how is a skier to find his or her perfect pair of boards? The answer is simple: read our reviews and selection advice. Then drop by our partner site, [Realskiers.com](https://realskiers.com), where you’ll find an even more detailed methodology that will guide you to your perfect skiing companion.

realskiers.com



THE PERFECT EQUATION



NEXO LYT RS 130
98mm



NEXO LYT 130
100mm



EDGE LYT 130
102mm

#LYTDONERIGHT

FOR YEARS, NARROW BOOTS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED HIGH PERFORMANCE, WHILE WIDE BOOTS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED LOW PERFORMANCE. WHY? EXPERTS CAN HAVE WIDE FEET AND BEGINNERS CAN HAVE NARROW FEET. OR VICE VERSA. OR SOMETHING IN-BETWEEN. WE AT HEAD HAVE THE ANSWER: LYT TECH, OUR COMPLETE FAMILY OF MEN'S AND WOMEN'S LIGHTWEIGHT BOOTS WITH PERFORMANCE TARGETED TO ALL ABILITIES AND ALL FOOT SHAPES.



LYTTECH

HEAD[®]



HOW WE TEST SKIS

Our test results are based on hundreds of scores and comments submitted by the owners, managers and employees of 20 [Realskiers.com](https://www.realskiers.com) Test Shops scattered all across America. Each ski is rated for 10 performance criteria that together capture a complete picture of its capabilities. The letter grade shown with each review represents the total of all average scores for all criteria. Within each category the models are listed in descending order of total score.

TEST KEY

Brand Model Name
Manufacturer and ski model

128/84/112 - 16.3M @ 176CM
Width at tip/midbody/tail—Turn radius in meters at sample size

L: 152, 160, 168, 176, 184
Lengths available



To read more 2020 ski reviews and learn more about the ski market in general, please visit

realskiers.com



“Lighter is Better” Maintains Momentum

Now that carbon is so inexpensive that it can serve as the principal structural element in an entry-level ski, “lightweight” has become the most commonly used adjective in the brochure copy lexicon. For some brands, like Atomic and Head, lightweight is a top-of-mind preoccupation. Practically everybody’s new recreational 2020 models reference lighter weight as a benefit. (Lightweight will matter to the race community, as well, should it ever prove to be faster.)

One brand swimming against this tide is Liberty, which—oh, rich with irony—built its business around lightweight, bamboo-and-carbon constructions. Liberty added a third rib of aluminum to its V Series, and its latest design, *evolv*, uses a two-rib version of its Vertical Metal Technology.

Carbon neutral this year’s new skis aren’t!

Getting Skinny

Okay, “skinny” is overstating the case, but skis are gradually getting slimmer. Women have already learned what most men are only now realizing: that an All-Mountain East model (85mm-94mm underfoot) makes a superb one-ski quiver.

Fat skis are a poor tool when there’s no new snow and most skiers aren’t lucky enough to get a lot of freshies.

That may explain why the Big Mountain and Powder categories are fairly stagnant, while the All-Mountain East genre is loaded with quality options for men and women up and down the price ladder.

Ski widths are slimming down. Again.



LX

LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE

All-new LX collection combines Lange's legendary precision with a relaxed and luxurious all-mountain fit. The more accommodating 102mm width expands our "Choose Your Fit" concept to offer reduced foot compression for optimized all-day comfort no matter your foot shape.



LANGE
BE ONE WITH YOUR BOOTS



The Little Black Dress of skis. Unless you own a helicopter or snowcat, you need a frontside ski in your quiver.

Frontside Skis

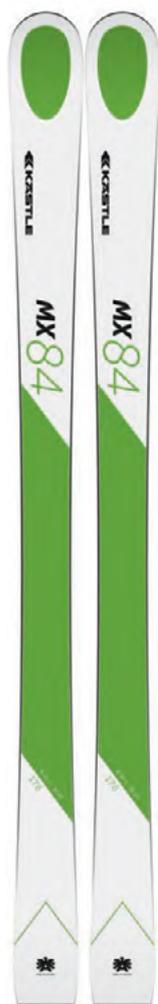
The Frontside category (74-84mm underfoot) spans the entire spectrum of skier abilities. The groomed frontside of the mountain is where everyone begins, so the genre includes entry-level skis as well as rail-stiff carving tools meant for highly polished experts. For the novice, almost any ski will do, so the focus of these reviews is on skis made for skilled skiers who are looking for specific properties. As a rule, the men's models are stiffer and geared higher than those made specifically for women. In other words, for women, a Frontside ski is often a stepping-stone, while for men it tends to be a destination. Experts often have a Frontside ski in their quiver for days when groomed runs are the only game in town.

MEN'S FRONTSIDE SKIS

VÖLKL **DEACON 84**

132/84/115 15.8m @ 172cm
L: 162,167,172,177,182 \$1,150

Last year Völkl resurrected its beloved Mantra by concocting a new technology called Titanal Frame; this season, Völkl applies the Titanal Frame touch to its Frontside family. The new pater familias is the Deacon 84, and like the M5 Mantra, it represents a return to traditional Völkl values. Compared to the RTM 84 it replaces, the Deacon 84 has more edge-gripping power, more energy out of the turn and an overall bigger performance envelope. It's not just better than its predecessor; it out-scored the entire Frontside field in the primordial technical criteria of early turn entry and short-radius turns, as well as earning the top Finesse score in category—not bad for what is inherently a power ski. What is it about the Deacon 84 that allows it to be all skis to all (Frontside) skiers? It's the alluring combination of a fiberglass torsion box and tactically placed Titanal parts that nullify shock without stifling the glass structure's naturally springy nature. Its exceptional rebound—it will lift you right off the snow if you punch it—derives from the Deacon 84's 3D Glass: top and bottom glass laminates that come together above the sidewall to create a torsion box. The three-part Titanal Frame anchors the forebody and tail while allowing the center to react to pressure, so the glass can compress and load up energy for the turn transition.



KÄSTLE **MX84**

128/84/112 16.3m @ 176cm
L: 152,160,168,176,184 \$1,299

Did you ever have a ski dream where everything was perfect? You can't tell if your skis are an extension of your being or visa versa. You flow from turn to turn expending all the energy of a passenger lounging on a high-speed train. The scenery blurs as your speed climbs steadily until you reach a zone where time warps, aging is reversed, and still, you're totally connected to the snow by forces that feel at once magnetic, emotional, and gravitational. I can't guarantee that you'll arrive at this transcendental state the first time you step into a Kästle MX84, but you will if you keep trying. For if you're not a beautiful skier before you encounter an MX84, in time, it will make you one. This claim probably sounds optimistic, if not delusional, yet several testers claim that the MX84 essentially coached them into making better turns. Rather than dismiss it as New Age hogwash, I suggest you reconsider the hypothesis that a great ski invites great skiing.



LIBERTY **V76**

126/76/106 15m @ 179cm
L: 165,172,179 \$850

The V76 imparts a thrilling cocktail of sensations that don't normally mix. It's inherently both lively and damp, urgently on and off a steeply angled edge or content to ride a relaxed, languid arc. Best of all, it's instantly accessible; you don't need to adapt to it because it's already one move ahead, adapting to you. For this reason it's a brilliant re-entry vehicle for skiers who have been out of the sport for over a decade and want to try something that is both new and yet familiar. The unique construction that allows the V76 to simultaneously maintain world-class snow contact and sensuous snow feel is Vertical Metal Technology (VMT). VMT consists of vertical aluminum struts that run tip to tail. When it was introduced last season, the V76 had two such struts; for 2020, Liberty has added a third to boost its effectiveness on hard snow. As you might imagine, a longitudinal vertical strut will resist any force that tries to bend it, which is how the V76 is able to achieve such unshakeable edge grip.



ELAN WINGMAN 82 CTI

129/82/112 15.5m @ 178cm
L: 160,166,172,178,184 \$750

The new Wingman 82 CTi from Elan demonstrates the proposition that the best way to imbue a Frontside ski with greater terrain versatility is to begin with an off-trail template. The Wingman series borrows its structure from Elan's Ripstick collection, which uses twin 3mm carbon rods near the base to lend strength, dampening and rebound to its poplar and Paulownia core. To give the ski more poise on piste, Elan squared up and flattened out the tail and added a band of Titanal to the ski's mid-section for good measure. That the Wingman 82 CTi would excel at twin-track carving was foreordained by its TruLine Amphibio design, an Elan staple. Amphibio is the umbrella term for an asymmetric sidecut that puts a longer effective edge on the inside of the ski and a shorter camber zone along the outside edge. In other words, the ski is rockered along the longitudinal axis. This allows the skis to always remain in sync as they roll from one inside edge to the other. TruLine amplifies the Amphibio offset by concentrating more glass over the inside edge so the skier's force is directed where it's needed most.



BLIZZARD BRAHMA 82

121/82/105 19m @ 180cm
L: 166,173,180,187 \$720

This ski shouldn't be here. Skis with a patently off-piste baseline have no business infiltrating the ranks of Frontside models, by definition the domain of deep sidecuts and highly arched camber lines. How does a ski whose Flipcore baseline is practically already bowing manage to mingle with the second cousins of true race skis? If a sitcom producer cast a story about the Frontside category, all the proper club members would be draped in Armani, while the brash Brahma 82 would crash the party in flip-flops, jams and a tattered tee. In short, the Brahma 82 is here because it's so damn easy and fun to ski. It's one of a tiny minority of Frontside skis with a higher Finesse score than Power score. Of course, it's ease of use wouldn't mean squat if it couldn't hold on hard snow, but the Brahma 82 grips ferociously because beneath its mellow exterior beats the heart of a lion. Two end-to-end sheets of Titanal are sandwiched with layers of multi-directional fiberglass around a poplar and beech core. Throw in a dab of carbon in the tip to keep the swing-weight down and a dampening platform underfoot, and you have many of the same components that power the rest of the genre's best skis.

VÖLKL DEACON 80

132/84/115 15.8m @ 172cm
L: 162,167,172,177,182 \$1,065

There's a trail of clues that would lead a ski behavioral therapist to believe that the new Völkl Deacon 80 is the inferior in the relationship with its bigger brother, the Deacon 84. For starters, there's its price, which works out to \$100 less at retail. Price is usually an indicator of the cost of goods, and sure enough the Deacon 80 uses glass for its three-piece top laminate instead of the Titanal in the 84. And the Deacon 80 is, of course, narrower, which among carving skis can sometime indicate that it's geared slightly lower. While these indicators are all true enough, the reality on snow is that the Deacon 80 is definitely in its brother's league, but it offers a different bundle of sensations. It's more of a lateral step on the product quality ladder, not down. It uses the same structure as the 84's Titanal Frame, with glass in lieu of metal. The 80 copies the 3D.Ridge and 3D.Glass construction of the 84, it has exactly the same size splits (ranging from 162cm to 182cm) and while it's slimmer, it's thinner by the same 4mm everywhere, so its comparable to the 84's.



NORDICA DOBERMANN SPITFIRE 80 RB

130/80/110 16m @ 174cm
L: 162,168,174,180 \$800

When Nordica was finding its feet as a ski brand, it earned its first critical acclaim and commercial foothold with its collection of carving skis. In the current market, the runaway success of Nordica's Enforcer series has pushed its Frontside Spitfire models into the shadows, an unfortunate byproduct of Nordica's ascendance into the first rank of ski makers. No one ski can change skiers' infatuation with wide, off-trail models, but the Dobermann Spitfire 80 RB would gladly volunteer for the job. Powerful and playful in nearly equal measures, it's such a confidence-inspiring platform that you'll want to take it with you everywhere you go. "Easy turning and forgiving," notes Bobo's Theron Lee. "Very user friendly, drifts well but holds an edge at higher edge angles. Feels like a western Frontside ski, able to handle soft snow as well as hard. Good energy feedback but not overly damp. Better at speed, low response at slower speeds. Suitable for intermediates up to and including Frontside speed addicts."





TAKE A RUN *with Us!*



Receive a **FREE** one-year digital subscription to *Skiing History* magazine

Learn about the history of ski resorts, equipment, technique and the sport's pioneers, innovators and champions around the world.

SIGN UP TODAY TO READ **SIX BIMONTHLY ISSUES ONLINE, FREE.**

- > Go to www.skiinghistory.org/join
- > Scroll down to Digital Membership
- > Select 1 Year-Digital Only, then Add to Cart
- > Enter Coupon Code **MFU17**
- > Hit "checkout" and set up your account
- > Submit and that's it!
- > **Value: \$29. Cost to you? Zero!**



802.366.1158 | www.skiinghistory.org

ISHA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to preserve skiing history and raise awareness of the sport's heritage.
Image courtesy Hans Truöl Archives / antiqueskishop.com

A new era begins for the Panterra, with its legendary fit now integrated in a slimmer, lighter, more attractive package. Keeping the cushy interior of the boot consistent, on the shell we've added **Power Cage** construction with **3D Grip Texture** to improve power transmission, and a walk mode with a 50° range of motion for comfort around the resort. All that, and the Panterra is the first complete series from Dalbello to be delivered with **GripWalk®** soles pre-installed, so walking in your boots is truly effortless.

**GRIP
WALK**

**MADE IN
ITALY**

SINCE
1974

ALL NEW
PANTERRA 130 ID GW

**LEGENDARY FIT.
BRAND NEW PRODUCT.**



DALBELLO

DALBELLOSPORTS.COM

[#REALITALIANBOOTS](https://twitter.com/REALITALIANBOOTS)

HEAD **SUPERSHAPE I.TITAN**

137/80/117 14.1m @ 170cm
L: 156,163,170,177 \$1,200

Head wasn't the first ski manufacturer to market a carving ski, but it was the first major brand to not only embrace the Carving concept but to adopt it as the cohering principle behind every ski it made. This primordial dedication to the art of creating a continuous track has reached its purest expression in Head's Supershape series, where the i.Titan is the widest (80mm waist) among peers. Despite its relatively broad beam, the i.Titan feels as quick to the edge as any 75mm stick on the slopes. It feels more agile than it measures for three main reasons. First, there's its shape, with a 57mm drop between the tip and the waist, so as soon as it's tipped, it's carving on a multi-radius, continuous edge. Second, its front rocker is so shallow it does nothing to inhibit early turn entry. And third, the piezoelectric fibers in its tail stiffen up the rear-body when subjected to vibrations that racing across hard snow engenders.



SALOMON **S/FORCE BOLD**

132/84/116 16m @ 177cm
L: 170,177,184 \$1,200

The S/Force Bold is an unapologetic Frontside carver. If you want to find out how deep a new snowfall is, take a run on the S/Force Bold and you're almost certain to find the bottom. Any ski this stable can make its way through off-trail porridge, but it will send out the occasional reminder that you're running against its grain. The reason: the S/Force Bold is laden with dampening agents and associated avoirdupois to maximize edging power and stability on hard snow, which is its happy place. When it's running fast and loose in its element, the S/Force Bold is "damp, stable, with very strong edge hold," says Bobo's Pat Parraquirre, identifying its dominant traits. "If you like speed and grip—this ski is for you! Great high-speed carver."



ATOMIC **REDSTER X9 WB**

125.5/75/109.5 13.5m @ 168cm
L: 152,160,168,176 \$1,200

Atomic's entries in the Frontside genre come from the two different categories that abut it: the new Vantage 79 Ti and 82 Ti import their Prolite chassis from the wider world of All-Mountain models, while the latest Redster, the X9 WB, is a direct descendant of the Redster X9, a tight-radius Technical ski. Like brothers that don't get along, they're both from the same family but they could not be more different. The "WB" in this Redster's name stands for Wide Body, but by today's standards its 75mm waist looks painfully corseted. Its sidecut radius is only 13.5m in a 168cm, roughly the dimensions of a World Cup slalom ski. If the pilot tilts it to a high edge angle, it will tuck into a short-radius turn with the eagerness of a cutting horse cornering a calf. (Note that it earns a 9.0 for short-radius turns, one of the best scores in the category for this bellwether feature.) As long as it isn't subjected to FIS-level speeds, its fully cambered baseline stays plastered to the snow. If the pilot gives it a little poke in the tail just for grins, it responds with a jolt of energy that carries you weightlessly into the next turn.





WOMEN'S FRONTSIDE SKIS

BLIZZARD BLACK PEARL 78

115/78/100 15m @ 156cm

L: 151,156,163,170 \$480

The position of the Black Pearl 78 in our review over the last two seasons has to be the most anomalous in the entire test. The Frontside category is supposed to be the province of dedicated carvers—skis with extravagant sidecuts, shock-sucking interfaces, and elevated binding systems. How did this flat, Plain Jane with a shallow, off-trail shape and double-rockered baseline not only end up in this den of carvers, but leading it in Power points? One possible answer is the Black Pearl 78 actually is the best carving tool in the Frontside drawer. Its test scores, which admittedly can be misleading, lead the large field in early turn entry, continuous, accurate carving and short-radius turns. That's a tough trifecta to simply dismiss as anecdotal. Hell, all scores are anecdotal, but we wouldn't use them if they didn't tend to accurately reflect behavior. One stat we don't capture—because it doesn't exist—is holding power per ounce, or grip per gram. The 1350g Black Pearl 78 would lap the field. Its relatively tiny, 78mm waist helps it move nimbly edge to edge, whether it's decorating groomers with twin rail tracks or threading through tortuous troughs. The skinniest Pearl in Blizzard's oyster bed stands out for its ease and accessibility.



BLIZZARD BLACK PEARL 82

121/82/105 17m @ 173cm

L: 152,159,166,173 \$600

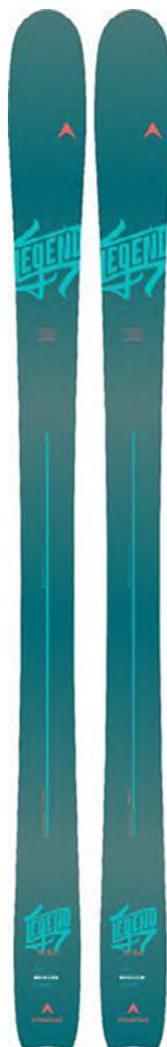
At a scant 4mm wider in the waist than the Black Pearl 78, the new 82 shares a lot of its attributes, including a somewhat surprising preference for the consistency of groomed runs over the anything-goes conditions encountered off-trail. Perry Schaffner—like her dad Jim, an archetype of racing power and efficiency—filed this report after a couple of turns on the dance floor with the Black Pearl 82: "The Blizzard Black Pearl in a 173cm length was really great on freshly groomed snow. I can make both large- and short-radius turns very easily and carve while carrying good speed if I want it, but I also have the ability to slow myself down. When I skied off the groomed run into some of the skied-out powder from yesterday, it felt like it didn't perform quite as well, as I got bucked around a bit. So I would definitely say you could go in all conditions, but it's probably better to stick towards groom surfaces, especially with the longer length I skied." Bear in mind that Perry can load the Black Pearl 82 just looking at it, and the pace at which she felt "bucked around a bit" would win a skiercross. For skiers who don't have Perry's power, the Black Pearl 82 feels just right.

DYNASTAR LEGEND W 84

123/84/106 14m @ 163cm

L: 149,156,163,170 \$600

The Dynastar Legend W 84's position at the top of our panel's favorite Frontside Finesse skis of 2020 illustrates an interesting phenomenon that sometimes occurs when a brand uses the same ski for both men and women, particularly when said ski doesn't use Titanal in its stock recipe. The women's skis garner higher points than the men's, as has been the case the last couple of years with Dynastar. If you're familiar with Dynastar's recent history, then you know the Cham series was conceived as a freeride, off-trail family. Given its bloodlines, the Legend W 84 has no trepidation about traveling off-trail, where it's better at drift across broken snow than most in the genre. When it's confined to corduroy quarters, its user-friendly baseline allows it to pivot or carve on command, and its tidy turn radius (12m @ 156cm) creates a lovely short arc. As one tester noted last spring, it's "easy to carve medium radius turns yet also easy (and fun) to make short turns."

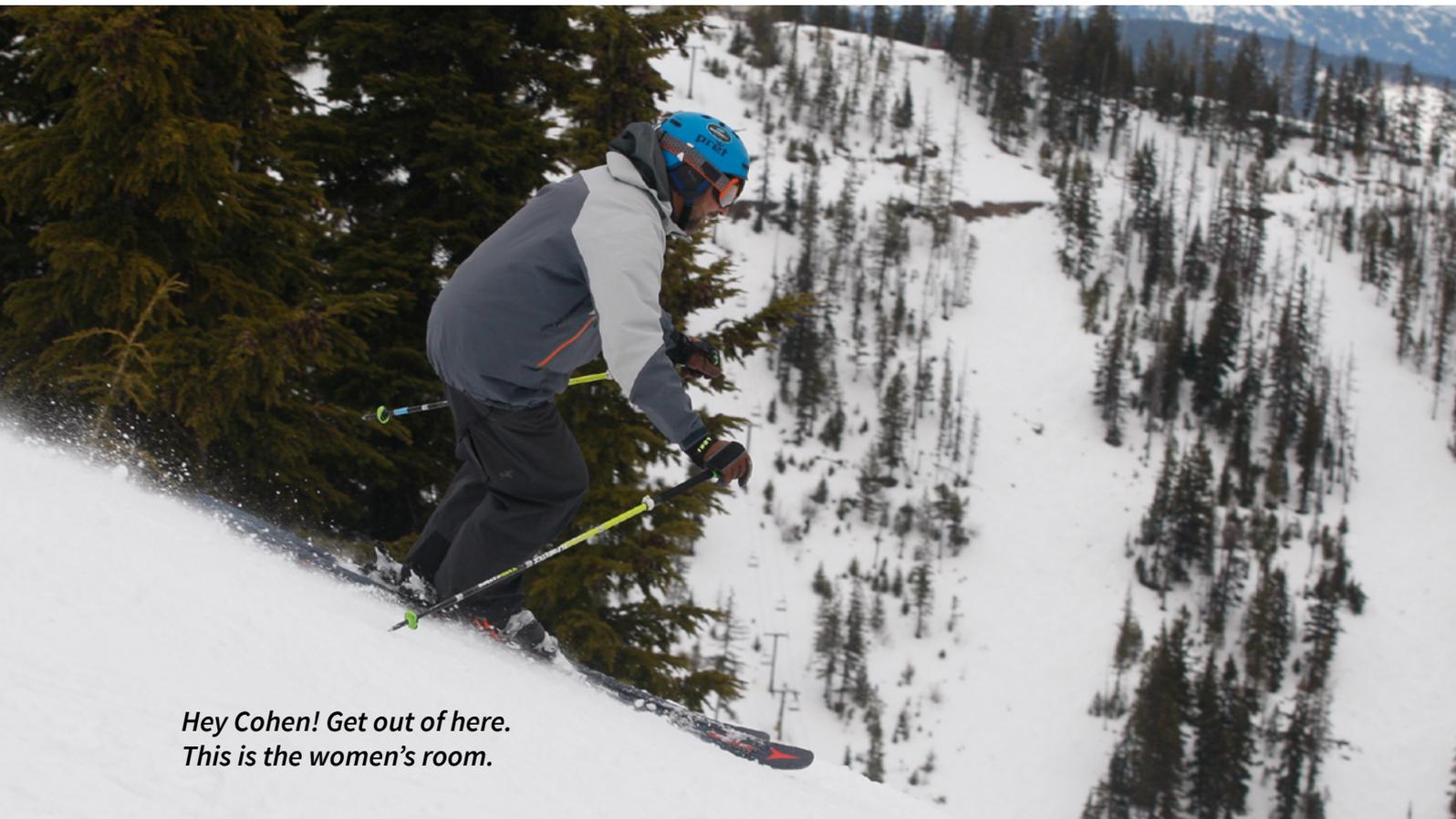


LINE PANDORA 84**122/84/110 13.0m @ 173cm****L: 151,158,165 \$500**

In keeping with the inverted world of women's Frontside skis, where true carvers are nearly extinct and off-trail baselines are increasingly the norm, the Line Pandora 84 has its scores backwards. It's no more a Power ski than Taylor Swift is a power lifter; it's a soft, buttery, compliant little cupcake of a ski that holds a nice edge all along the camber zone in its modestly rockered baseline. When one considers Line's youthful demographic and the Pandora 84's below-market price, it becomes clear just who this ultralight all-terrain ski is for: Miss Teen America, that's who. It's not for the ex-racer or the off-piste adventurer, but the girl next door who just wants to have fun. Line will turn 25 this year, yet it's never lost touch with the youth market from which it draws its inspiration and its energy.

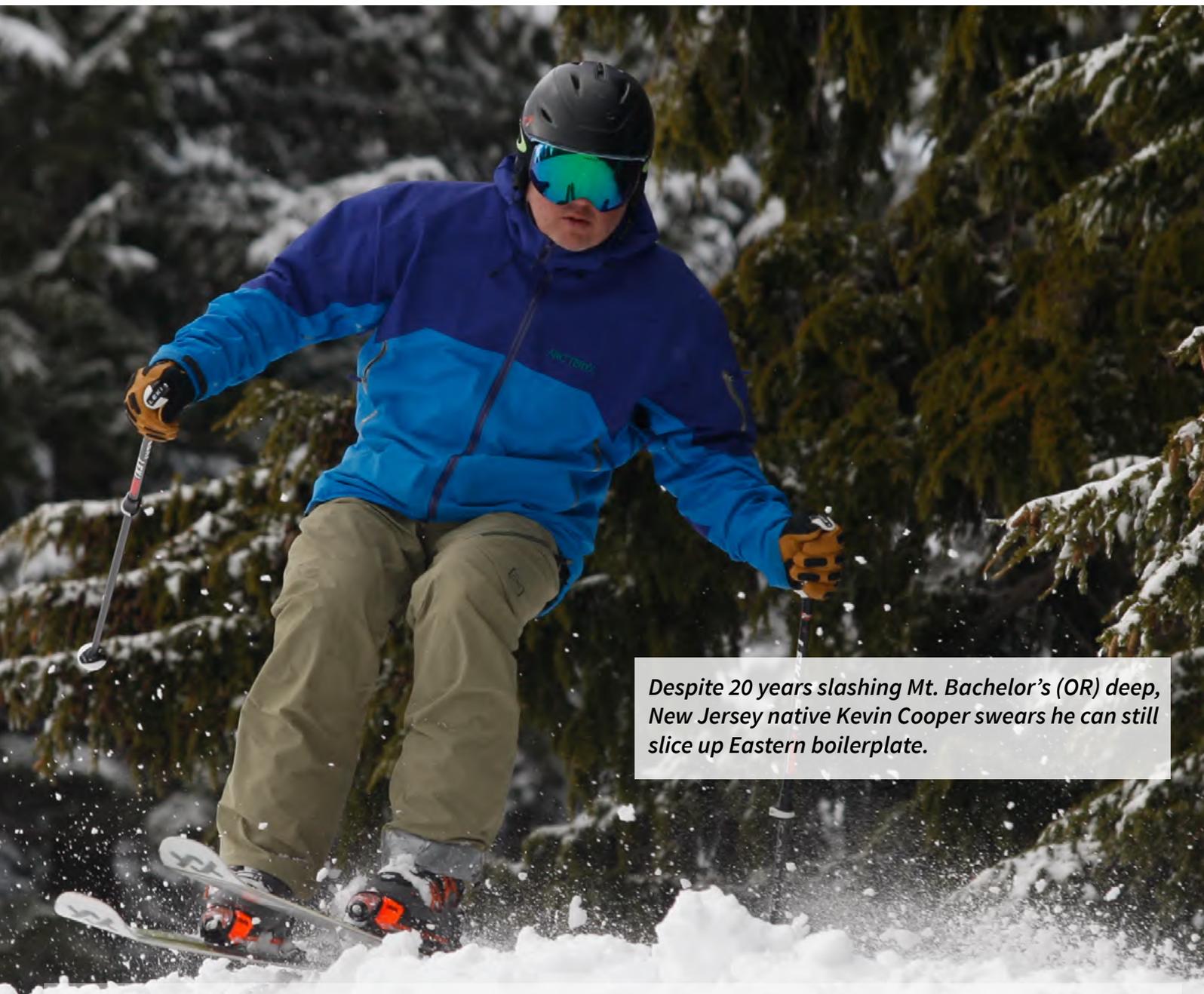
**VÖLKL YUMI****123/84/104 15.8m @ 161cm****L: 147,154,161,168 \$650**

The Völkl Yumi is what we in the retail trade refer to a "step-up" ski. It isn't a top-of-the-line charger, but neither is it as frail as fettuccine, like so many entry-level package skis. It's called a step-up ski because it's bound to be an improvement over whatever is serving this skier at the moment, be a rental ski, a hand-me-down, a buying mistake or something fished out of a bargain bin at a ski swap. As for where this first-new-ski buyer is stepping to, the Yumi leaves that entirely up to her. Equipped with an all-wood core and partial topsheet of Titanal, the Yumi has the intestinal fortitude to cope with life on groomers, where its gift for short-radius turns encourages intermediates to get their act together. At 84mm underfoot, the Yumi is fat for a Frontside ski, so it can manage its business in a foot of fluff without becoming verklempt.



*Hey Cohen! Get out of here.
This is the women's room.*

All Mountain East Skis



Despite 20 years slashing Mt. Bachelor's (OR) deep, New Jersey native Kevin Cooper swears he can still slice up Eastern boilerplate.

The All-Mountain East genre, the narrower (85mm-94mm) of the two all-mountain categories, is a mix of the narrowest off-trail models and the widest on-trail skis. In keeping with the current fashion for all things off-trail, most AME models are extensions of a family with its roots in a Big Mountain (powder ski) archetype. They remain excellent on-trail skis because they're still skinny enough to get on edge easily. Because they travel so readily all over the mountain, AME skis make the ideal one-ski quiver. This is especially true for women, who have made this genre by far the most popular in the U.S. for female skiers, from first-ski buyers to lifelong participants. Men should pay heed, for a lot of guys jumped on super-fat skis when they were all the rage and their skiing suffered for it. A switch to an All-Mountain East ski will get them back on track.

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN EAST SKIS



VÖLKL KENDO 88

129/88/111 18.6m @ 177cm
L: 163,170,177,184 \$775

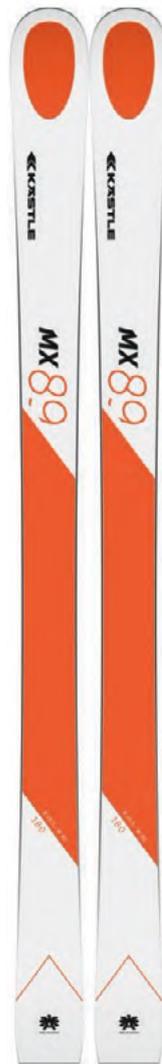
Unless you were on the moon last year, you know the Völkl M5 Mantra and its Titanal Frame design had a wildly successful debut. What's all this Mantra mention got to do with the new Kendo 88? The new kid has finally stepped out of its sibling's shadow. In the most hotly contested category, All-Mountain East, that's loaded with star products, the Kendo 88 earned the highest score for every Power attribute as well as for Finesse/Power balance, the catchall criterion for overall excellence. The single most important quality an all-mountain ski can possess is total indifference to terrain selection. On this score, the Kendo 88 has no peer. It transitions from wind-affected crud to crisp corduroy as if those two conditions were the same. On hard snow, it's so quick to the edge the skier can't even tell it's rockered, and it's so stable in crud you can relax, drop the reins and let the boys run. Jim Schaffner of Start Haus knew the new Kendo 88 was a winner from the first turn. "Let me begin by saying, this ski is going to end up being a category killer. A very well-balanced ski, easy to stay centered on and get pressure to the tip. A quick, lively ski that really held in the turn."



NORDICA ENFORCER 88

122/88/110 17.5m @ 186cm
L: 165,172,179,186 \$750

When Nordica introduced the original Enforcer five years ago, it already had a 100mm-underfoot model in its line, the NRGy 100, and the more acutely rockered Enforcer could have been misconstrued as redundant. Yet the Enforcer immediately earned a name for itself as a new breed of all-terrain ski that disguised a fully cambered baseline—and all the power it entails—between rockered extremities. As the Enforcer family grew, first wider, then skinnier, the arrival of an Enforcer 88 became inevitable. Now that the long and winding road between the first Enforcer and the last has reached its destination, one can only wonder, what took them so long? This ski is a marvel, stable enough to navigate scoured wind crust yet ready to pounce turn to turn on hardpack with barely a transition between the two contrary conditions. Its score for short-radius turns is off the charts, yet it can lay into a big-bellied arc as comfortably as a cat curling up on a sofa.



KÄSTLE MX89

129/89/113 17m @ 172cm
L: 156,164,172,180,188 \$1,299

There's stability, then there's MX89 stability. Nothing fazes it. Send it through crud and it bashes every sodden clump of set-up snow out of its way. Toss it on ice and it acts right at home, begging its pilot to tip it further on edge and trust it to hold a honking arc. If it has a speed limit, chances are you'll never find it. The MX89 exceeds expectations because it flies in the face of current fashion. It is not worried about its weight. Its camber line runs uninterrupted from shovel to tail, as does its sidecut. Its core is made from silver fir and beech, not cork, Koroyd or Paulownia. The top and bottom sheets of Titanal are a stout 0.5mm thick and are paired with sheets of 00/900 fiberglass weave. Aside from its shock-damping Hollowtech tip, its construction couldn't be more traditional and its merits couldn't be more evident once you put it all in motion.



NEW!

ELAN WINGMAN 86 CTI

130/86/115 16.5m @ 178cm
L: 160,166,172,178,184 \$800

Wingman is a new series from Elan that's a hybrid of the Slovenian brand's Frontside Amphibio collection and its off-trail Ripstick series. This formula makes the Wingman 86 CTi behave like a carving ski with a penchant for off-piste forays. It owes its hallmark tenacious edge grip—stunningly evident in all conditions—to a variety of interrelated factors. First, its relatively deep sidecut (16.5m @ 178cm) combines with its asymmetric shape to create early edge contact that never lets go. Second, the rear-body and tail are also biased to the inside edge, so instead of wimping out at turn finish as so many rockered tails do, this Wingman drives through the arc on a solid platform. Third, Elan loads up the inside edge with more material so force concentrates there, improving stability. Finally, a brace of end-to-end carbon rods work in harmony with a sheet of Titanal to suck up shock and convert it into rebound energy that keeps the Wingman motoring even when the snow gets clumpy.



NEW!

LIBERTY V92

133/92/120 17.5m @ 179cm
L: 172,179,186 \$950

Last season represented a sort of coming out party for Liberty, a small brand that had carved out a niche as a bamboo-and-carbon specialist with a knack for making lightweight wide-bodies. Then they figured out how to industrialize the integration of an aluminum strut into their wheelhouse construction, trimmed down their usual silhouette to something more svelte, and boom, they elevated to a whole new level of performance. After having skied two generations of Vertical Metal Technology models from Liberty, two global qualities standout. One, every sinew of the ski seems dedicated to maintaining snow contact. If the modestly rockered tip deflects upward for a microsecond, the struts manage the moment so the edge underfoot is never perturbed. Two, all the VMT models require zero adaptation on the part of the pilot. Don't worry about loading the tip or exaggerating edge angles. Just ski from a centered stance with whatever means of angulation floats your boat. The V92 will hold an edge no matter how you stand on it. Because the V92 is so open-minded, it's an ideal match for someone who hasn't bought a new ski in ages, wants the benefits of new technology, but doesn't want to re-learn the sport.



NEW!

SALOMON QST 92

128/92/111 18m @177cm
L: 153,161,169,177,185 \$675

Let the record show that no ski made as giant a leap forward in 2020 as the Salomon QST 92. In its two earlier incarnations, it barely met our recommended minimum standards, barely hanging on the tail end of the Finesse ski standings. Now it resides at the top, and the result is no fluke. The new QST has more of everything you want—edging power on-trail, a better shape for off-trail, a more solid platform—and less of what you don't want (tip chatter, indifferent grip, overall looseness). Salomon pulled off this coup by reconfiguring how it used its primary components: flax, basalt and, of course, carbon. The basalt and carbon are now woven together in an end-to-end matrix, while the flax gets its own mat directly underfoot. An all-poplar core is reinforced by a patch of Titanal in the mid-section and finished with new cork inserts in the tip and tail.

HEAD KORE 93

133/93/115 16.4m @ 180cm
L: 153,162,171,180,189 \$750

Last year we anointed the Head Kore 93 as our All-Mountain East Ski of the Year, a title it richly deserved. In the Era of Lighter is Better, almost all mainstream brands have sought a variety of ways to strip away any excess fat in their designs. When Head acquired a license to use Graphene in sporting equipment, the Austrian brand possessed a material advantage in the race to make the lightest ski that didn't suck. The reason the market hasn't been awash in lightweight skis for years is because mass is part of what makes a ski damp, or able to absorb vibration. Lighter weight formulae have been tried for decades, always with the lamentable downside that they couldn't hold an edge any better than Florence Foster Jenkins could hold a note. Head spent several years working with Graphene before it applied the superlight material—carbon in a matrix one-atom thick—to its previously woeful collection of fat skis. And lo and behold, it turned out that Head finally, as it trumpets in its slogan, got light right. Wisely, it didn't try to make the lightest ski possible with its miracle matrix, or the Kore 93 wouldn't stand up to the rigors of battering through set-up crud fields. But the Kore 93 is nonetheless noticeably lighter than 80% of its peers, which contributes to its elite Finesse score.



NORDICA ENFORCER 93

126/93/114 18.5m @ 185cm
L: 169,177,185,193 \$750

The Nordica Enforcer 93 is only three years old, and already it's a legend. It debuted to instant acclaim and has since maintained its position among the top models in this most competitive of categories. It continues to earn accolades for one all-important reason: the Enforcer 93 takes the term "all-terrain" very much to heart. The quintessential characteristic of any great all-mountain ski is the ability to transition from one terrain extreme to another and always feel like it's the right ski for the job. Jim Schaffner filed this report after taking the Enforcer 93 through mixed conditions at Snow Basin, Utah. "Conditions: about 8 inches of slightly compact powder. A super well-balanced ski, so it's really easy to find home base in terms of positioning." ... "Super predictable and not in a negative way," Schaffner continues. "Very good at transitioning from powder to cut-up to previously groomed, back into the powder, so I think this ski remains fairly high up in the category. A great all-rounder that worked really well for today's conditions."



BLIZZARD BRAHMA 88

127/88/111 17m @ 180cm
L: 166,173,180,187 \$780

The only change to the Blizzard Brahma for 2020 is the addition of "88" to its moniker, the better to distinguish it from its new little brother, the Brahma 82. As surface area roughly equates to flotation and ease of operation in irregular, off-trail conditions, the Brahma 88 remains the better choice as a one-ski quiver. While we are encouraged by the trend to narrower skis, there's no doubt that from the perspective of terrain versatility, a wider ski offers more benefits than liabilities. The Brahma 88 has been among the top models in the All-Mountain East genre since its debut. The reasons for its sustained popularity are several, beginning with its Flipcore construction. To give you an idea of how different Flipcore construction is, when you get a Flipcore ski like the Brahma too hot when ironing on wax, the ski will try to revert to its originally molded position, revealing that its inherent camber is upside down. (BTW, don't do this, please.) Primary among Flipcore's virtues is that there is no stress where the relatively mild tip and tail rocker connects with the middle of the ski; when the ski is tipped and pressured, the full length of the ski comes into play. An added benefit is that the ski follows terrain brilliantly, a big bonus in crud bumps. If the skier wants a little more oomph out of the turn, dual multi-directional fiberglass laminates provide energy on demand.



FISCHER RC ONE 86 GT

130/86/116 17m @ 175cm
L: 161,168,175,182 \$899.99

To grok the essence of the new Fischer RC One 86 GT, think of it as a carving ski with wanderlust. As an Austrian brand, Fischer's collective mind rarely meanders far from the racecourse, so it's natural that the RC One 86 GT is a carving machine first and an off-trail implement second. Not that there's anything wrong with that. All a ski this wide really needs to navigate most off-trail conditions is a dash of tip rocker, aka, early rise. The tip-off that Fischer envisions the RC One 86 GT in Frontside environs is that it's the head of a mostly Frontside family (75mm-84mm underfoot). Furthermore, its construction is all about maintaining snow connection, a classic Frontside obsession. The tip and tail are outfitted with Bafatex®, a synthetic compound meant to muffle shock and keep every cm of the 86 GT's fully cambered baseline plastered on the snow. Not to mention 0.8mm's of shaped Titanal to further cow hard snow into silence.



Big smiles. Mikey likes these boards!



WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN EAST SKIS

BLIZZARD BLACK PEARL 88

126/88/110 16m @ 159cm
L: 145,152,159,166,173 \$720

The Blizzard Black Pearl 88 is the Michaela Shiffrin of the U.S. ski market: now in its fourth year of dominance, it's crushing the women's field and setting sales records that leave all the men's models in the dust, too. Like a cartoon snowball rolling downhill, its sales success grows each season as a new legion of adherents joins the chorus of praise, spreading the gospel in countless one-on-one chairlift chats. If you break down the dynamics of a ski sale, you'll discover how the Black Pearl 88 edges out the competition. Every sale hinges on a description of a skier's current status and her wish list of what she wants the new ski to be able to do for her. It almost doesn't matter how a recreational skier assesses her ability or her desires, the Black Pearl 88 will end up on the very short list of most desirable alternatives. The Pearl 88 can be legitimately recommended to any ability range from terminal intermediate to budding expert and is suitable for any terrain from groomers to 18 inches of fresh. That's an 8-lane freeway in terms of how many different skier styles and preferences can be accommodated by this one ski. It's light, easy to skid or carve, ideal for developing confidence in off-trail conditions, and won't wilt under pressure on hard snow.



DYNASTAR LEGEND W 88

125/88/109 15m @ 166cm
L: 159,166,173 \$700

Ever since Dynastar introduced the Cham series what seems like several centuries ago, the brand has moved metal in and out of its model matrix, trying to find the right fit for its 5-point sidecut design. It first offered a metal-laden option for the flagship Cham 97 and its bigger bros, the Cham 107 and even the Champ 117. It soon became apparent that all that massive material in a 117 was overkill, and gradually metal also disappeared from the 107mm-width and, in due course, the 97 as well. When Dynastar resurrected a modified Cham baseline and sidecut in the form of the Legend X and Legend W series, to keep the wider skis' weight down, it cut the metal out of the 106 and reduced it to an insert in the 96. The 88 had the perfect dimensions to handle the weight of two sheets of Titanal without feeling like an oil tanker to turn. The added heft and unique damping qualities of this aluminum alloy keep the Legend W88 calm on both boilerplate groomers and bothersome crud. The Legend W88 is a Power ski that's accessible to Finesse skiers. Its relatively short contact area makes it easy to foot-steer, it has sufficient width to float and drift in powder, and if a technical skier should tip it on edge, she'll have the support of Titanal to keep her carving on a clean trajectory.



VÖLKL SECRET 92

130/92/113 16m @ 163cm
L: 149,156,163,170 \$825

The Völkl Secret 92 has sufficient surface area to qualify as an off-trail specialist, but temperamentally she's a carving kind of gal. Far from being a bit loosey-goosey in the tip, like many skis meant to travel off-piste, the Secret 92 is built to keep its slightly rockered tip and tail from inhibiting the prime directive: stay connected. Maybe the Secret 92's little secret is that she would rather be carving. With a 16m-sidecut radius in a 163cm, short turns are easily summoned with a modest application of edge angle. Because the Secret 92 craves snow contact, it's good at following the fragmented terrain found in today's moguls. Should the off-piste beckon, the Secret 92 can take its carving tools off-trail and let its broad beam take care of the occasional need to drift.



BLIZZARD SHEEVA 9

124/92/114 14m @ 164cm

L: 148,156,164,172 \$660

Both the Sheeva 9 and the Black Pearl 88 are descendants of a line of off-trail parents; the template for the Pearl was the Brahma, the little brother of the mighty Cochise and Bodacious; the model for the Sheeva 9 was the Rustler 9, a spin-off of the Rustler 10 and 11. To better understand the nuances that distinguish the Pearl 88 from the Sheeva 9, it helps to understand the families they come from. Distilled to its essence, the Pearl 88 has a smidgeon more aptitude for hard-snow skiing. Its Flipcore construction allows the forebody to join the rest of the ski on edge once it's tipped and pressured, so the skier has the sense of riding the entire ski and not just a section of it. The front of the Sheeva 9 is made to be looser, to intentionally forego early connection to a fully carved turn. That it still feels solid throughout is a testament to the security imparted by a trimmed down top laminate of Titanal. In light of its overall gentle nature and bias for off-road conditions, the Sheeva 9 is an ideal set of training wheels for the gal who is ready to get off groomers. Supple enough to slither through bumps and agile enough to dart through trees, the Sheeva 9 can give an off-trail newbie the confidence to try it all.



NORDICA SANTA ANA 93

124/93/112 15.5 @ 169cm

L: 153,161,169,177 \$750

Much as I hate to undermine my own methodology, I encourage you to ignore the niggling difference between the Santa Ana 93's Power and Finesse scores that allowed it to migrate from the Power collective to the Finesse family this season. Its personality didn't change over the summer, but a couple of new scores shifted it from one side of the Power/Finesse border to the other. The Santa Ana 93 still favors the strong, technical skier who is comfortable carrying speed, but it's so good at off-trail skills like drifting and staying calm while crud-busting that it can't help but earn high marks for Finesse properties. The very fact that the Santa Ana 93 can slip so easily across the Power/Finesse divide tells you that it's neither one nor the other, but both. One look at its double-rockered baseline reveals why it moves so smoothly from on-trail to off: the blunt tip bends abruptly upward, doing the job of riding over irregular terrain quickly so most of the ski can be fully cambered. It's as if a high-powered Frontside ski were hiding inside a loose-tipped powder vehicle.



Flat light, flat skis. Go faster girls!



NEW!
VÖLKL KENJA 88

127/90/110 16.8m @ 163cm
L: 149,156,163,170 \$825

The Kenja is the grand dame of the women's market, and over the years she's had more facelifts than Joan Rivers to keep her current. But none of her previous makeovers were quite as extensive—or as successful—at reinvigorating the old gal with the energy of youth as the new Kenja 88. In a word, wow. The application of Titanal Frame technology is the game changer. By breaking the top sheet of Titanal into 3 pieces, the metal is distributed where it can do the most good, and the fiberglass beneath it can breathe. The engagement of the glass layer during the turn is what creates the rebound energy that differentiates this Kenja from all who came before. But the Kenja 88 didn't bring just one gift to this party; its sidecut has been modified into triple-radius affair—Völkl calls it 3D Radius Sidecut—that mimics a geometry more commonly found in Technical skis. If you lay it over until the center radius is engaged, you'll get a tidy short turn. But ride it close to the fall line and the long-radius tip and tail sections take control over trajectory. An extra patch of shock-damping carbon in the shovel helps reduce shimmy in sketchy snow.



NEW!
HEAD KORE 93

130/91/113 15.4@171cm
L: 153, 162, 171 \$750

With the Kore 93 W, Head felt it could part ways with its Wild Joy and Great Joy skis. Let us pause a moment to mourn the passing of two pioneering women's skis. The Wild Joy was remarkably supportive for its weight, an identity crisis that may have hurt its ability to attract a larger following. When we look back at this era, the Great Joy will be remembered as one of the greatest made-from-scratch women's skis of all time. Head wouldn't have let the Great and the Wild go were it not for the fact that the Kore 93 had already proven its inherent, come-hither appeal to women. Like the unisex ski from which it was cloned, the Kore 93 W is a "big tent" ski, strong enough on edge to handle brittle corduroy with a baseline and sidecut that beg to be taken off piste so they can reveal just how helpful they can be. "This is a great ski that handles particularly well in variable terrain," says Allene Lemons of The Sport Loft. "I think lots of levels of skiers would like it," she suggests. Another veteran tester notes, "Compared to the Wild Joy and Great Joy, it loses some carving ability but gains forgiveness and soft snow performance. Very stable for a lightweight women's ski." For its blessed ability to uncomplicate off-trail skiing, whether you have your AARP card or not, we award the Kore 93 W a Silver Skier Selection.



*Jackpot!
Great skiing, great smiles at Silver Mountain, ID*



Tricia Pugliese

Ski Talk at a Higher Level

Listen to what our members and industry icons are saying!

These guys work so hard to bring you honest, up-to-date info on the best equipment, the best skiing, and the most fun! Kudos to Phil and Tricia for the level of professionalism they bring to the ski industry! Thank you.

Genia Fuller Crews
Hall of Fame Member

*Great information about all aspects of alpine skiing and great people all in one great place!
#plugthepug*

Doug Briggs



Phil Pugliese

I love Pugski.com! Brings back great memories with past magazine advertisings while keeping us up to date with what's new and what's hot in the ski industry!

Ettore Casati

Great reviews and advice from someone who lives and breathes the ski industry!

Chad Bowen

Pugski is a great place for information on skiing, a civil, informed, knowledgeable and personable forum of caring and fun folk!

Mike King



PROUD SPONSOR OF
**U.S. SKI AND SNOWBOARD
HALL OF FAME**

Ski Reviews and Discussion Forum

All Mountain West Skis

All-Mountain West models (95mm-100mm) serve a different need for men than they do for women. For the guys, AMW skis maximize off-trail versatility by providing the most surface area in a ski that still retains hard snow chops. For the ladies, an AMW model is heavily biased towards off-trail conditions to the point that on-trail aptitude suffers for all but the most accomplished lasses. More succinctly, for men an AMW model is the apotheosis of the all-terrain ski that does it all; for women, it should be a second ski they reserve for when the snow is soft and deep. While the average skier can have fun on an All-Mountain West ski, they are far more appropriate for those with well-developed skills. Don't expect a lot of price differentiation among the most popular models as all are high-end skis built with the best non-race technology the brand has to offer.



The SUV of skis for men. It handles in and out terrain with aplomb. For women, AMW skis are at their best off-trail.

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN WEST SKIS



BLIZZARD BONAFIDE

135.5/98/119.5 18m @ 180cm
L: 166/173/180/187 \$840

I readily admit to an engrained bias in favor of the Blizzard Bonafide, as a pair has lived in the first row of my ski locker since its inception. I take them everywhere I go because I'm confident there's no condition on earth they cannot ski, and ski well. The Bonafide has remained a perennial all-star for skiers because it's built on sound fundamentals: a wood core made from poplar and beech sandwiched between laminates of multi-directional glass and Titanal. Its Flipcore design connects to the edge early, with no disruption in the snow connection from the modestly rockered forebody through the midsection to its flat, supportive tail. If one wished to pick a nit, it could be argued that the Bonafide is geared for the more skilled skier. But this is true of virtually all the more torsionally rigid models in the All-Mountain West genre. If you want to tone it down a bit, get it in a shorter length and you too can experience one of the greatest skis ever made.

HEAD KORE 99

133/100/121 21.3m @ 177cm
L: 162,171,180,189 \$800

Many lifelong skiers are familiar with the decidedly mixed history of lightweight skis. Anyone who wants to re-visit the dubious joys of a stripped-down ski can always hop on a \$399 package ski. Suffice it to say, you'll learn quickly to keep your speed in check. So I suspect most veteran testers who try a Head Kore model for the first time carry with them a hint of suspicion. You can tell in the hand that they're lighter than the typical wood-and-metal make-up usually found at the top of this popular genre. Will a noticeably lighter ski like the Kore 99 measure up to the standard set by powerful skis like the Bonafide, MX99, M5 Mantra and Enforcer 100? Yes, indeed. The Kore 99 annihilates every negative ever associated with lightweight skis. Lightness doesn't affect its grip or stability, which is nearly on a par with the metal-laden i.Rally. It holds a medium-radius turn without a hitch, delivering effortless power usually associated with a more traditionally built ski. For the Kore 99 is anything but traditional and a significant departure from Head's customary wood and metal constructions. The Kore's principal components are Graphene, Koroyd and Karuba, a lightweight wood often found in backcountry models. The Graphene does the heavy lifting in terms of distributing pressure along a flex pattern that provides the feedback experts expect from a high performance ski.



LINE VISION 98

131/98/119 18m @179
L: 172,179,186 \$800

It's fitting that Line's new Vision 98 should top our rankings for All-Mountain West Finesse skis, as it's commitment to skis that are surfy and playful is ironclad. The brand that began to make twin-tip skiboards 25 years ago is the only mainstream brand without even a toe-hold in the Technical or Frontside categories. If you're looking for a wide ski that mimics a carving ski's accuracy, you're in the wrong room. That said, the Vision 98 can hold its own in firm conditions because its moderately rockered tip and tail blend into the rest of its cambered baseline when it's flexed, creating a long effective edge. Its flex distribution—geared towards a centered stance—shock dampening, and liveliness are dictated by three high tech fibers: aramid, carbon and fiberglass, all working in concert to create an instantly responsive ski. Line calls this amalgam of materials THC™ Construction, a term it shrewdly trademarked. About the only way the brand could have sent a louder signal to its constituents is if it had made the core out of hemp and sold each pair with papers and a lighter (the core is actually Paulownia and maple). By keeping metal out of the Vision 98's guts, Line is able to make it much lighter than the norm.



LIBERTY EVOLV100

139/100/122 19m @ 179cm
L: 172,179,186 \$850

Like any ski with metal in its make-up, the evolV100 isn't light as a feather, but it's so well balanced and responsive to steering input that even the most irregular snow requires less effort to navigate. Its ability to maintain its composure when under assault by adverse conditions allows the pilot to relax, a real energy saver on a pow day. By my thoroughly unscientific estimate, the average advanced skier can add up to three more runs per ski day just by switching to the evolV100. When Jim Schaffner likes a ski, you know it can hold up to a hard, sustained edge set delivered by a superb technician. After running it through a gamut of mid-winter snow varieties at Snow Basin (Utah), Schaffner came away impressed. "This was a great all-rounder. It performed well in the mixed snow conditions." For its even temperament and energy-saving equanimity in rough terrain, we award the Liberty evolV100 a Silver Skier Selection.



NORDICA ENFORCER 100

133/100/121 18.5m @ 185cm
L: 169,177,185,193. \$800

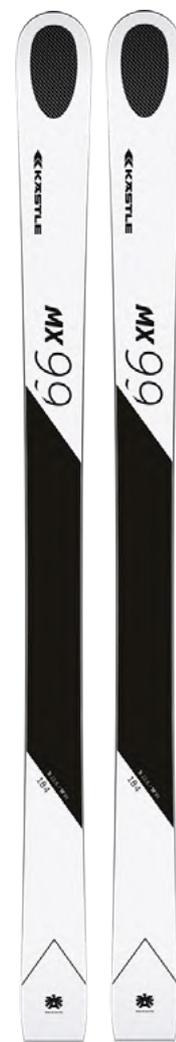
What distinguishes the Nordica Enforcer 100 from the other benchmark models in the All-Mountain West category isn't its poplar/beech/balsa core nor its two sheets of 0.4mm Titanal; it's the length and flex of its traditional camber line that instill it with power, precision and pop off the edge. Most skis 100mm or more underfoot don't have a lot of camber built into the baseline, so they're easier to push around in soft snow. The Enforcer 100 isn't drinking this Kool-Aid; it's made for skiers who know how to stand on a ski and drive it. If you look at a pair base-to-base, you'll notice that while the tip and tail are amply rockered upward, they're stubby in length, a shape Nordica aptly names Blunt Nose. The rest of the ski is arched considerably, assuring as long and secure an edge connection as you can find in a double-rockered baseline. In its longer lengths, the Enforcer 100 is a strong skier's salvation, able to respond forcefully to pressure. Jim Schaffner of Start Haus, a big man who skis with a racer's innate aggression, hails the Enforcer 100 as "really, really fun in these conditions, which consist of 16 inches of slightly compact powder which is starting to get chopped up. Found this ski to be really versatile, moving smoothly from the chopped-up stuff into fresh pow. All in all, a very good ski for [these] conditions, and I can see its versatility would extend to other conditions, as well."



KÄSTLE MX99

135/99/120 20.5m @ 176cm
L: 160,168,176,184 \$1,299

The Kästle MX99 should not be mistaken for a set of training wheels. If you've never owned a ski this wide before, this is probably not the best place to start. The MX99 expects you to be good. Very good, actually. If you're an imposter, the MX99 can and will detect your fallibilities. This is your final warning. If you continue reading this review, you'll end up wanting a pair, and I'd feel better knowing you were qualified. The MX99 is unlike every other ski in the All-Mountain West genre. It's the only ski in the category that evolved from a Frontside template, namely the exquisite MX84. It makes no attempt to dumb down its principles. Far from trying to disassociate the front of the ski from the rest of the chassis, as is the norm among AMW models, the MX99 tries to connect to the turn starting in the shovel. The Lighter is Better trend, evident elsewhere in the AMW category, is just background noise to the MX99; it pays no attention. Instead of subtracting material, Kästle added a sheet of braided carbon to its usual all-wood core and two sheets of 0.5mm Titanal. With all this shock-damping material onboard, the MX99 could collide with a Sequoia and only the tree would feel it.



ELAN RIPSTICK 96 BLACK EDITION

134/96/113 18m @ 181cm
L: 167,174,181,188 \$1000

Enrobing a ski in a coating of carbon is like dosing it with Xanax; it calms the nerves and helps it focus on the task at hand. The inescapable comparative adjectives are "silky" and "smoother." With no metal underneath its ebony hide, Elan's Ripstick 96 Black Edition needs something other than Titanal to give it the sangfroid required to batter crud aside. Its carbon sheath muffles the rough edges caused by crud-busting without hauling around the extra ounces Titanal entails. In lighter, softer, generally more congenial off-road conditions, the Ripstick 96 Black raises its game. It doesn't matter if the depth of the latest layer is 3 centimeters or 3 feet, put any kind of cushion under it and it will practically purr with gratitude. Because it skis narrow, it's also easier to find a high edge angle, which helps keep its rockered tip from getting twitchy and makes negotiating tight gaps in trees dependent more on the science of technique and less on the power of prayer.





VÖLKL M5 MANTRA

134/96/117 19.8m @ 177cm
L: 170,177,184,191 \$825

When the Völkl M5 Mantra appeared last season, it was received like an answered prayer by thousands of Mantra fans who didn't much care for the iteration that preceded it. The attributes that had been erased over time—and that the M5 Mantra restored—were a tighter waist for more accurate hard-snow steering and conventional camber underfoot for greater grip and control over the trajectory. Völkl didn't just resurrect an old Mantra concept; it created an entirely new recipe using the same classic components—wood, fiberglass and Titanal—that had helped put the original Mantra on the map. The new configuration is called Titanal Frame, for the difference maker is in how the top sheet of Titanal has been re-imagined. Instead of a solid, end-to-end laminate, Völkl broke the topsheet into three pieces: a 0.6mm thick section in the forebody that runs around the perimeter and over the tip; a similar 0.6mm U-shaped part in the tail; and an independent 0.4 mm plate in the middle. By making it easier to bow underfoot, the skier can more readily compress the fat sheet of fiberglass right below the metal bits, loading the ski with energy and delivering another element Mantra fans had been missing: rebound.



SALOMON QST 99

134/96/113 19.4m @ 181cm
L: 167/174/181/188 \$800

Just last season Salomon improved the hard snow performance of the QST 99 by adding basalt to its foundational carbon/flax (C/FX) fibers. For 2020, Salomon has re-configured its primary elements, mixing the basalt and carbon elements and using the flax in its own layer under the binding zone. The net effect is to augment the sense of support, not just underfoot, where there's also a slice of Titanal, but all along the baseline. Two other changes to the ski design contribute mightily to the QST 99's infusion of power and improved snow contact: 4mm's of width have been pared away from both the tip and tail, so the new version doesn't automatically try to steer out of the fall line, and the substitution of cork for Koroyd in the shovel. Salomon asserts that the "Cork Damplifier" is 16 times more proficient at absorbing shock and even lighter weight. With its new, trimmer silhouette, a 181cm QST 99 weighs 65g less this year compared to the 2018/19 version, while improving its Stability at Speed score from 7.80 to 8.43, the best score in the genre for a non-metal ski.

FISCHER RANGER 99 TI

130/97/12 18m @ 181cm
L: 174,181,188. \$699.99

Fischer has been tinkering with its off-trail Ranger collection over the span of several seasons, searching for the fine line between lightweight, with attendant ease of operation, and elite carving capability that can handle the transition to hard snow. For 2020, the Ranger 99 Ti tilts the scales in favor of stability, amping up the carving power by reverting to square, ABS sidewalls straddling a classic wood-and-Titanal sandwich. A carbon inlay in the tip lowers swing-weight and overall mass, which is substantial enough (+150g vs. 18/19 Ranger 98 Ti) to keep it calm on corduroy, yet feels comparatively light when tearing through crud. A veteran tester from Joe's Ski Shop [Minnesota] summarizes his impressions of some of the Ranger 99 Ti's more subtle changes: "The 19/20 model has a slight construction change from the 18/19 model—a change in the core materials and a bit less tip and tail rocker. Makes the ski a bit better at tip engagement with a bit more all-mountain feel to it over last year's ski. Overall, I'd say it makes what was a very good ski even better, especially for in-bounds skiing out West where you can go from powder to groomed to crud all in one run."



ATOMIC BENT CHETLER 100

129.5/100/120 19.5m @ 180cm
L: 164,172,180,188 \$725

To give you an idea of what a steal the Bent Chetler 100 was last year, Atomic understandably raised its likely retail price by \$100, and it's still the best value in the category. But the Bent Chetler 100 is more than just a good deal; it's a wonderfully versatile ski that is as easy to ski in off-trail conditions as any AMW model at any price. The key to the Bent Chetler 100's charms is its Horizon Tech tip and tail which are rockered on both axes. By crowning its extremities, the littler Chetler feels like it can drift in any direction on a whim without losing control of trajectory. When in its element, it's the epitome of ease, rolling over terrain like a spatula over icing. The Bent Chetler 100 is all about freedom of expression rather than the tyranny of technical turns. So what if its liberty-loving tip doesn't want to show up early in the turn? That's not its shtick. It has talents Technical skis never imagined, like throwing it in reverse off a precipice. It's light, it's easy to pivot and it's wide enough to float in two feet of fresh. If you evaluate the Bent Chetler 100 for what it does rather than what it isn't meant to do, it's an all-star in a league of its own.



WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN WEST



KÄSTLE FX96 W

133/96/119 14m @ 164cm

L156,164,172 \$849

For the 19/20 season, Kästle completely re-formulated its FX series of wide, off-trail models. To create its first-ever women's model in the FX family, Kästle chose to work off the FX96 template, as the 96mm waist width optimizes the strengths of the new design for female skiers. One of the goals of the new FX series was weight reduction, so Kästle engineers concocted Tri-Tech, a trifecta of design features all aimed at keeping weight off. Tri-Tech is essentially a core-within-a-core; a central channel of high-density woods is wrapped in a glass torsion box and braced on either side with lighter wood laminates. The torsion box rides higher than the outer sections, creating a 3D top surface, which is the first weight-saver. Second is the concentration of hard woods in the center, so lighter woods can be used in the remaining two-thirds of the core. Third is using a thicker core profile in the central torsion box, which gives it more power without adding more materials.



DYNASTAR LEGEND W 96

132/96/112 13m @ 165cm

L: 158,165,171 \$750

One of my ardently held beliefs about ski design, for which I have no statistical support, is that every model family has a star, a width at which all its other design parameters are optimized. For example, in Salomon's QST collection, it's the 106; in Kästle's MX family, it's the 84, and in Dynastar's 4-model Legend W series, it's the 96. What makes the W 96 the belle of the ball? The Legend W series is directly descended from Dynastar's Cham clan, an early adopter of the 5-point sidecut. The 5-point sidecut keeps the tip and tail from engaging with the cambered zone underfoot, effectively keeping them out of the turning business and helping the skis to roll over terrain rather than digging into it. This shape was made expressly for Big Mountain skiing; it's at its best when it's wide, and a waist around 96mm is about as broad as it can be without feeling sluggish.

NORDICA SANTA ANA 100

131/100/119 13.5m @ 161cm

L: 153,161,169,177 \$799

The Nordica Santa Ana 100 is easily the most torsionally rigid of our four Recommended women's All-Mountain West models, usually an indicator of a higher Power quotient, yet it's so easy to ski—for advanced to expert women—that its scores landed it on the Finesse side of the ledger. But as I occasionally stress in these pages, while the numbers are instructive, they don't reveal as much about a ski's character as the narrative. Listen closely to what a couple of our testers had to say about the Santa Ana 100, and you'll hear suggestions that both these ladies thought the ski is, if anything, too powerful. "Great all around ski," is the general assessment of Jol-ee from Footloose, with this proviso: "A little too much ski for hard pack, but for a woman who charges, it's terrific. Handles great off groomed snow," she adds. Becca Pierce from Bobo's test team skied the Santa Ana 100 in rapidly softening spring conditions, which Becca found it ideally adapted for. "These skis were meant for today's conditions. A tad long for yours truly in the bumps, but assuming I were a stronger skier, I'd bet they'd be tits. Would be great in pow, and [had] awesome control in this slop. Loved the stability."



BLIZZARD BLACK PEARL 98

135/98/119 15m @ 166cm

L: 152,159,166,173 \$720

Blizzard's Flipcore baseline, the heart and soul of the Black Pearl 98, has probably been the most commercially successful execution of a double-rockered baseline since rocker first reared its ugly head (and tail) over a decade ago. Flipcore certainly has left a mark on the women's market, where the Black Pearl franchise is a well-oiled sales machine. The Black Pearl 98 isn't the sales phenom that its little sister is, but then nothing can match the records being set by the Black Pearl 88. The reason for the sales imbalance is simple: the BP 88 is an everyday ski, the proverbial one-ski quiver if ever there was one. While the BP 98 could be the regular ride if the pilot is a strong skier, both physically and technically, but more often than not it's going to a second pair reserved for powder and powder-ish days. Whether or not the Black Pearl 98 is right for you is answered by a simple equation. If you spend half your ski day (or more) as far from groomers as you can get, the Black Pearl 98 is your ideal mate. If you're spending more than half your time on prepared slopes, hook up with its little sister.



CARRY GEAR LIKE A PRO

LOCK BRAKES IN PLACE

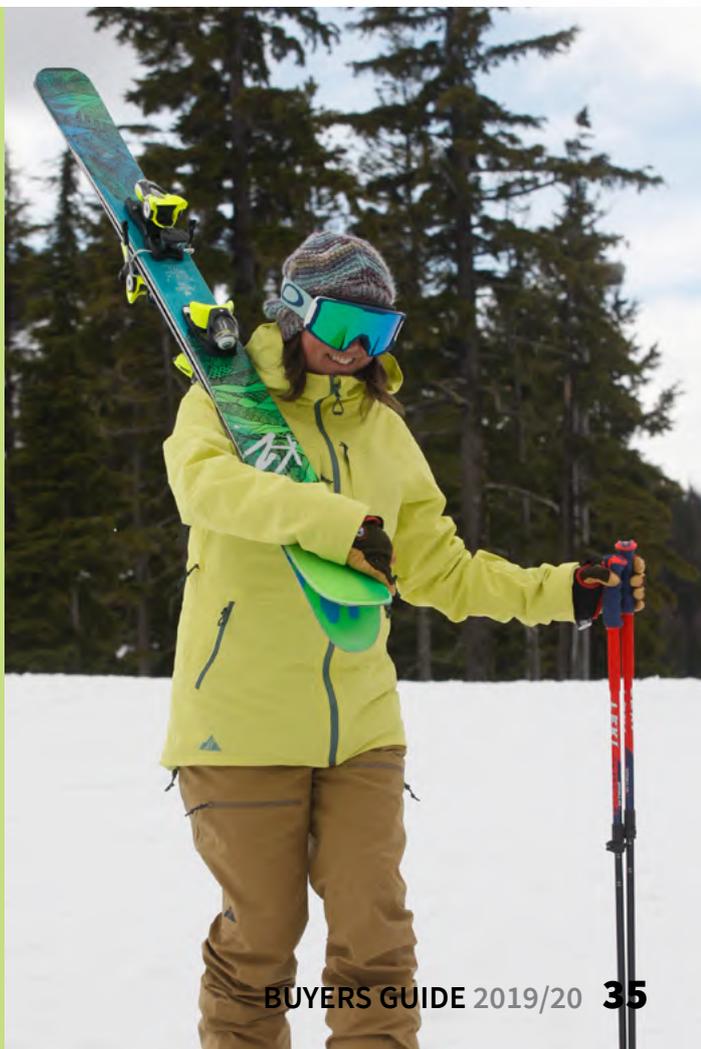
The brakes on all bindings are designed to latch together and secure your skis for transport. For increased security during longer walks and vehicle transport, wrap a Velcro strap around the forebody. Your skis will stay together no matter how you handle them.

VERTICAL CARRY

In congested areas like tram lines or busy plazas, carry your skis vertically to avoid clobbering your fellow snowsports enthusiasts. To carry your skis vertically, lock the brakes, cradle the skis in the crook of your arm and pick them up by the inside of your binding toe.

CARRY OVER SHOULDER

In open areas and for longer hauls, balance your skis tips forward on a shoulder with binding toes resting on your shoulder. Hold the forebody with one hand and grasp both poles in your other hand and use to provide better balance and support and ease your travels.



Big Mountain Skis

A special tool for special days when the steeps are deep.

Big Mountain models are adapted for powder and crud, period. The fact that they can be skied on hard snow doesn't mean that they should; if you can only afford one ski, a Big Mountain model shouldn't be it unless you're planning on skiing powder, or what was recently powder, exclusively. (This advice applies doubly for women.) However, if you already have an everyday ride, a Big Mountain model is insanely fun for those days when everything on the hill is buried in a blanket of white. Skiing powder on a narrow ski, particularly one with a deep sidecut, can feel like fighting a marlin with a fly rod. On a Big Mountain model, the same condition isn't exhausting, but exhilarating. Effort is replaced with euphoria, which more than justifies the price of a second pair of skis.

MEN'S BIG MOUNTAIN SKIS



NEW!

NORDICA ENFORCER 104 FREE

135/104/124 18.5m @ 186cm
L: 172,179,186,191 \$850

Last year the Nordica Enforcer 110 owned the title of easiest Big Mountain ski; for 2020, the crown stays in the family but it passes to a new king of kindness, the Enforcer 104 Free. (The "Free" is a fresh suffix this year that denotes the slightly lighter wood core that's been in the 110 since its introduction.) The Enforcer 104 Free leapfrogged to the front of our Finesse rankings by being even more maneuverable and responsive than the highly recommended ski that served as its role model. Back-to-back runs on the 110 and 104 in 10 inches of partially tracked powder confirmed what one might suspect a priori—that the narrower ski was noticeably easier to steer no matter how you slice it. Whether pivoting your feet to make a short turn shorter or banking off a wind drift, the Enforcer 104 took less force to guide. To the obvious question—is a 104 waist width really necessary in a line that already has cornerstone models on its flanks in the original Enforcer 100 and the 110?—we now have an equally obvious answer: oh, yes.

NEW!

SALOMON QST 106

139/105/125 22m @ 181cm
L: 167,174,181,188 \$900

If Salomon's brand identity over the past forty years could be summarized in a single word, it would be "innovation." The driver behind its history of successful new product introductions is a corporate culture grounded in extensive research and development (R&D). Salomon's Annecy Design Center continues to launch breakthrough products capable of disrupting a market, such as last season's Backcountry/Alpine Shift binding. The same relentless devotion to R&D that made the Shift possible has spurred Salomon to re-design the QST 106 for the second season in a row. The list of the latest changes may sound like a handful of minor alterations, but together they turbo-boosted the QST 106's Power score and its 2020 Finesse score is even higher. I confess I've been maintaining a soft-snow-days only liaison with a QST 106 since we first met, so my bias in its favor is engrained. I'm now seeing a 181cm 106, which strikes me as the perfect blend of flotation for soft snow and grip on hard snow. Instead of dreading the latter, I find the new QST 106 to be so natural and imbued with fluid fortitude that I stop noticing its width and simply ski. Even as the rpm's ascend, it stays the course, laying down long turns as if to the manner born.



VÖLKL MANTRA 102

140/102/123 21.4m @ 184cm
L: 170,177,184,191 \$850

Not since the first Cochise rolled off the production line some eight years ago has there been a Big Mountain ski like the new Völkl Mantra 102. You can feel the power percolating under the hood before you have it out of first gear. Even though it's "only" 102mm underfoot, it feels more substantial. At slow speeds, its triple-radius sidecut (long-short-long) encourages the Mantra 102 to stay close to the fall line so it can pick up enough inertia to show its other moves. Once you've shown it you care by injecting speed into its veins, the Mantra 102 becomes more compliant. Even though it's double rockered, its Titanal Frame design, which puts more mass around the tip and tail, keeps nearly the full length of the ski engaged. While not exactly nimble—its lowest score is for short turns—it doesn't have to be, for whatever lies in its path better get out of its way or face extinction. As I noted on my test card, "The ends are a bit loose but otherwise its phenomenal security makes you feel as powerful as King Kong, like you can drive through anything. I would hate to be a pile of frozen snow between me and the bottom; the last thing it will ever see is the Völkl logo bearing down on it."



BLIZZARD RUSTLER 10

133/102/122.5 17.5m @ 180cm
L: 164,172,180,188 \$840

The Blizzard Rustler 10 wants you to look good, so it makes everything about off-trail skiing easier. There's a long, central band of Titanal on the top to stabilize the ski underfoot while allowing the tip and tail to twist. The idea is to keep the tapered tip from getting involved with every obstruction it meets; instead of trying to hook up at the top of the turn like a hard-snow-oriented ski is meant to do, it politely deflects all rough treatment by bending with the blow. The same basic idea at the tail keeps it from insisting on finishing every arc on a hairline trajectory, as if skiing were trying to emulate figure skating. A more powerful skier who takes his hard-snow technique with him when he travels off-trail might prefer the more connected feel of the Blizzard Cochise. But for the majority of off-piste skiers, the Rustler 10 is a better fit. When the nearly expert skier really needs help, the Rustler is a godsend. Imagine being in flat light—a common condition when the goods are there to be gotten—and not being able to tell what your tips are going to encounter next. That's where the Rustler 10's innate surf-ability takes over, smearing over the unseen obstacles as if they weren't there.



ELAN RIPSTICK 106

140/106/122 18.1m @ 181cm
L: 167,174,181,188 \$900

Like every model in the Big Mountain category, Elan's Ripstick 106 has lighter weight near the top of its design criteria. The Ripstick 106 is also in step with its competition in its use of carbon to replace heavier components, but the Slovenian ski maker deploys it in a unique fashion that takes full advantage of carbon's capacity for shock damping and elasticity. Two 5mm-diameter tubes reside in CNC-machined grooves that follow the sidewall along the base of its all-wood core. Positioned as they are near the snow and the edge, the carbon cylinders can keep the Ripstick 106 on a calm edge when navigating rough terrain. If you're familiar with Elan, you'd be correct to surmise that the Ripstick 106 uses its signature, asymmetric sidecut, dubbed Amphibio. Given the Ripstick 106's inherently looser tip and built-to-drift girth, the Amphibio effect isn't enough to keep its tips cool, calm, and collected on brittle hardpack. But crispy corduroy isn't where the Ripstick 106 longs to roam. It would like nothing better than to find a soft berm to sink into or bank off of. In its happy place in soft snow, it's "super smooth and buttery," according to an anonymous tester who tried it in wind-affected crud.



BLIZZARD COCHISE

136/108/122 27m @ 185cm
L: 171,178,185,192 \$900

The Blizzard Cochise has been around long enough that it's become the longest tenured member of the Big Mountain academy. But don't mistake its age for weakness. Until the Völkl Mantra 102 came along this year, the Cochise had no peer as a balls-to-the-wall crud-buster. It has the turn radius of a blue whale and the construction of a GS race ski. If you're in its way, I would suggest moving. The reason the Cochise hasn't lost its relevance has less to do with how it's changed than how it hasn't. No other ski beats it for stability at speed, and we mean in any condition. The dirty little secret that experts know about how to ski chopped-up powder is to step on the gas. The Cochise already knows not to pick a dainty path through the crud but to barrel through it, skimming over what's still clean and pummeling the rubble. With this kind of power, of course it can ski hard snow, where the Cochise exhibits its prowess as a trench digger. If you have the skills, you can take the Cochise pretty much anywhere, and it will dominate.



K2 MINDBENDER 108 TI

136/108/125 22.9m @ 186cm
L: 172,179,186,193 \$900

The Mindbender 108 Ti tries to win the war against crud by caressing it instead of crushing it. It has a gift for rolling to the edge that makes it feel quicker than the norm among skis of its 108mm girth. To execute a truly tight radius turn requires overruling its roughly 30m-sidecut radius and foot-swiveling a flat ski, a move the Mindbender 108Ti has down pat. Its impressive 9.25 score for drift speaks to its ability to brake according to the current style that uses skidding as the primary form of speed management. It takes only one section of uncut powder to realize that this unsullied canvas is where the Mindbender 108Ti would prefer to display its artistry. Who wouldn't rather ski unblemished freshies? By afternoon what was once pristine is now a mogul field. Remarkably, its soft, rockered forebody allows the 108Ti to conform to gnarly bumps—I'm looking at you, snowboarders—as if they were only a minor inconvenience.



LIVE THE MOMENT

MACHI LV 130

We know you attack every inch of your hill, and because high performance is not just for the roy -- sometimes you need the classic, four buckle boot that will be there for every turn. Now available in an all-new low volume, with state-of-the-art custom fit options.



MACHI LV PRO W

The women's LV Pro was re-designed by women who rip, for women who rip. The perfect combination of versatility, quickness, precise fit and warmth allows this new, 98mm lasted boot with a 120 flex, to shred your resort wall to wall and bell to bell.



Transpack

TRV™ BALLISTIC PRO

THE MOST ADVANCED TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR BOOTS, HELMET & GEAR



For the World Traveler:

Two decades of evolution in design and materials

Isosceles Storage System™ carries boots in side pockets, helmet and gear in a roomy central compartment.

Easily accessible pockets for accessories, tools and personal items.

Ergonomic sleek shape, compact and organized.

Ballistic 1680 water-resistant coated nylon, making it the most rugged pack on the mountain



HARD CASE JET™
DOUBLE SKI OR SNOWBOARD ROLLING CARRIER

HARD CASE JET™ & SHUTTLE™ FEATURES:



BUILT-IN DURABLE WHEELS FOR EASY ROLLING



CHECK SKIS ON A PLANE OR SHIP WITH CONFIDENCE

HEAD KORE 105

135/105/125 17.8m @ 180cm
L: 162,171,180,189 \$875

The Head Kore105 is a very clever combination of some Old School principles, a few features that are de facto standards in the Big Mountain genre, and technology that is on the cutting edge of ski design. Head is the only ski maker with a license to use Graphene, carbon in a one-atom thick matrix, which allows its engineers to stiffen or soften flex with minimal effect en masse. To maintain this weight advantage, the heaviest component in the core is a slice of poplar next to the sidewall; the rest of it is a synthetic honeycomb called Koroyd and a quotient of Karuba, an ultralight wood commonly found in Alpine Touring skis. The Kore 105 gets its power and energy from the carbon, fiberglass and Graphene that are laminated around this exotic core. To further trim grams, the topsheet is a cap made from polyester fleece, another dampening agent that's only downside is it's difficult to decorate, which is why all the Kores look murdered-out. This recitation of low-mass components makes it sound as though the Kore's only selling feature is its lightweight chassis. There's no question that the Kore design is laser-focused on keeping the ski light, but if that were its only accomplishment, it wouldn't be such a big deal. What makes the Kore construction remarkable is that it's light but never wimpy. Once you ski it for a few runs you forget about the lightweight and just ski as you would normally, only with less labor and fatigue.



LINE SICK DAY 104

137/104/121 17.7m @ 179
L: 172,179,186 \$750

This is going to seem like an odd way to begin a review of the returning Line Sick Day 104, but if you love skiing powder—and I know you do—you have got to ski the 19/20 version of the Sir Francis Bacon. One of Eric Pollard's original signature models, the SFB has been subjected to a series of tweaks over its long tenure. Now something very much like the original (143/107/139) is back, and it's crazy good. As for the Sick Day 104, the narrowest of Line's Big Mountain bunch, it's like the bright, bored student who could get good grades for edge grip but would rather skip class than let The Man tell it how to ski. Its natural tendency is to show up a little late for the turn, gradually roll up on its side then bank off its broad base to finish the arc. Given a choice between drifting and carving, the Sick Day 104 will take the slacker route every time.



ROSSIGNOL SOUL 7 HD

136/106/126 18m @ 180cm
L: 164,172,180,188 \$850

The one traditional ski trait that is still largely absent from today's ski market in general and the Big Mountain category in particular is rebound. Before rockered baselines became standard equipment on any ski meant for powder, the end-to-end camber line of an all-glass ski created a giant spring. In the down-up-down weighting rhythm then in vogue, the skier de-cambered the arch of the ski at the apex of the turn and allowed the stored energy in the glass to recoil and send the skis and skier back near the surface to transition to the next turn. Skis without any rebound stayed submerged, where the tips would inevitably cross, dooming their owner to ignominy. Ten points to the first reader who guesses which classic characteristic is so intertwined with the identity of the Rossi Soul 7 HD it could be said to own it. The Soul 7 HD is the Prince of Pounce, the Raja of Rebound, the Powder Porpoise—you get the idea. As long as it has snow to settle into, it provides a ride that's as effortless as powder skiing gets. Take away the medium that gives it life, and it does as well as a dolphin on a dock.



FISCHER RANGER 107 TI

139/107/131 18m @ 182cm
L: 175,182,189 \$749.99

For 2020, Fischer has again re-designed the flagships of its Ranger Ti series, returning to a lay-up with twin Titanal laminates for stability and liberal use of carbon to make it responsive. Carbon inlays in the tip and tail help make the extremities thin and light, so the new Ranger 107 Ti is easier to foot steer when necessary. "It's user-friendly but still can be skied aggressively," notes one admiring tester. "You can take your foot off the gas, and it's still responsive." Compared to the Ranger 108 Ti that preceded it, the Ranger 107 Ti has a slightly less shapely silhouette and a longer contact zone underfoot, giving it more directional stability and an overall calmer disposition in the sloppy seconds that prevail on so-called powder days. Its new sidecut favors the skier who can maintain momentum through a series of rhythmic, mid-radius turns that neither enter nor exit the turn too suddenly.



REVEAL YOUR INNER SELF

Salespeople are trained to open the sale by asking a litany of questions. Be ready to reveal as much as you can about yourself as a skier. The key subjects to cover in your initial interview are included in this list.

SKI BACKGROUND

- *How many years have you been skiing and how frequently per season?*
- *How would you describe your skills?*

SKI STYLE

- *Are you cautious and conservative or aggressive and attacking?*
- *Do you like speed?*
- *Are you a Finesse or Power skier?*

CURRENT SKI PLANS

- *Where do you ski now?*
- *On what runs? Be as specific as possible as to where you ski and what sort of terrain and conditions you want to master.*
- *How much will you ski this year?*



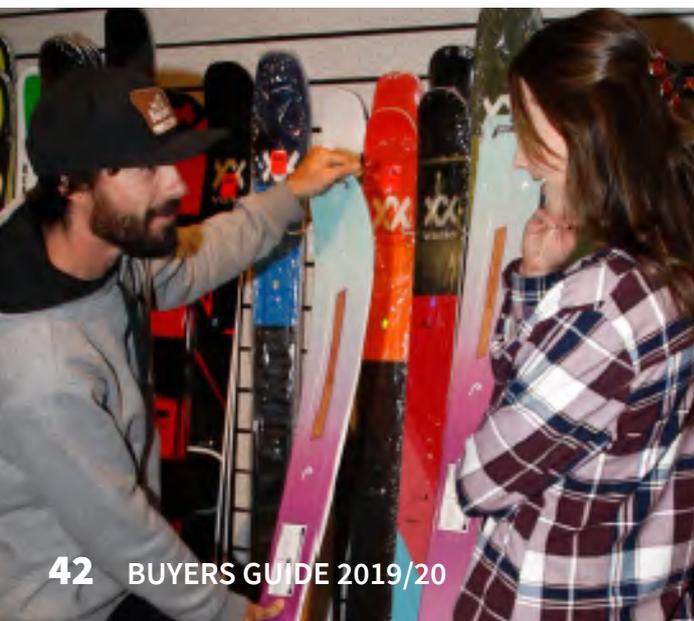
She obviously picked the right boards.

WHY YOU SKI

What motivates you to get on the hill?

- *Fresh air with friends?*
- *Learning off-trail skills?*
- *Skiing with the kids?*
- *Mastering a challenging sport?*

–Jackson Hogen



... match your needs to appropriate new gear.



SEBASTIAN FISCHER
DALEBOOT RIDER

AK130

Resistance-free walk mode with 40° touring freedom for easy ups. Direct Connect technology for unmatched lateral stiffness and 130 fore/aft flex for radical downs. Award-winning performance for the most committed all-mountain skiers.

DALEBOOT.COM
f DALEBOOTSkiBoots

DaleBoot



Skis Demystified

PICK THE CATEGORY

The simplest way to find the right ski is to focus first on your terrain preferences, as this will lead directly to the correct category. When discussing where you ski, be as specific as possible, naming the runs you like at the areas you frequent. A ski's genre is determined primarily by its width: narrow skis for hard snow, big fat skis for powder, and medium width models for all-terrain capability. Determining where you'll spend a typical ski day will tell you and your salesperson which category of ski is right for you.

CATEGORY	WAIST	TERRAIN
Frontside	75mm–84mm	80/20 Groomed/Off-Piste
All-Mountain East	85mm–94mm	70/30 Groomed/Off-Piste
All-Mountain West	95mm–100mm	60/40 Off-Piste/Groomed
Big Mountain	101mm–113mm	80/20 Off-Piste/Groomed
Powder	> 113mm	100% Off-Piste



FIND THE RIGHT LENGTH SKI

Getting the right length is almost as important as finding the right model. As a general guideline, low-skill skiers should select a length close to chin-height, average skiers around nose-height and advanced skiers around the hairline. But height isn't the sole consideration. Weight is also a factor, as is speed and terrain preference. Some ski designs reduce a ski's effective snow contact, so they won't ski as long as they measure.

MATCH YOUR STYLE

Within each category, some ski models are made for highly skilled skiers who are capable of extending their feet far out from under them in order to set their skis at a high edge angle. These skiers are comfortable at speed and capable of varying pressure, stance and degree of edging to handle any terrain. We classify these skiers as Power skiers. Finesse skiers may have a very polished skill set, but they don't generally exert as much force, ski as fast or attempt to set as high an edge as Power skiers. Their preferred skis might be softer flexing, less cambered and more forgiving.

– Jackson Hogen



ANOTHER **BEST** DAY

©Blake Jorgenson



ALLTRACK PRO 130

AUGMENTED MOUNTAIN

Chase untracked lines inbounds or out in the Alltrack Pro 130 GW. The new no-compromise free-touring boot, Alltrack features tech-fittings for alpine-touring binding-compatibility and improved range of motion for a more natural stride on the skin track or boot pack. The 100mm last balances comfort and control while the Generative Design Grid shell is engineered for reduced weight and full power transmission for all-conditions skiing.



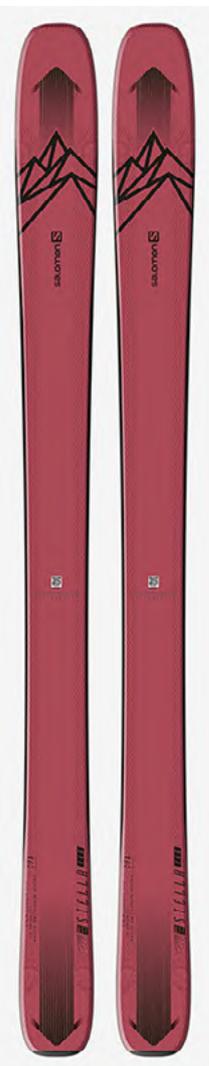
WOMEN'S BIG MOUNTAIN SKIS



BLIZZARD SHEEVA 10

131.5/102/121.5 14.5m @ 164cm
L: 156,164,172,180 \$720

The defining feature of the Sheeva 10 is also its most obvious, a top layer of Titanal that runs virtually edge to edge underfoot and tapers to a central tongue that terminates halfway up the forebody and down towards the tail. The partial laminate of metal simultaneously serves two purposes: it magnifies torsional strength where it's widest while allowing the rest of the ski to go with the flow. The tapered tip isn't itching to dip into a turn, and the tail isn't the clinging type. This freedom to deflect helps the Sheeva 10 to drift over ratty terrain as if it were level. The Sheeva 10's ability to deliver the stability of a metal ski and the playfulness and ease of glass and carbon in a single package is recreated in a larger format, the Sheeva 11 (140/112/130). While in the Big Mountain world, greater girth is sometime associated with greater ease, the metal underfoot in the Sheeva 11 "makes it ski way wider than a 112," says Lauren Takayesu of Footloose, "but still easy to negotiate for the lady ripper."



SALOMON QST STELLA 106

136/106/122 18m @ 174cm
L: 159,167,174 \$900

Even though Salomon gave the QST Stella 106 a significant boost in edging power last season, the French brand again raised its performance ceiling for 19/20. It reconfigured its construction by switching the roles played by basalt and flax, so basalt is now entwined with carbon in a bundle of braids while the flax flies solo in its own mat underfoot. This switcheroo creates a ski that's at once lighter and stronger on edge than ever. To give it even more on-trail stability, Salomon trimmed its tail flare and tightened up the Stella's turn radius (from 20m to 17m @ 167cm).



LINE PANDORA 104

137/104/121 14.6m @106cm
L: 158,166,172 \$750

The Line Pandora 104 is a paean to the merits of simplicity when it comes to making wide skis for women. An all-aspen core and fiberglass laminates reinforced with carbon stringers—with the memorable moniker, Carbon Magic Fingers—in a cap construction with a dash of square sidewall underfoot is nearly all you need to know about its composition and construction. A striated topskin designed to shed snow is a nice touch that helps keep the Pandora 104 light by ditching any pow that tries to hitch a ride. Becca Pierce from Bobo's raved about the Pandora's winning personality after sending it through piles of soupy spring snow. "Absolutely perfect for these slushy spring conditions!"



VÖLKL SECRET 102

140/102/123 16.3m @ 163cm
L: 156,163,170 \$850

The new Völkl Secret 102 should not be mistaken for a set of training wheels. If you don't have the requisite technical skiing skills, the Secret 102 can sense this shortcoming the way German shepherds can smell fear. As you digest the contents of Perry Schaffner's critique of the Secret 102, cited below, please remember she's fresh from a collegiate racing career and is an active coach who crushes every turn as if it owed her money. "This is a great powder/off piste ski. Really carries speed well. I skied the top in the choppy powder [at Snow Basin, UT], and it cut through it fairly well. Additionally, it was surprisingly lively on the groomed snow. Obviously a little more challenging to ski it in groomers since it is fairly wide under foot. I think this is a great ski if you mainly ski powder with some random days of groomers thrown in there."



Where is everybody?

ROSSIGNOL SOUL 7 HD W

136/106/126 16m @ 164 cm
L: 156,164,172 \$850

The Rossignol Soul 7 HD W isn't similar to the most popular Big Mountain skis of the last decade, it's identical to it. Part of this model's enduring appeal is the allure of its Air Tip design that decorates the shovel with filigree that appears jewel-like when illuminated from behind. Like a potential date who's both brainy and attractive, the looks draw you in, but it's the substance that makes you stay. All the real action in the Soul 7 HD W happens in the camber pocket underfoot. The roughly medium radius sidecut (16m @ 164cm) ends where the tip and tail rocker begin, effectively consigning the lovely tip to the simple assignment of keeping its nose out of the snow. Right behind the eye-candy shovel is a long fiberglass arch, loaded with energy. When the skier compresses the camber line at the bottom of a powder turn, the glass deforms; the instant the energy lets up, the arch recoils, and the skier is delivered back to the surface, where it's a cinch to slip across the fall line and sink into the next rhythmic arc.





ADVICE FOR FIRST TIMERS:

TAKE A LESSON!

Taking lessons from professionals is a great investment. Instructors know and can demonstrate technique and they also have experience dealing with customers who have varying skills. They understand that different individuals will respond differently to learning.

Snow sports industry research indicates that about 50 percent of beginners who purchase a lift, lesson, and rental package from a resort wind up not taking the lesson. The assumption is that one can “self-teach,” they feel that it is easier to rely on a friend or family member. Those who make that assumption should ask themselves, “Would I try to teach myself how to skydive or have a friend teach me?”

That analogy may be a stretch. But all too often, well-meaning companions over-estimate newcomers’ skills and escort them to a slope that is beyond their ability level. That often

leads to an exercise in frustration for both parties rather than a sense of accomplishment.

Most instructors can readily assess those skill sets. They can tailor their programs accordingly.

Having an opportunity to “pick the brains” of professional instructors is an added value. Most instructors are a wealth of information on all aspects of the sports. By and large, they are more than willing to share that knowledge with others on issues within and outside the parameters of the lesson. Topics might include how to dress, types of equipment, tips on the most popular slopes, safety precautions and more.

Lessons are available all winter long at resorts throughout the U.S. Additional tips on skiing or snowboarding for beginners can be found at sunandsnowadventures.com.

—Mary Jo Tarallo



Comfort For the Sole



SKI **SKOOTYS™**
skootys.com

Made In USA



MASTERFIT

Keep Your Gear In Shape



How long your gear remains in tiptop condition depends entirely on how well it's maintained. At least once a season, it's good to get skis tuned by a specialty shop, where tuning machines can reproduce a factory finish on the skis so they perform like new. Here are some tips on how to keep your equipment in optimal condition for better performance on the snow.

If you follow these maintenance tips, a well-made pair of skis can perform acceptably for 200 skier days, and may last longer if there's no major damage. Even inexpensive package skis have at least 100 days of useful life in them. Heavier and more aggressive skiers will usually wear out their skis—and anything else they own—faster than the lighter and more cautious.

DAILY EQUIPMENT CARE

SKIS: Wipe clean and dry. Check for dings on edges and bases.

BOOTS: Buckle all buckles with just enough tension to keep closed. Be sure soles are clean and no mud or debris is lodged in tread.

BINDINGS: Wipe clean, particularly at boot/binding interfaces.

REGULAR MAINTENANCE & AT THE END OF THE SEASON

SKIS: Get ski edges tuned by the shop. Or do it yourself: freshen up side edges with a light filing, followed by hand polishing. Fill cuts in bases if necessary. Wax, scrape and buff.

BOOTS: Visually inspect for sole wear and damage to buckles.

BINDINGS: Look for excessive wear, damage or missing parts. Inspect boot/binding interfaces.



Extend the Life of Your Boots

The first part of your boots to wear out will be the soles, but most boots now use replaceable toe and heel pads. The trick is getting a replacement pair while the supplier still stocks them. Or you could just protect them. If you spend a lot of time in parking lots or other hard surfaces, we recommend [Ski Skootys](#). These are the easiest to use, most versatile sole protectors on the market. As a bonus, they're also rockered so they make walking in ski boots a lot easier.

warm happy feet

Bootaclava boot warmers are made from weather resistant, stretch neoprene with tough nylon stitching. Add your favorite hand warmer to the exclusive Bootapouch to stay even warmer.





TIPS FOR **SUCCESS!**

GEAR FOR YOUR KIDS: WHY BUY WHEN YOU CAN RENT?

BY JACKSON HOGEN

Before you buy your child new skis and boots, rent.

Whether you rent gear for a day, a week or a season, rental makes far more sense than purchase at this stage. There's very little difference between rental and retail gear at this end of the market, so there's no real advantage to ownership. Additionally, lease deals for the season cost under \$200 for skis, boots and poles.

KID'S BINDING INTEL

As for bindings, most kids' skis are systems, meaning they come with their own bindings.

If buying a child's binding à la carte, be sure it's a junior binding designed to accept children's norm boot soles. It will have a DIN scale of roughly 0.5 – 4.5.

Junior bindings that work with both junior and adult soles usually have a DIN scale from 2 – 7.

Children are going to grow out of their equipment seemingly overnight. This is why you might consider getting a boot a little larger for your child, especially if he or she is in a growing phase. If the boot is fitted true to size, kids may outgrow the boot (ouch); or it's fitted way too big, children risk having zero control as their feet slide forward in the outsized shell. It's a good topic to discuss with the bootfitter and if you have the flexibility to change mid-season that could be another option.

While boots need to be up-sized for kids, the same concept doesn't apply to skis. The worst thing you can do for a child, equipment-wise, is put them in a boot they can't control on a ski they can't control.

Beginning kids should have skis that just reach the chin. Once skiing comfortably and in control, length can grow to nose-height. By the time the child attains advanced ability, you'll have a clear idea of his or her needs.



❄️ 2,200' Vert ❄️ 1,600 Skiable Acres ❄️ 315" Average Snowfall ❄️



Home of the Masterfit/America's Best Bootfitters Boot Test



888.394.6032

Kellogg, Idaho

silvermt.com

BILL ALLEN

Bill grew up skiing the “huge” mountains in western New York near Buffalo—with his parents and siblings, as well as his friends during after-school ski programs. With a love for the sport, he hooked up with the crew at Peter Glenn Ski & Sports, where he has worked for 20 years. He still makes trips to Buffalo to get his brother off the couch, and he does demo trips with Peter Glenn each year. Working at Peter Glenn has kept him in touch with others who have a passion for the sport and with whom he can exchange stories of good times in the mountains.



JOLEE ASH

Second generation employee and prankster of Footloose Sports in Mammoth Lakes, Jolee has tested skis for seven years. With a dad working in ski repair, she started waxing skis as soon as she could see over the machine and has been in the shop since. Nicknamed Demo Doll, she prides herself on technical knowledge of both hardgoods and soft goods. On her days off you will find her skiing in the morning and adventuring with shop dog Teddy after.



TREY CLAUSS

Trey Clauss started working at The City Garage, a ski and outdoor shop in Ellicottville, New York, in 2001. He sells skiers everything from hats to wax, and he likes to try to predict the future of ski sales. He also operates the shop’s Wintersteiger tuning machine and is one of the shop’s “glass slipper fitters” (bootfitters). In 2012, Skiing Magazine named Trey a Shop Hero. His mom got him into this sport, and he’s made a living out of it. A mogul skier to twin tipper to ACL replacement poster boy, Trey is presently carving hard on wide skis, adventuring uphill, and searching for the perfect turn.



LYNN DOUGLAS

Lynn has been a ski instructor with Squaw Valley for 17 seasons and received her PSIA level 3 certification in 2011. She is the Women of Winter (WOW) Program Coordinator managing all aspects of the weekly sessions and three-day camp, as well as the training of other WOW instructors. She is also a resort trainer and received her divisional trainers accreditation in 2019. When she is not skiing, she loves to hike and scuba dive.



SARAH EDLIN

Sarah grew up skiing recreationally on family vacations. When she moved to Reno two years ago, she fell completely in love with this sport—to the point of obsession. Two years and two certifications later, she is growing a secondary career as an adaptive ski instructor. She is beyond excited to introduce the sport to individuals with disabilities and hopes to encourage other women to join in on the wonder that is skiing.



DANIELLE GOLDSMITH

Co-owner and C.A.O. (Chief Amazement Officer) at Goldsmiths Sports Inc., established in 1987. Goldsmith started building snowboard boots (as there were no snowboard boots yet) in 1987. She was a pro snowboarder for Simms and Morrow snowboards from 1988 to 1991. She has been a Masterfit-certified bootfitter since 2012, a snowsports industry product tester since 1987 and an ABB boot tester since 2013. Big Bear Resorts (Snow Summit and Bear Mountain) in Big Bear Lake, California, are the home resorts for Danielle and GoldsmithsSports.com.





STACY KELLNER

Stacy Kellner grew up in Colorado and spent her winters skiing and snowboarding in Summit County. She's lived in California for the last five years and has fallen in love with Tahoe, most recently working in rentals and demos at Squaw Valley. This winter, she's working for a ski company in Vermont and is equal parts excited and anxious to spend a season on the East Coast. An all-mountain skier, she loves playing in glades, chutes, and moguls, but certainly appreciates some good groomer laps once in a while. She generally looks for a ski that's the right balance of sturdy and playful to handle variable terrain and keep things fun and is always excited to try out new shapes. Skiing is her passion, and she hopes that her experience, formal and informal alike, can be an honest resource for women skiers and all skiers.



CORTY LAWRENCE

Corty Lawrence was born on January 7, 1953, in Rutland, Vermont, to David J. and Andrea Mead Lawrence (of double Olympic gold medal fame). A member of a skiing family from the very start, he does not remember learning how to ski other than his mom and dad teaching him how to sidestep, sideslip, herringbone (how many know that one?), and kick turn. Skiing with peers and race coaching provided the remainder of his technical foundation. He has been in the ski business his whole working career. He met Sven Coomer, boot designer and a founder of Superfeet and Footloose Sports in Mammoth Lakes, California, and became a boot-fitter there in 1980. He has pursued that career since then. "Anything to keep me in my habits ... skiing the primary one," he says.

THERON LEE

A U.S. Ski & Snowboard Level 200 slalom coach, Theron works on the race crew for the Mt. Rose race team. He also coaches the Oak Ridge high school alpine team and works with Kirkwood's race department and as a coach at the Mt. Hood summer race camps. At Mt. Hood, he is also a Salomon race tech. He's a ski tester for K2 sports and Realskiers.com.



JOLENE LOWRY

A Winter Diva who has served on the Winter Divas Sports Industry Focus Group for five years, Jolene Lowry started skiing at 17 in a program at Buckaloons in Youngsville, Pennsylvania. Since then, she has focused her winter life around skiing in New York, Pennsylvania, and the Rockies. She has raised triplet ski racers and even raced a little herself, qualifying for NASTAR Nationals in Steamboat one year. When skiing groomers, she looks for a ski that is responsive and fast, balanced with ease of control and finesse. On powder or in the junk, she prefers something with a bit more flex and 90-96 underfoot. Jolene says, "Skiing gives me a feeling of empowerment...to challenge myself, not necessarily to go fast, but to make great turns."



CLARE MARTIN

Clare Martin is a veteran salesperson and bootfitter at Peter Glenn Ski & Sports in Atlanta. She got serious about skiing while attending college in Vermont and still skis there every year. In addition, she always makes at least one trip a year to Purgatory and Breckenridge in Colorado to ski and visit family. Clare enjoys demoing next year's equipment to ensure she's recommending the proper equipment for each customer. Not just a skier, Clare coached hockey for 10 years. And when she's not on the slopes, you can find her on one of her bikes or out on the tennis court.

JULIE MATISES

After years of commuting to the mountains with her high school (Oakland) and college (CSU Sacramento) ski teams, Julie Matises soon settled in Lake Tahoe. She started her ski teaching career at Alpine Meadows in 1991, quickly specializing in women's programs. The 2019 season marks Julie's 27th year in the ski industry, and her 10th year working at Squaw Valley. Julie is currently a supervisor/trainer for the adult ski school, and is an examiner/trainer for PSIA-West. She travels with her family to different ski resorts each season, rating them by snow conditions, terrain and freshness of the main lodge's baked goods.





PATRICK MCLOUD

It all started when Patrick drove past a ski store and wanted a new pair of skis. That moment led to 20 years (and counting) as a ski industry professional. Patrick is currently a sales associate at Peter Glenn Ski & Sports, and his love of skiing is what drives him to help others find the clothing to protect them, the ski that fits their needs, and boot that links it all together. When he is on the mountain, he is equally comfortable up on the steeps or on the groomers carving out smooth turns.



JIM MCGEE

Jim is a ski tech and sales associate at Peter Glenn Ski & Sports in Atlanta, Georgia. He began skiing when he was about three years old and has been skiing as often as possible since then. As a ski tech, he gets to see the construction of all the skis he mounts with bindings. That combined with the opportunity to review skis on our annual trip allows him to sell the best ski depending on his customers' skills and preferences.

STEVE OLSON

Steve Olson is a long time ski enthusiast and manager of Viking Ski and Snowboard Shop in Barrington, Illinois. Steve has been testing skis in the Midwest and Western United States for 28 years. He specializes in all-mountain skis and carving skis.



KIRSTEN REEVE-SOI

A Truckee native, Kirsten has skied for over 30 years and has been showing others the love of sliding on snow for over a decade. She is a PSIA level 2 instructor who works with Squaw Valley's Women of Winter (WOW) program. The program empowers women on the hill and helps them take their gear needs into their own hands.



SCOTT SAHR

Scott Sahr was born and raised in the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio. In 1987 he strapped on his first pair of water skis and tasted untouched tracks for the first time. After moving to Denver, Colorado, post college graduation, he earned his chops on snow with the greatest sport in the world. When he returned to Columbus a decade later, there was only one place that made sense, and he has been the manager of Aspen Ski and Board ever since. He likes to say that skiing is an art and skis are his brush. Selecting the correct brush (skis) for the right artist (skier) and canvas (terrain) is vital for maximizing those ear-to-ear grins and roars of utter bliss on the slopes.



JIM SCHAFFNER

Schaffner has been working in the ski industry his entire adult life. Originally from the Midwest, he started in ski retail as a teen and was then picked to work with athletes in racing service for Salomon North America. His home is in Truckee, California, where he owns and operates The Start Haus ski shop.

JACK WALZER

General manager of Jan's LTD, which includes Jans MT Outfitter, White Pine Touring and Rennstall World Cup tuning service, Jack Walzer is a ski industry veteran. He is an Avid Alpine skier, Nordic skier, MTB and road biker with a fly-fishing fetish. With over 30 years of specialty retailing experience, he has experienced all trends and product improvements over the years. He has served on numerous product advisory panels and has tested hundreds of skis over the years. He grew up in Vermont before settling in Park City. He is also a longtime bootfitter and equipment connoisseur.



HOW TO PICK YOUR PERFECT POLE



BY JACKSON HOGEN

If you're a new skier, you'll be amazed by the variety of options for a seemingly simple stick with a grip on one end and a point on the other. But entry-level and occasional skiers need not complicate a pole purchase. Getting the right size with a grip that feels comfortable will get the job done. Skiers who get hooked on the sport will inevitably want to upgrade if for no other reason but personal style. **Here are some of the options to consider:**

GRIPS

The one part of the pole you feel most intimately about is the grip. Better grips are more ergonomically shaped and multi-material, for better feel. All grips include some form of strap, which comes in a variety of materials and configurations. The most common strap is an adjustable loop designed so your hand can rest against the strap when skiing.

The most common mistake is grabbing the grip by putting your hand down through the loop; the strap only works for you if you put your hand up through it.

Leki's Trigger S system grip is a clever design favored by our test team and many other frequent skiers. It uses a link built into a lightweight glove harness (or proprietary glove) to clip into a latch on the top of the grip. It's a snap to click in and out while providing a secure link without the nuisance of a flapping strap.



ABOUT SIZING

Sizing poles is simple. Turn the pole upside down, so the tip is pointed upwards. Grab the pole under the basket and put the handle on the ground just in front of your feet. If the size is right, your elbow will be at a right angle, with your forearm parallel with the ground.

SHAFTS

As with grips, shafts come in a variety of materials and configurations. The most widely used material remains aluminum, although carbon and carbon-laced composites have their fans. You can even find poles made of bamboo, if that fits your retro style.

Aluminum comes in many grades, from an entry-level price around \$40 to high-end styles that can cost as much as \$250. The best alu shafts are lightweight and tapered for better balance.

The first carbon poles were dubbed "pencil poles," for these highly flexible, narrow cylinders were about pencil-thick. Carbon's edge over aluminum is its resistance to crimping when bent. Today carbon is available in several shaft styles.

Composite shafts mix carbon with cheaper materials to provide a sturdy, lightweight alternative to aluminum at less expensive prices.

And if you really want bamboo, this all-natural solution comes with a long, padded and strapless grip.

HOW TO GET FIT FOR SKI SEASON

BY PEGGY SHINN

Getting fit for ski season doesn't take a fancy gym membership. What it does take is general cardio training — biking, hiking, running, or even vigorous walking — and some specific strength training that will improve your performance on snow.

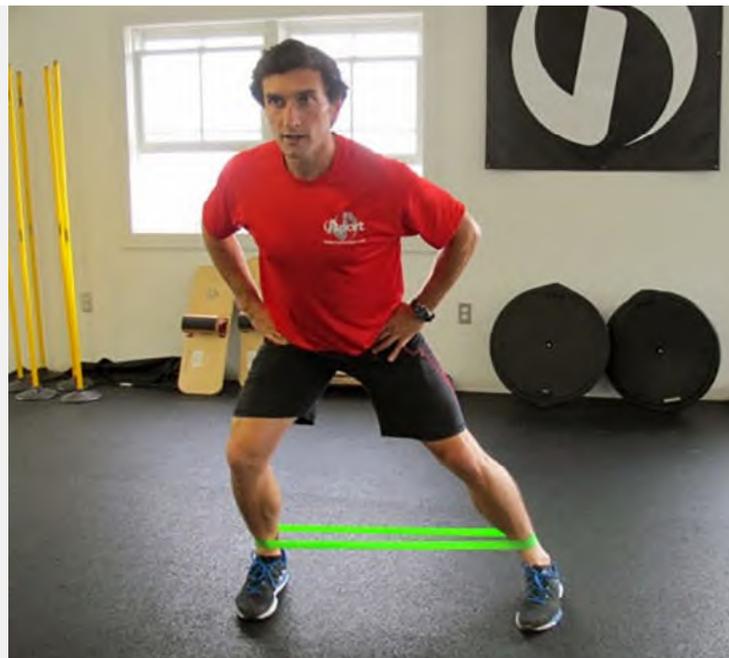
Just ask Tyler White, who runs iSport, a training facility at Killington that's a branch of the Vermont Orthopaedic Clinic. Tyler has helped everyone from Olympic gold medalists and NBA players to middle-aged moms and dads get stronger for the season ahead. His emphasis is doing key movements correctly.

"If you let bad technique go, it's going to become worse technique," Tyler likes to say. Bad technique, or simply doing whatever it takes to accomplish an exercise, like a squat, means weaknesses get weaker, strengths get stronger and the imbalance can lead to injury down the road.

To improve strength and balance for skiing, Tyler suggests these six movements (don't call them exercises!), performed correctly. Doing this series for five weeks pre-season will help you ski better, reducing that early-season burn, and hopefully prevent injuries.

BENT KNEE SIDE STEP WITH A MINI BAND

With an elastic miniband around your ankles, step laterally, pushing down through your feet with each step. Toes pointed forward. Two steps right, then two steps left. Repeat three times. Do 1-2 sets. This movement strengthens hip (gluteals) and quadriceps muscles, thereby improving stability.



SINGLE LEG MULTITOUCH

Stand on one leg, the other reaching behind you. Simultaneously flex your ankle, knee, and hip in one linear plane as you lower your body and touch the floor with your fingers. Do not let your knee or hip wobble to either side (out of the linear plane). One rep involves dipping three times and touching the floor in three places: on the left, in front, and on the right side of your foot. Do four reps for each leg. This exercise will strengthen your legs individually, improving balance and leg strength.

BULGARIAN SPLIT SQUAT

Rest one foot on a bench behind you, then squat down with the other leg. Do not let your knee cave to the inside, keep it in line with your foot. Do 6-12 reps per leg, and 2-4 sets. This exercise strengthens quads, hamstrings and glutes and helps you overcome a favored side.



SIDE ROTATIONS WITH RESISTANCE CORD

Hook an elastic resistance cord to an anchor (such as a door knob), then stand sideways to the stretched cord. Take a “ski stance,” then push into your feet to anchor your legs and hips as you pull the cord across your body, twisting your core (but not your hips). Return to the start position with control. Do 5-12 reps. per side, 2-4 sets.

SIDE LUNGE

From a standing position, step quickly to one side and squat on that leg. Then quickly rebound to the other side and squat on that leg. Step on your mid-foot, then transfer weight to your heel as your lunge. Do 8-12 reps each side, 2-4 sets. This movement trains your body to handle the lateral movements of skiing.



SIDE PLANK

Lie on your side, then prop your body up on your elbow. Your body should be in a straight line (don't drop your hip) with weight on your elbow and outside of your foot. Hold for 20-90 seconds each side. Do 2-4 sets. This movement strengthens abs, glutes and shoulders.



You know these testers found boots they like based on their grins.

2020 BOOTS

Lighter. And Righter!

That's what skiers can expect when shopping for new boots this season.

Lighter boots are continuing to become more prevalent, even in the chairlift-centric All-Mountain Traditional category. After experimenting with Backcountry-style plastics like Grilamid and Pebax, manufacturers are now employing conventional plastics like polyurethane and polyether but in thinner, stiffer injections to shave weight. Our testers like the pairing of reduced weight underfoot with the tried-and-true feel of "old-school" boot plastics—they just ski better in on-area application, testers report.

That said, a broad mix of constructions can be found in the still-growing All-Mountain Freeride category, which is marked by tech-binding compatibility that provides maximum uphill and downhill options. This group of boots appeals to skiers who want one boot that covers all their needs, whether in-bounds or out. So, expect to find overlap shells, three-piece shells, a variety of plastics, and options on traditional or full-thermo EVA type liners.

Manufacturers continue their decades long march to make boots that fit better, pushing the envelope with design features that enhance a boot's ability to mold to a skier's anatomy. Boots that fit just right make for better skiing, longer days and more fun. Anybody who's ever had a not right fit knows that!

Some brands are employing plastic additives or ultra-thin shell wall areas that make the

shells heat-and-wear moldable. Others are focusing on liner modification technology, like Fischer's use of trick micro-Velcro fitting pads and easy-bootfitter-access tongues. Head is introducing a Liquid Fit liner paraffin wax injection system. Other brands are making it easier for skilled bootfitter to customize your boots, by making them more "fittable." Things you probably won't notice but that make a big difference are seamless shells that make internal grinding or heat stretching easier, and reduced shell wall thickness and material bulk in common modification zones.

Perhaps the most welcome news for skiers with wide feet is that our testers found this year's collection of wide width boots now shred as well as narrow ones. That hasn't historically been the case. Be aware that you still need a wide hoof to fill a wide lasted boot, so the maxim of going only as wide as your foot requires still applies. Never go bigger or wider than your foot demands!

So, if you've held off on buying new boots because your broken-down pair is finally broken in, you no longer need fear the replacement process. Work with a professional bootfitter from an [America's Best Bootfitters shop](#) and you will find the perfect boot to continue your ski career this winter.

- Mark Elling, Boot Test Director





HOW WE TEST AND SCORE BOOTS

by Mark Elling

We start the boot test process in early winter by working with our brand partners to determine which boots will be tested in each of four categories: Frontside, All-Mountain Traditional, All-Mountain Walk and All-Mountain Freeride. Virtually every boot brand participates in our boot test as it remains the only one like it worldwide.

Our test team is comprised of a core group of Masterfit University trained bootfitters and boot sellers who know boots inside and out (and who also are good skiers and have been testing boots for many years). We also invite ski industry professionals like coaches, instructors, patrollers, rental technicians and resort administrative staff to test boots—these are folks that spend long hours in ski boots for many days throughout the season and know what skiers are looking for in terms of fit and performance. On top of that, we have testers that are avid skiers who come to us from outside the industry—doctors, photographers, marketing folks and moms. It’s a big test team—about 50 testers volunteered to make it happen this year. Why so many? It takes a lot of testers to generate an adequate number of test impressions to ensure that these are fair results. Most models receive at least ten separate tests, though often many receive more.

Boots are given a 1-5 score in five different criteria:

- Anatomical Fit & Initial Feel
- Dynamic Balance
- Edge Power and Fore-Aft Support
- Quickness & Agility
- Convenience Warmth & Features

The average of all these scores is the boot’s score for each tester which are all averaged for a boot’s final score. The top 33-percent of boots from each category are awarded Gold Medals, boots in the top 66-percent of the group receive Silver Medals and Innovator awards are determined by test team consensus for boots that show merit with the use of new plastics or fitting technologies.



MINDBENDER 130

We've thrown all the tech in the world towards these boots. But we'll save you the preachy marketing spin – you can read all of that on our website. Here's what you need to know: We built a boot that won't slouch on the uphill and packs the power you need for the down. The Mindbender 130. Built to blast.

The K2 logo, consisting of a stylized white 'K' and '2' on a dark background.

BUILT TO BLAST

K2SKIS.COM

Frontside Boots

*Bill Haight of Vermont's Green Mountain Orthotics Lab
lays them over in another Frontside winner.*



For technically skilled, aggressive skiers who aren't willing to compromise when it comes to ski edge driving power on hard snow and at high speeds, the Frontside category boots will deliver the goods. These boots aren't World Cup "plug"-style race boots, but they're only one step away—all narrow lasts at this year's test and all stiff flexes. Here, you don't have to lace-up your liner before you put on the shell, and these narrows won't require the kind of shell modifications that plug boots do. But they put skis on rail and trench at a level that will suit all but the burliest of gate bashers.

MEN'S FRONTSIDE BOOTS



LANGE RS 130

\$850 F: 130 // L: 97mm

Score: 4.48

Once again, testers put the Lange RS 130 at the top of the Frontside category, backing up their decision with a slew of superlatives that speak to its ideal blend of anatomical fit, agility underfoot and unstoppable edge power and stability. The other boots in the group were similarly near flawless piste-beasts, so what sets the RS 130 apart? Its comfort and conveniences scores were head and shoulders above the rest—it's a lovable beast, and a benchmark best of test, testers said.



TECNICA FIREBIRD R 140

\$850 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.46

The Orange Crush from Tecnica keeps charging ahead with the new and burly Firebird R 140. Edged for top-of-field by a mere 2-hundredths, testers called this the flamethrower of Frontside boots—its edge power and stability score was the highest of the entire test. Testers used words like latex glove, contained, and holy \$&!# it's tight to describe the fit tension of this 96 mm boot, but they loved it for that grip on the foot and leg and subsequent transmission of movement to the ski.



S/MAX 130 CARBON

\$975 F: 130 // L: 98-104mm

Score: 4.31

Speed becomes less concern than invitation to a party with the S/Max 130 Carbon, said testers who called the fit painted-on and gapless for the low-volume foot and instep. Built to absolutely crush early morning groomers, testers couldn't get enough of the close-to-snow feel of the lower shell and directly linked feel between lower leg and cuff. This is a responsive, lightweight ride that put stiff skis on edge and hammered hard snow into submission with ease. The ultra-quick Custom Shell HD process succeeded in mellowing minor hot spots.

All-Mountain Traditional Boots



All-Mountain traditional boots are the choice for in-area skiers from Maine to California.

This broadest boot category offers skiers the widest array of fit and on-area performance options and, as such, commands the largest part of the boot market. All-Mountain boots are available in narrow, medium and wide lasts and in a huge spectrum of stiffnesses to suit skiers of any size or ability. The All-Mountain Traditional boot as we defined it for our boot test does not have a releasable cuff for hiking—it's designed to perform everywhere on the hill, but it typically won't stray far from the chairlift.

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL NARROW BOOTS



NORDICA PROMACHINE 130

\$849 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.59

One tester said, *as you buckle, the engine revs!* And out of more than 20 individual tests, the comments about a tight yet perfectly-mapped fit were virtually universal. The combination of a tightly, deep-seated heel fit with just enough room over the top of the foot for circulation and uniformly snug contact throughout the rest of the boot had testers fired up to ski. Testers said the light-but-strong Tri Force shell construction did not disappoint while on edge (trenching) or in rapid fire transitions to set the next rail.



ATOMIC HAWX ULTRA 130 S

\$850 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.57

In its fourth encore performance, the Hawx Ultra 130 S continued to impress, earning the second place ribbon in a highly competitive group—and just missed the top spot by a mere two-hundredths. *Light, tight and right* is what testers agreed on—one tester compared its fit to compression socks. Snug everywhere, especially in the cuff, but with extra room in the toe-box and forefoot, testers applauded its connection to the ski. Tall-ish on the leg with a spring-loaded flex, testers loved it in all conditions.



TECNICA MACH1 LV 130

\$840 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.48

The all-new Tecnica Mach1 LV 130 gained new momentum with its mold make-over, testers said, and pushed it onto the podium in the All-Mountain narrow group. They liked the now taller-feeling cuff and its firm but well-distributed feel against the shin. The Custom Adaptive Shape liner employs more customizable material throughout, and testers loved the tongue's revised design over the top of the foot. Its stance and balance scores topped the field and testers said its power and quickness would be limited only by the driver.



S/MAX 120

\$725 F: 120 // L: 98-104mm

Score: 4.33

A liner revision unlocked the S/Max 120's magic for testers this year, who put it on par with big brother S/Max 130 Carbon's score. Its balance, power and agility were merged in lock-step with tied scores for those categories. Testers praised its shrink-wrapped fit for the low-volume foot as well as its hyper-aware feel for the snow and immediate edge response that snapped to attention in all manner of terrain. Testers said minor fit issues disappeared with new, faster Custom Shell HD molding.



K2 RECON 130 LV

\$750 F: 130 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.28

The 2020 K2 Recon 130 LV returns with an updated, tighter fitting Ultralon liner over last year's debut, which testers appreciated, especially in the well-shaped heel pocket. However, it remains what testers called the most comfortable boot in the category, and it retains its slimmed-down, thinned-out, all polyurethane shell construction. Testers agreed the Recon 130 LV is an easy-on, trouble-free fit as well as a point-and-shoot performer everywhere on the hill that manages to pack just as much power as heavier models.



ROSSIGNOL ALLSPEED ELITE 130

\$850 F: 130 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.15

This is the fourth boot test go-round for the 2020 Rossignol Allspeed Elite 130, now in its fifth year in existence, and testers yet again put it in the top group of the All-Mountain narrows. For skiers who want the performance of an ultra-close fit but fear the agony that may come with the fitting process, *here's your solution*, testers said. Hovering on the fence between narrow and medium, the Allspeed Elite 130 brings sledgehammer power, a precise steering feel, and a renowned progressive flex to a more open and accessible fit.



HEAD NEXO LYT 130 RS

\$825 F: 130 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.11

The all-new Nexo LYT 130 RS hits a bullseye between their Raptor and Head's existing medium width line-up. Testers loved the combination of Raptor-like lower boot fit (*tight!*) blended with light-weight, thin shell wall Grilflex plastic for an agile All-Mountain attacker. The innovative Liquid Fit injection liner allows for quick heel and ankle snug-up (*we tested it and approved*), but testers didn't feel much need to employ it off the rack, suggesting skiers wait for a bit of pack-out if all is well to start.



FISCHER RC4 PODIUM GT 130 (VFF)

\$849 F: 130 // L: 96 +/- mm
Score: 4.10

Testers said that the RC4 Podium GT 130 is an absolute powerhouse—in fact, its edge power and stability score were topped by only three other boots in the entire men's test. Fischer brings Frontside power and accuracy to an All-Mountain application with the Podium GT—testers loved how deeply this boot drove the ski edge on hard snow. But they shed a few tears for their bony bits, too—it's tight! Testers said a Vacuum Full Fit molding job would have them dialed.

A CUSTOM BOOT FOR EVERYONE?

What should your first thought be if you have tricky feet and a history of painful boots? Find a great bootfitter, duh! ([Do that here](#)).

What should your second thought be? Maybe try a [Daleboot!](#) It's the only truly custom-built boot on the market (we think), and it's been updated in recent years with high tech plastics and modern stance angles. There are lots of ways to customize a ski boot, but only one way to start from scratch, like a custom-shaped surfboard for your feet.

The process begins with a Daleboot dealer taking essential measurements and tracings of the skier's feet. Those specs are sent to the factory in Salt Lake City, Utah, where the lower boot is built to match the foot shape using a variety of heavy metal lasts and a steam bath that permanently molds the thin shell-wall polyether plastic. The upper cuff is selected to match the lower leg's length and modified as needed to suit the calf's shape. Then the bespoke boot is shipped to the dealer (within the week, often) where the Intuition liner of a variety of styles, thicknesses and densities will be molded and then stance alignment checked and modified as needed.

All of this is included in the price of \$875, which also includes any needed modifications made by the dealer down the road. Our recent boot tests have favored the [VFF PRO](#), Daleboot's most popular model, for its long-travel flex feel, high agility scores and hyper-aware feel for the snow. Their VFF is preferred by less aggressive and more petite women, and the ST is a stiff beast of a boot that big dudes and frontside carvers love for its power and stability. Any of these models can be made as narrow as a 92 mm last and as wide as a 114 mm, as well as from a size 22 all the way to a 34.

—Mark Elling



DALEBOOT VFF PRO

There are lots of ways to customize a ski boot, but only one way to start from scratch, like a custom-shaped surfboard for your feet.



MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL MEDIUM BOOTS

A delightful day mining Silver Mountain's treasures.



LANGE RX 130

\$850 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.38

The 2020 Lange RX 130 continues to dominate the medium width group for our test team for its simple recipe for success: ease of use (*goes on and off well, and it's warm*), anatomical fit (*contours around the shape of the foot and leg*), power and stability (*real plastic drives the ski damply, at speed*), quickness and agility (*goes where you tell it, not the other way around*), balance (*the Lange angles work, so they don't screw with that*). Pretty simple, testers said, it's a great boot.



NORDICA SPEEDMACHINE 130

\$800 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.27

The 2020 Nordica Speedmachine 130 returned to our boot test beefed up with a revision made to the 3-D Cork Fit Primaloft liner that tightened and firmed the interior feel throughout. Testers said it transformed the formerly fluffed Speedmachine to a fully hardened All-Mountain warrior, as evidenced by its highest score in the edge power and transmission category. However, it hasn't lost its signature easy entry and well-draped Nordica initial fit, testers said, it's just toughened-up enough to be perfect.



ROSSIGNOL ALLSPEED PRO 120

\$700 F: 120 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.22

The steady and always ready Allspeed Pro 120 re-claimed the podium and turned a lot of our testers into admitted Rossi fans at this year's test. Testers report it remains one of the very best of the *comfy-sleeper-class* of boots, meaning you don't expect it to perform as powerfully or as accurately as it does considering its high comfort quotient. Testers said don't let the well-shaped and cushioned first fit fool you—this one frigg'in' rips. They gave it high marks for its dialed stance, too.



SALOMON S/PRO 130

\$900 F: 130 // L: 100-106mm
Score: 4.16

One tester called the all-new Salomon S/Pro 130, *whipped cream on a steak!* Meaning it's smooth and creamy and dreamy, but there's some real meat in there! This is a completely different Pro for Salomon, easier to get on, more height through the instep and lateral side of the foot—but with an S/Max styled cuff that grips the leg and ankles with a serious performance grudge. The S/Pro 130 combines that upper boot with the comfort and room of the lower boot for a great blend of arc and *ahhh*.



K2 RECON 130 MV

\$750 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.13

Among the new generation of lighter weight alpine boots, testers say the Recon 130 MV best manages to channel old-school edge power and a damp feel for the snow. The crisp-feeling thin shell wall polyurethane remains easy to peel apart for entry and exit (*many of this new crop don't!*), and testers said its plush and curvy liner offered enough padding for a cushioned and contained feel throughout. Some felt it overly snug on the top of the foot initially but said it settled in quickly.



HEAD NEXO LYT 130

\$825 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.12

The 2020 Head Nexo Lyt 130 returns this season with a revised shell construction that solidified its flex feel, and testers appreciated the difference, calling it a legitimate 130 with a more progressive range of motion. This also improved the fit against the shin over last year's version. Testers note that Head's numbers don't lie—meaning it fits true to size and last width indicators, an increasingly rare phenomenon in today's boot world! Light underfoot (Grilflex plastic), surprisingly strong on edge, and hyper-agile, testers said.



ATOMIC HAWX PRIME 130 S

\$850 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.09

Last year's completely re-made Hawx Prime 130 S returns unchanged this season and for good reason. Testers said that its winning combination of light weight, instant comfort and strong skiing skills remains intact. Testers say the thin shell wall polyurethane puts the foot in direct contact with the ski and snow surface and gave it high marks for feel and precise steering moves without getting twitchy. Snug heel and ankle pockets provide a solid anchor within the medium width fit through the rest of the boot.



DALBELLO DS 130

\$900 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.08

Testers again used apex predator descriptors to call out the Dalbello DS 130's strong edge work—but with comments that it's less like a cheetah and more like a big, well-fed lion. It ambles through large radius turns at high speeds as if it were born to—solid, strong and drivey, like a souped up Mustang, said one tester. Most testers liked the dark green. *Hulk. Strong. Smash*—that's how another tester put it. Instantly comfy, though a bit on the roomy side of medium, most agreed.

Is there a right way to buckle your boots?

In a word, no, but with a few caveats.

By Mark Elling

The key is to be in the right size boot and the right shape boot (are you a narrow, medium or a wide?) so that the snugness of the boot is there without having to use much buckle tension. Over-buckling a too-loose boot will distort the intended shape of the boot, can cause hot spots and often restricts blood flow, creating an uncomfortable and cold boot. It may seem counter-intuitive, but for many skiers, going to the smaller of two size options often ends up being the more comfortable fit in the end. But back to buckling—most skiers will utilize more buckle tension in the upper cuff to achieve a snug but comfortable wrap around the lower leg, and less tension in the lower boot when the boot size and shape is ideal.



How one buckles-up (meaning which one first, second, etc.) is of very little consequence so long as the boot is buckled without bearing full weight on the foot. Most savvy boot bucklers will give their boot a bit of a stomp into the floor with the heel to seat the foot back into the heel pocket, then buckle up the boot without much weight on it to keep that foot planted into the back and maximize toe room. Skiers with thicker calves may choose to start at the bottom buckle and work their way up, essentially zipping up the boot so that the top buckle closes a little easier. If you find you have to roll with a little less buckle tension for your first run or two of the day, then progressively snug it up as you go, you're not crazy; lots of skiers do the same.



One last bit of advice: if you're always the last one in any group to be finally buckled-up and ready to go after getting off the lift then you're taking too long—stop nit-picking your buckle program and pick up the pace!



BOOSTER STRAPS

You can't watch a World Cup event without seeing the distinctive flap of a Booster Strap waving from virtually every racer's boot. Competitors from every continent have learned that using a Booster elasticized wrap at the boot cuff instead of an unforgiving Velcro strap smooths flex, increases rebound energy and improves turn precision. Park and pipe competitors use it to eliminate shin bang. Boosters help you do everything on skis with more control and consistency. Easy installation.

MODELS AND STYLES

World Cup has three-ply strap and stiffening shunt for maximum response. Use with 130+ flex boots, heavier weight skiers. **BOOST-WC**

Expert/Race has three-ply strap. Use with 110-130 flex boots. **BOOST-EXP**

Intermediate has two-ply strap. Use with <110 flex boots, lighter weight skiers. **BOOST-REG**

Junior has shorter length, two-ply strap tailored for smaller cuffs. For use with Junior boots only. **BOOST-JR**

**AVAILABLE AT MOST AMERICA'S BEST BOOTFITTERS SHOPS
OR ON-LINE AT THE MASTERFIT SHOP.**

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL WIDE BOOTS



TECNICA MACH1 HV 130

\$840 F: 130 // L: 103mm Score: 4.59

Testers said again that the first-place Mach1 HV 130 is the perfect example of how the DNA of a top-shelf narrow boot should be passed down to its wide-last brother after their tests were concluded this year. All the dominant family traits (stance, power, quickness, comfort) remain intact, and without any downside, testers said. Huge scores were awarded for both its overall wide body fit (*curvy not fat!*) and its ski-driving power. Quickness scores were way above average—testers say *fill with foot* to improve on that further.



LANGE LX 130

\$750 F: 130 // L: 102mm Score: 4.51

Lange has said they'd never build a bucket of a boot, and while testers said this was the second widest fitting boot of the test, they also proved Lange right. Coupled with the comment that it fit like a warehouse, one tester made clear that he had no problem controlling the ski. Testers said things like huge width but with definition, but assured us that the classic Lange fit, stance, and performance heritage lives on here—just in newly oversized proportions! The comfiest Lange we've ever tested!



HEAD EDGE LYT 130

**\$725 F: 130 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.31**

The Edge lives on! But testers agreed that the all-new Edge LYT 130 is the best version of Head's wide line we've ever tested. Testers could find no fault with this boot for the intended wide-ride target skier—its liner is lush but not spongy, its flex feel is solid but even on the shin and adequately cushioned, its ability to transmit foot and leg movements to the ski was top notch. For a light-weight model, its edge power and stability were a welcome surprise. Bravo Head!



NORDICA
SPORTMACHINE 130

\$700 F: 130 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.25

At only 2-hundredths of a point behind slimmer brother Speedmachine at this year's test, the Sportmachine 130 represented for the Nordica family well, like the chubby younger brother that's willing to alley brawl with the older kids when it counts. Testers said it felt a little shy of the 130 stiffness target, but that it didn't negatively affect solid lateral moves on the ski. Every bit as good an All-Mountain utility wagon as the Speedmachine, testers claimed, but with a slightly softer interior and megatons more room.



ATOMIC
HAWX MAGNA 130 S

\$725 F: 130 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.13

There were lots of Flintstone and Sasquatch references in testers' reviews for the Hawx Magna 130 S this year, so we'll let it continue to wear the Widest Boot championship belt for another season! Though we should revise the title to read: Widest Boot That Still Skis Like a Champ because testers say there is absolutely nothing wrong with how this boot stands or tips to rip. Best to have a lot of volume in foot, instep and lower leg to truly tap the torque reserves here, they said.



ROXA R/FIT 120

\$625 F: 120 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.00

Testers said the R/Fit line-up's BioFit shape is a game changer for the brand! Thin shell wall polyurethane is used in the lower boot, incorporating "pre-punched" areas for common fit issues, and the cuff is made with crisp-responding Grilamid. By the numbers it's a wide but a well-sculpted one, testers report. They liked how this lightweight drove the ski but gave it highest marks for its rapid reaction to steering commands—accurate and agile, they said. A slightly loose feeling heel was its only real demerit.

Custom Boots Straight from the Factory

In the ongoing quest for making ski boots more comfortable and convenient, many boot companies have developed specialized technologies that help customers better match the boot to the body, streamlining the bootfitting process—even in regions where specialty bootfitters may be scarce. Salomon and Atomic have offered similar oven-cook-then-wear shell molding tech for several years in Custom Shell and Memory Fit models, and Salomon's newer HD version cuts its traditional molding time more than in half. Our tests have shown that K2's new thin shell wall Recon, Anthem, and Mindbender boots all respond well to cook-and-wear



molding. Head offers a similar shell-morphing option under its Form Fit badge, as well as the unique Liquid Fit custom liner system that enables viscous paraffin wax to be injected into ports to customize the fit around the ankles and heel. Fischer's Vacuum Fit technology combines oven-cooking with their low-temperature VacuPlast shells and a pressurized air bladder molding system to press the boot against the foot and leg for a better match and instantly customized stance angles. Our tests of all these systems have yielded noticeably positive results.

—Mark Elling

WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL NARROW BOOTS



ATOMIC
HAWX ULTRA 115 S W

\$725 F: 115 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.69

Stripped and ripped—right down to the bare essentials of what makes a ski boot great, testers said. They liked the thin but well-shaped liner that provided just the right amount of padding for comfort without muting the connection of the foot and leg with the shell, and said that boot and body felt morphed together into one cohesive performance unit! The lighter weight of its thin-shell polyurethane construction appealed, but testers mainly praised that it skied race-boot strong without race-boot pain.



NORDICA
PROMACHINE 115 W

\$750 F: 115 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.67

Edged out for first place in the narrow group by a mere two-hundredths and sporting a nearly perfect score for edge power and stability, testers said the Promachine is an absolute powerhouse that most agreed needed not a single fit modification out of the box. Lively and balanced, they said it's also tall and firm against the leg, and they liked that just fine. This is a real skier's boot, and one that appeals to the kind of shredder that might often opt for a stiffer men's model.



TECNICA
MACH1 LV 105 W

\$720 F: 105 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.64

The all-new Mach1 LV 105 W's revised shell (taller cuff, more anatomical shaping in lower boot) and updated liner (more customizable material and better instep pocket for the top of foot) made for an instant hit with testers who pushed it straight onto the podium in a highly stacked field. The stance angles and properly snug, low-volume fit (lots of 1's and 2's on fit impressions scores) were ideal for our testers who said that this boot simply made them ski better, straightaway. *And they look good*, they said.



ROSSIGNOL
PURE ELITE 120

\$750 F: 120 // L: 98mm **Score: 4.63**

The Pure Elite 120 earned its highest marks for its balanced stance, rapid-fire quickness and its comfort, warmth and convenience. Testers remind, yet again, not to let its furry liner fool you into thinking that this isn't a top-tier performer. They said it's one of the stiffest and strongest of the entire test this year, and while it is the roomiest of the narrow class in virtually every fit parameter, it doesn't stray into true medium volume. Ease of use, good looks and great skiing got it a gold.



SALOMON S/MAX 120 W

\$850 F: 120 // L: 98mm
Score: 4.58

The debut of the women's S/Max was met with widespread tester approval. While some boots are powerful but heavy, and others might be agile and light yet unstable, testers said that the new S/Max 120 W combines all performance elements in a perfectly balanced blend. They also like its true to narrow class fit—very snug in all the right places. One tester said, *look out ladies, there's a new boss in town—powerful, driven, and tight.* Very quick Custom Shell HD molding made subtle but good changes, they said.



LANGE RX 110 W LV

\$750 F: 110// L: 97mm
Score: 4.57

The bottom line is that testers love the way they ski in the RX 110 W LV. They say there's something about the combination of its dialed stance angles, strong Dual Core polyether shell and cuff, and its anatomical shape that produces their best turns of the day. Testers love that it has one of the most snug fits in the heel pocket of any boot in the class, but without being crushingly tight. The instep and navicular have a bit more breathing room, as does the calf, they said.



FISCHER RC4 PODIUM GT 110 VFF

\$850 F: 110 // L: 96 +/-3mm
Score: 4.40

Fischer brings race-room-level performance and VACUUM customization together for lighter skiers (women) looking for a softer flex than the 130 and 140 level beasts that share the RC4 Podium GT badge. The 110 provides the same trim level as those stiffer models, as evidenced by their shared price tag—no discount for the girls! Our test team delighted in its raw power to the edge and said *full-gas* was its favorite speed. Tallish on the leg and a touch aggressive in forward lean, they said this one ain't for wannabes.



DALBELLO DS ASOLO FACTORY W GW

\$950 F: 120 // L: 97mm **Score: 4.33**

The DS Asolo Factory W GW employs shrinkage to morph the medium width DS into this 97mm lightweight. *Is it that cold in here?* No, it's Dalbello's use of Grilamid plastic in the shell and cuff and that material's shrinking behavior post molding that does it. Testers said it's definitely more snug than the DS, but said it ran on the roomy-comfy side of the narrow group yet with a very snug Achilles. Skis with a springy slinky character *a la* Grilamid and is a touch shy of 120, testers said.





WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL MEDIUM BOOTS

LANGE RX 110 W

\$750 F: 110 // L: 100mm

Score: 4.60

Testers call the RX 110 W the industry standard for how a medium width performance boot should fit and ski. One tester said, *The boot's best qualities? All of them—the RX delivers every year, again and again.* There were virtually no negative comments out of all the test cards, with unanimous agreement on its super neutral, dialed stance angles and a near perfect score for edge power and stability at speed. They call its V-shaped fit (party in the front, business in the back) flawless—first place.



NORDICA SPEEDMACHINE 115 W

\$700 F: 115 // L: 100mm

Score: 4.56

Our test team liked the step up to the 115 flex women's Speedmachine this year, saying the additional horsepower drove big skis well without feeling unmanageable—and so stepped it up to a second place finish in the group. They loved the vertical room over the top of the foot and said that the ankle pockets are firmly performance oriented (*read: mold the 3D Cork Fit liner!*). They appreciated its useful features, like the Power Driver power strap spoiler, adjustable calf, and a functional cuff adjustment for dialing lateral stance angles.



SALOMON S/PRO 100 W

\$725 F: 100 // L: 100-106mm

Score: 4.43

Testers loved Salomon's launch of the new women's S/Pro 100 for its newfound room along the lateral border of the foot, additional ceiling height through the instep and its slightly more slender cuff grip along the leg shaft. It's easier to get on and off than its predecessor medium width X-Pro, and testers said this new one snaps off crisper turns and drives the ski with a more direct-drive connection between movement and response. Custom Shell HD molding opens up the calf fit (and elsewhere) for those who need it.



TECNICA MACH1 MV 105 W

\$720 F: 105 // L: 100mm

Score: 4.40

Once again, the Mach1 MV 105 W amazed the test team with how well it pairs comfort with downhill performance. One tester called it *a sleeper on the fit floor* for how its instant luxury flies in the face of, well, how well it flies down steep faces. Another's only comment was, *rainbows, cotton candy, pillows, marshmallows.* A third said, *it rips.* All mentioned that the polyurethane shell felt strong underfoot, and they agreed that it has a bit more instep room than many boots—a plus for high arches.

Sock it to YOU!



DALBELLO DS 110 W

\$650 F: 110// L: 99mm

Score: 4.38

Testers called the DS 110 W a *lush, curvy, perfect fit with additional cush*. Sounds good, doesn't it? *Big-boned but beautiful*, they said, it was the second roomiest medium width in the group except for its calf fit, where it tapered slightly. Thicker feet and insteps will love the room there and will be able to tap the quickness that low volume testers found a bit lacking. Strong to the edge and dependably solid in the transitions between turns, was the word, with an upright stance for burn-free quads.



K2 ANTHEM 110 MV

\$750 F: 110 // L: 100mm

Score: 4.31

Supreme comfort in a lightweight package was the takeaway from this year's test of the new-in-name Anthem 110 MV. Gone is the Luv and its former look, but testers' love it for its easy on and easy-to-cruise-the-entire-mountain nature. They liked its open forefoot, toebox, and taller instep fit, and equally appreciated the snug grip of the heel and ankle pockets. It runs a little softer than billed, they said, but the polyurethane chassis kept it stable at speed and on hard snow.

By Mark Elling

First, know that a ski specific sock is the first requirement—using shorter length socks designed for other applications that don't fit high enough on the lower leg to stay out of the boot top is a recipe for an uncomfortable shin fit. Additionally, ski socks are made of modern fabrics and wool blends that do a great job of wicking moisture away from the skin within the ski boot environment to keep the foot drier and warmer.

What weight of sock is highly subjective, though the adage thinner is better still applies for most skiers who are looking to maximize toe room and a close, connected feel to a closely fitted boot. A skier's sock weight (in a range from ultralight to lightweight to medium, typically) will vary depending on boot fit—skiers who choose a slightly roomier initial fit can afford to start out with a heavier weight sock right out of the gate, to slightly snug the fit and maximize warmth. And don't forget that a sock is the ultimate 360-degree fitting tool—your boot's a little too tight everywhere? Get a thinner sock! Your boot's starting to pack out? Get a thicker sock! It ain't rocket science—they're socks!



Keep in mind that most skiers don't like a slippery feeling sock in the boot. It can improve entry and exit but often allows too much foot movement during skiing. Also, know that you can target problematic fit areas with a sock's padding distribution. Skiers with chronically tight toes should look for minimal padding in the toebox; a thicker padded heel can reduce slippage there, and a thicker construction along the shin can soften the shin-bang blow, especially in the early season when shins are more sensitive. How many pairs of socks does one need? Ideally a fresh pair for every day of skiing—so think about your upcoming ski trip and do the math.



salomon

TIME TO PLAY



S/PRO

BUILT FOR SKIING.
MASTERFULLY
CRAFTED FOR
YOUR FEET.



WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN TRADITIONAL WIDE



LANGE LX 90 W

\$550 F: 102 // L: 90mm
Score: 4.56

One tester said of the new LX 90 W, *fits big but skis small*—meaning, skis as well as the narrow class which historically has out-performed the wides. Not so anymore. The fats ski every bit as well as the skinnies now, and this newcomer smoked the field. Testers loved the close-to-snow feel through the bottom of the shell, calling it agile and in-tune. Another said *its edge power was alarmingly awesome for a 90-flex wide*. Easy on, easy off, warm and looks good—a no brainer for the big foot ripper.



HEAD EDGE LYT 100 W

\$600 F: 100 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.50

Head did right with their wide one—that was what one tester said of the new Edge LYT 100 W, and that sentiment was mirrored universally. A fault-free performance from this light and airy cavern was what the team agreed on—no problems with fit for the high volume foot and leg, no problems with speeding up the cadence when needed, no problems putting a big ski on edge at speed, and certainly no problems sliding this one on and off. Extra leverage buckles and Liquid Fit liner technology sweetened the deal.



FULL TILT PLUSH 6

\$625 F: #6 tongue/90 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.09

You don't have to be a park kid to appreciate the Plush 6—one of our ex-collegiate racers and race-coach-turned-tester gave it a perfect score, saying, *it won't crush it in the race course but it's great for everything else!* Testers agreed that its three-piece construction combined with spiral wrapping Intuition liner made for best-of-test entry and exit as well as a sweetly cushioned, long-travel flex feel. While some found it a bit more forward leaning than most, all praised its quick handling edge to edge.

Bindings Made Simple

Bindings are rugged little devices, but like any mechanical unit they can wear out quickly if not kept clean and lubricated. At the beginning of the season, do a binding check. Annual shop inspections of the ski/boot/binding system will reveal any deviations in the release system that may require a binding to be re-set or retired if it won't release within a standardized range.



After a given binding model has been off the market for several seasons, the binding company's liability insurer can decline indemnity coverage for a model it deems obsolete due to its age and likely condition. If shop personnel inform you they "can't work on this binding," they're acting within established guidelines over which they have no control. No matter how much you once loved them, if your bindings are no longer indemnified, it's time for them to go.

-Jackson Hogen



Binding Do's & Don'ts

Do:

- Determine your binding setting. It's based on height, weight, age, boot sole length and skiing style. Any shop tech can help you do this in about 10 seconds.
- Pick a binding with your setting number (often called a "DIN" number) near the middle of the binding range. If your setting is "6," a binding with a 3 - 10 scale should be fine.
- Ask a salesperson about any special features that may make one binding more suitable for you than another.

Don't:

- Continue to use a binding the manufacturer no longer indemnifies.
- Use a boot with a touring sole or walking sole that's incompatible with your Alpine bindings.
- Use a boot with worn-out soles.
- Use a children's boot with an adult binding. The toe and heel lugs are sized smaller and they will not release properly. Danger, Will Robinson!

All-Mountain Walk Boots

Take a go-everywhere, do-anything All-Mountain boot and give it a cuff release for more convenient walking and standing around in lines and you get the perfect match for comfort-conscious skiers who may do more packing of kids to lessons or sunny bar-deck après lounging than they will boot packing along a wind-shredded ridgeline. These boots often have more insulated, cushioned liner construction—and in our test this year, they trended more toward the medium and wide side of the fit spectrum.



Dig it. A little Nancy Sinatra. These boots are made for walking. The [Transpacks](#) are made for carrying them with style and ease. That's a shameless plug for our sponsor who truly does make outstanding bags for schlepping your boots.



MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN WALK BOOTS (ALL WIDE)



FISCHER RANGER ONE 120 PBV

\$650 F:120 // L:101 +/-mm
Score: 4.73

One tester channeled Jim Nabors as Gomer Pyle with a *surprise, surprise, surprise!* The Ranger One 120 garnered the highest total score of the entire boot test and was the only boot to earn a perfect score under the Convenience, Warmth & Features tab. I guess we're paying attention now! Testers said it skied on auto-pilot, with a better flex feel than its stiffer, tech-compatible brother, and said the liner feel was a dream against the leg and foot. One of the very best wide of the test—with a walk mode!



ROXA R/FIT HIKE 110

\$575 F: 110 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.33

Testers didn't see this one coming! The sleeker and lighter R/Fit Hike 110 was also a *sleeper and a fighter*. Testers said its shape was surprisingly well-matched to the foot and leg, with a firm enough grip to light up quick turns on demand but without negatively affecting comfort. One tester called it a *vacation home for your feet*. Another said it was *the best newcomer to the boot test and a sneaky powerhouse*. Its lowest scores were for fore-aft support but testers said average and smaller guys with thicker feet will be fine.



ROSSIGNOL ALLTRACK 120

\$700 F: 110 // L: 102mm
Score: 4.30

The perennial tester favorite Alltrack 120 went through a major overhaul for this season, with a completely new mold shape in Dual Core plastic, a totally redone liner and a redesigned hike mode. Testers approved and gave it a gold-medal-level thumbs up. More sculpting for the thicker, higher-volume foot but without sacrificing performance, testers said. The boot is lighter weight now, but without losing the dampness and predictability of a polyurethane shell. Dual Core breathes new life into every arc, of every radius, on any terrain, they said.



K2 B.F.C. 120

\$650 F: 120 // L: 103mm
Score: 4.20

Testers love the massive amount of hangar space in the 2020 B.F.C. 120, calling it *absolutely, positively, without question, hands down a whole lotta room!* In fact, it has the roomiest scores of the entire test for instep height, navicular, ankle pockets and calf—and third roomiest of the bunch in the toebox and forefoot. So yeah, large feet and legs belong here! Testers continue to applaud how well it skis—much better than they'd expected for something so big and luxurious. And with a sweet *après* mode!



DALBELLO PANTERRA 120 GW

\$650 F:120// L: 102mm
Score: 4.16

Lighter and more agile-feeling underfoot, the new 2020 Panterra 120 pleased our crew with a re-styled walk mode and a more streamlined exterior. A new mold gives the Panterra a ripped new look borrowed from medium-width DS's Power Cage construction, and on snow, testers thought this new version was crisper and stronger than its predecessor, without the turbo-lag of old. The fit still remains generous in the toebox, forefoot, and up through the instep (where it ranks in the top 5 hike-mode boots for most room).

INSTANT IMPROVEMENT:

GET A BETTER INSOLE

Professional skiers—competitors, coaches, instructors, patrollers, pretty much everybody who works at a ski area—all have one thing in common: they use upgraded footbeds in their boots. They know that a well-fitting boot is a 360-degree proposition, and there's a lot of your feet on the bottom side that need attention.

Just like building any good structure, you need to start with a solid foundation and a better footbed is the way to do that in a ski boot. It affects not only how your foot sits inside your ski boot but also how the lower leg, knee and hip all line up. That affects your ability to easily and accurately pressure your skis—the essence of comfortable performance skiing.

The stock insole that comes with most boots is its weakest component. It's usually flimsy and not very supportive. It's also the first component of most boots to wear out. Shoes too, by the way.



There are basically two kinds of upgraded footbeds:

Custom, where a professional bootfitter molds special material to your feet to create a precise mirror image shape of your underfoot. Custom insoles, like Masterfit's Instaprint, transmit the inputs to your skis with great precision while providing increased comfort. A great combination. They are usually perfectly comfortable and balanced from the get-go but sometimes a visit back to the bootfitter for a tweak here and there is required.

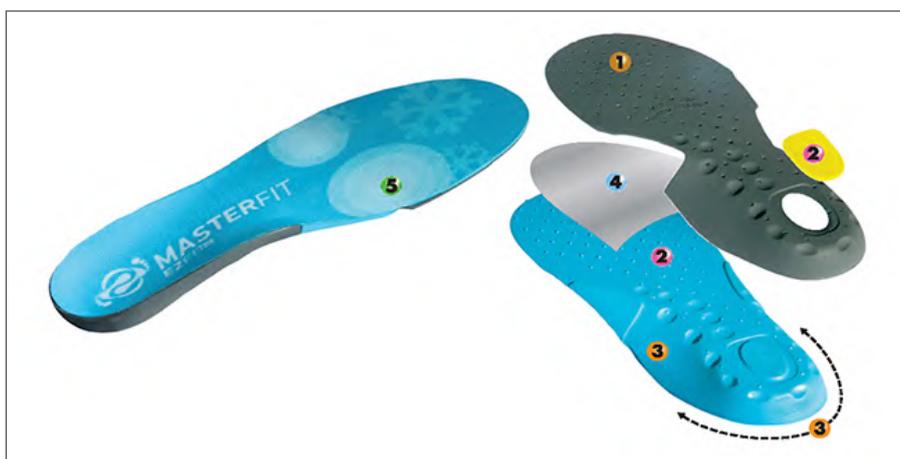


Preparing a molding system for making a custom insole.



Top and bottom views of completed Masterfit Instaprint+ custom insole.

Cut to Fit, where the materials and design provide better support and comfort than what comes stock in the boot but are not quite the movement transmitters that custom insoles are. These are often a great choice for recreational skiers and even rental boot customers. Having your own pair of insoles turns even rental boot into a semi-custom experience.



Top and exploded views of Masterfit EZ Fit Snow insoles.

Some cut-to-fit upgrade insoles, like Masterfit's EZ Fit, have Auto-Adaptable® properties and mold to the underfoot shape with use. These insoles also have extra features like better padding under the heel and a heat reflective layer in the forefoot for extra warmth. We think they are the best cut-to-fit insoles on the market. But in the interest of full disclosure, besides publishing this magazine we also make Masterfit insoles. So we may be a wee bit biased. But we don't think so.

You can find Masterfit insoles at all [America's Best Bootfitters shops](#).



EZFIT^{QF}

Trace, Trim, Drop...and Go! All QF models are ready to roll in minutes using just a pen and scissors. With Masterfit's exclusive AutoAdapt Technology™, **EZFIT QFs** are the only cut-to-fit insoles that personalize both arch *and* heel shape! Pedorthist-designed, they provide a unique blend of support, balance and cushioning while reducing foot and leg muscle fatigue.

QF MODELS AVAILABLE REGULAR AND LV (LOW VOLUME) IN ALL SIZES

Available at [America's Best Bootfitters shops](#)



Clear, cold morning mountain air, crisp corduroy and vacant lift mazes. Another fabulous Silver Mountain spring test day.



ROSSIGNOL
ALLTRACK PRO 110 W

\$700 F:110 // L:100
Score: 4.53

The women's top of the line Alltrack Pro has gained a reputation as the perennial best-looking boot of the test and this time around was no different—its new pale Ice Blue hue won over our test team. They said that while it has a hike mode, it looks, feels, and skis like a full-on Alpine boot, with no power or quickness demerits. The fuzzy liner eases entry and exit, but testers also said it belies the beast within—this is an expert's boot that still welcomes intermediates.



DALBELLO
PANTERRA 105 W ID GW

\$750 F: 101 // L: 105mm
Score: 4.32

An all-new women's performance three-piece joins the Dalbello line-up this year in the Panterra 105 W ID GW, and our test team liked the step up from the softer Kyra of the past. Testers said the gal Panterra runs tall on the leg with a firmly padded shin fit and stouter-than-105 flex feel. Strong to the edge, they said. Supremely easy to slide on due to the spiral ID (Intuition-Dalbello) liner, which they recommend molding straightaway, with roomy-medium containment once all the straps and overlaps are navigated.



ROXA R3W 95
\$625 F: 95// L: 99mm
Score: 4.25

This tall and upright three-piece got its highest scores in the performance categories: stance, edge power and quickness. Testers agreed its feel for the snow was highly tuned, and it had a slinky-carvy attitude edge to edge. Testers said that the R3W 95's entry and exit game was world class, though they fumbled a bit at first with the overlaps and upper Velcro strap buckle. For a more customizable fit, they reminded us that there's an IR (Intuition-Roxa) liner version available for an extra 75 bucks.

WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN WALK BOOTS WIDE



FISCHER MY RANGER ONE 110 (PBV)

\$600 F: 110 // L: 101 +/-3mm
Score: 4.31

It was no surprise to find the My Ranger One 110 PBV's highest score was for Convenience, Warmth and Features; it's very roomy, very cushy, very warm and very easy on and off, testers guaranteed. Testers gave it the highest instep fit score of the entire women's test, which translated into a loss of transmission for average and lower-volume testers—so big thick feet and legs (and the higher instep in between) will luxuriate here. Testers say it's great in medium and big turns, but shorties took some oomph.



K2 B.F.C. W 90 HEAT GRIPWALK

\$750 F: 90 // L: 103mm
Score: 4.70

Many testers rated the fit of the top-shelf B.F.C. W 90 in 5's across the board (that's the roomiest score possible), and another's fit commentary was one word: huge. Another tester, discussing the initial fit and feel said, *put this boot on and try not to smile—I dare ya!* This one's big for sure, rating most room in almost every fit parameter except the ankle and heel where testers said there was a little more retention. They also said it skied head and shoulders above their expectations—sleeper slippers.



The Question Queen, Melodie Buell:
"Hey, what does this do?"

It used to be that a hike- or walk- mode pigeonholed a boot into a less-powerful-skiing sub-class. That isn't the case anymore for the best boots in this large group, which combines lightweight yet stiff plastics and solid metal-to-metal cuff connections to create serious descenders—all with tech binding compatibility. Skiers of all shapes and sizes can now find a boot that will suit his or her foot width as well as uphill and downhill performance needs; narrows, mediums and wides in a broad range of stiffnesses are available in this still-growing category.

A skier wearing a teal jacket, red helmet, and colorful goggles is captured in a dynamic pose, leaning into a turn on a snowy mountain slope. The skier is wearing red and white striped pants and black gloves. The background shows a clear blue sky and evergreen trees.

These boots go uphill and sideways as well as they go downhill.

All-Mountain Freeride Boots

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN FREERIDE NARROW BOOTS



LANGE XT FREE 130 LV

\$850 F: 130 // L: 97mm

Score: 4.42

The most “real boot like” of the Freeride group, testers said over and over—both for fit and for downhill performance. One tester praised the snug but hotspot-free fit by saying the boot felt poured around his foot and ankle. Testers said that there was no sacrifice made on the edge power and stability side of things for having a hike mode and tech compatibility, making it a great choice for aspirational tourers and skinnners who demand true alpine performance. It lacks huge touring range-of-motion, but nobody cared.



DALBELLO LUPO PRO HD

\$950 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.34

Testers liked the new Lupo Pro HD for its polyurethane shell's more damp feel on the snow than the stiffer carbon-cuffed Lupo Factory, but appreciated that it didn't lose any of its quickness or power when it lost \$150 off the Factory's price tag! They found it easy on and off and loved the touring range of motion when the removable tongue was off, allowing unhindered forward cuff movement, matching its long rearward travel. One tester said it got better with every run and the faster he went.



K2 MINDBENDER 130

\$850 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.23

The newest addition to K2's boot family, Mindbender 130 got testers thinking about how comfortable this category has become. Its silky, luscious liner had them salivating on the first slide in, and while it received the roomiest fit scores within the narrow group, testers loved the ample fit for warm and compression-free touring. The toebox and forefoot offers lots of space in width and height but the shape tapers to a snug grip for the ankles and heel. Great power-to-weight ratio with a trick set of features, testers said.



ATOMIC HAWX ULTRA XTD 130

\$950 F: 130 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.08

Testers concur, the revised Hawx XTD 130 is a true low volume boot that doesn't mess around when it comes to gripping the foot and leg. The tightest of the All-Mountain Freeride group, it's on the short list for snuggest of the entire test. Light, agile, and insanely good at going uphill, testers said, the Hawx XTD belongs in the skin track where it can dominate an untracked big-mountain descent. Many testers mentioned wanting to fire up the Memory Fit oven to quickly customize the fit where needed.

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN FREERIDE MEDIUM BOOTS



TECNICA COCHISE 130 DYN

\$900 F: 130 // L: 99mm
Score: 4.29

This year's revised Custom Adaptive Shape liner made the difference for testers who especially loved the larger instep cutaway for a bony midfoot and adjustable tongue attachment for tweaking the instep and shin fit—they put it back in gold medal position in the Freeride group this time around. Unchanged is the shell and cuff, which testers agreed needed no alteration. Cochise 130 Dyn boasts one of the easiest-to-actuate hike modes, and testers resoundingly agreed that it has surprising touring acumen for how strongly this do-it-all skis on any terrain.



FISCHER RANGER FREE 130

\$800 F: 130 // L: 99mm
Score: 4.24

Last year we thought the Ranger Free 130 was Fischer's best boot ever and one of the best boots in our test. This year, with the arrival of its wider brother Ranger One, we think Fischer now has two of its best boots ever and two of the best in our test. Testers still applaud how strongly this boot skis given its very light weight and huge range of motion in walk mode, and they love how well it cradles the foot and leg (read: tightly for a medium).



NORDICA STRIDER 130 PRO DYN

\$850 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.15

Though it returns this year with a flip-flopped shell-cuff cosmetic change, testers did not flip-flop on their previous adulation for how strongly the Strider 130 Pro Dyn skis. Skis like a real boot, was a common refrain from testers who scored it highest for a balanced stance and edge power (poor hike-mode boots get no respect, unless they earn it, and this one did). The 3D Cork Fit Lite liner fit is initially aggressive (firm and snug for a medium), they said, but assured that it settles in.



HEAD KORE 1

\$900 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.11

The Kore 1 got a shell overhaul for this season, with thickened shell walls in critical zones to stiffen the flex and provide more fore-aft stability. Testers could feel the difference and liked it, citing a stronger feel on edge than last year's version. The hike-articulated 3D Perfect Fit liner's Liquid Fit injection feature remains a tester favorite for quickly and anatomically snugging the heel and ankle pocket, and testers who underwent the Form Fit shell-cook customization process said both fit and flex feel improved dramatically.



ROSSIGNOL ALLTRACK PRO 130 GW

\$850 F: 130 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.08

This year, Rossi introduces a medium width version of last year's debut light-weight tech compatible Freeride boot. Testers say the Alltrack Pro 130 GW bullseyes the fit target for the average foot and offers a little extra toe room. It's light by virtue of wall thickness, yet strong on edge due to its Generative Design crosshatched grid structure and Dual Core polyether plastic (aka real ski boot stuff) in the lower shell. A revised hike mode design increased range of motion and solidified power transfer with a new metal-on-metal connection.

MEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN FREERIDE WIDE BOOTS



FISCHER RANGER ONE 130 PBV DYN

**\$750 F: 130 // L: 101 +/-mm
Score: 4.06**

Our test team said that for the thick footed, high insteped and large calf-ed human who's actually interested in doing some real touring, there is no better option than the new Fischer Ranger One PBV Dyn. Wondering about those last three letters, Dyn? That stands for Dynafit tech fittings, the standard for accessing the goods on lightweight touring bindings and not offered on the softer Ranger One 120. Powered by VACUUM—meaning the lower shell is easily molded with Fischer's various VACUUM fitting tools.



FULL TILT ASCENDANT

**\$850 F: #10 tongue/120// L:99mm
Score: 3.87**

Who did testers say would like the Ascendant? Just about anybody who's looking for a lightweight (Grilamid), warm, supremely easy on and off boot that comes with a walk mode, that's who. And it's tech compatible, along with the good touring range of motion that comes naturally with releasable three-piece shell construction. Testers liked the revised, lasted Intuition liner construction that allowed for better custom footbed use and suggested that full-thermo liner molding be front-and-center on the post-purchase to-do list.

MIRACLE ELIXIR: SHELL MODIFICATION

If you've ever had a boot shell stretch or grind for an uncomfortable hot spot like a bunion or a prominent inside anklebone, you know what a difference a little bit of boot modification makes. It's a small investment in time and money that pays huge on-snow dividends over the life of the boot. Adaptive Shape shells employ targeted, dimpled areas to make modifications easier and more permanent. Virtually any boot is able to be customized for better fit and performance, so long as you're working with an experienced bootfitter.

It used to be that bootfitters only had their cobbling skills and stretching and grinding equipment to effect changes in shell shape. Now manufacturers are providing customizing features from the factory. Lange hangs its boot-fittable hat on its mono-injected shell construction, which eliminates plastic seams that can negatively affect traditional shell modifications. Tecnica's Custom Adaptive Shape



shells employ targeted, dimpled areas to make modifications easier and more permanent.

If you've got a foot that begs for shell modification, visit an [America's Best Bootfitters shop](#). You'll find pros there who can provide shell space exactly where you need it.

**Members Save at over 70 resorts -
More local, regional, and destination
resort deals coming!**



**Use it once &
it's paid for.**
*Use it often and
save hundreds!*

50% off on ski/
board tunes or
hot wax at ski/
snowboard shops

2 for 1 and daily
savings

Save on lodges at
top destinations
all season
(excludes
holidays)

Save at bike
parks and
summer activities

ONLY \$19.95
EARLY SEASON SPECIAL

**Use Promo
code:
GEAR19**

*Use it as many
times as you want,
all season long!*

www.MountainSportsClub.com
PRINT & USE COUPONS THE SAME DAY



MountainSportsClub

Use it once and it's paid for. Use it often and save hundreds.

WOMEN'S **ALL MTN FREERIDE NARROW**



ROSSIGNOL
ALLTRACK ELITE 120 W

\$750 F: 120 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.70

Testers agreed that for an all-day-skiing crossover boot that's at home in-bounds or on short forays into the backcountry, skiers will be hard-pressed to do better than the new Alltrack Elite 120 W. It forgoes lightweight plastics, sticking with a polyether shell for damp control of the ski, but offers tech binding compatibility and an option on GripWalk soles for off-campus missions. A touch softer than 120 and on the roomy edge of narrow, testers gave it the second highest score of the entire test, men's included.



K2 MINDBENDER ALLIANCE 110

\$750 F: 110 // L: 98mm

Score: 4.37

With high scores for its dialed stance and its convenience, warmth and features kit, testers affirmed that the new Mindbender Alliance 110 is a multi-playground master with more throttle response and quick handling than expected for its high level of fit luxury. Thin shell polyurethane and Pebax keep it light, and testers loved the two-position forward lean adjustment on the metal-to-metal hike mode apparatus. This is the roomiest of all women's narrows, regardless of category, so testers said average feet should not fear this untracked pow reaper.



WOMEN'S ALL MOUNTAIN FREERIDE MEDIUM BOOTS



NORDICA
STRIDER 115 W DYN

\$750 F: 115 // L: 100mm
Score: 4.60

Coming from a group of serious skiers, when they say this is a serious performer, well, we take them seriously! Nearly perfect scores for its edge power and stability and also for its quickness and feel for the snow, the Strider 115 W Dyn will not disappoint rippers looking to dominate demanding pitches on big skis. Sitting well to the narrowest side of the medium group, the liner's aggressive heel and ankle fit relaxed with wear time but testers still recommend a liner cook to even it up.



TECNICA
COCHISE 105 W DYN

\$780 F: 105 // L: 99mm
Score: 4.58

Consistently high scores across the board got it a gold medal, but testers agree the Tecnica Cochise 105 W Dyn's simple hike mode switch remains the best of the group. They loved the revised Custom Adaptive Shape liner this year, citing extra room in the toebox and forefoot (nice for touring and warmth) and a firmly anatomical grip on the heel and ankle (good for skiing). The liner's new instep cutaway relieves peak pressure over the top of the foot, even when buckled tight for a gnarly descent.



FISCHER
MY RANGER FREE 110

\$700 F: 110 // L: 99mm
Score: 4.51

This boot checks a lot of boxes, one tester said. Another just said, I want this boot! Again, the My Ranger Free 110 is on the podium with a gold medal for its pairing of stunning range of motion in hike mode (best in test) with true Alpine descent qualifications, all wrapped in a noticeably lightweight package. It's one of those tight-mediums, testers say, right on target for a 99mm last and ideal for average to slender calves. Its sneaky hike-mode switch location remains a tester fave.

LX

LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE

All-new LX collection combines Lange's legendary precision with a relaxed and luxurious all-mountain fit. The more accommodating 102mm width expands our "Choose Your Fit" concept to offer reduced foot compression for optimized all-day comfort no matter your foot shape.



L LANGE

BE ONE WITH YOUR BOOT.



Backcountry Boots

By Mark Elling

The true Backcountry boot is an out-of-bounds animal—built for ascending with light weight, maximum touring range of motion, tech binding compatibility and a fully rockered and aggressively lugged outsole for walking and scrambling when needed. We chose to wait until the Spring to test a small batch of BC boots in the Pacific Northwest where the snowpack hung on long enough for us to spend some time in the skin track and see which boots rose to the top of the pack.

While we'd all hope for champagne powder on a trip beyond the gates or out of a hut, the truth is that backcountry snow can be tricky, and might even be boiler plate melt-freeze in the morning—so, we looked for boots that would control fatter all-mountain skis everywhere we pointed them regardless of snow quality or terrain. Not all touring boots can deliver on that.



Far and away, testers put the new, men's Scarpa Maestrale XT and updated women's Scarpa Gea RS at the top of the heap for their combination of anatomical fit, massive touring strides and Alpine-level ski characteristics. The men particularly liked how the Maestrale's new four-buckle gripped the lower leg evenly but still offered a well-contoured, medium width fit in the lower. One tester said, *the flex feel is strong and resilient, the edge power is substantial and the steering is accurate—it's a good boot.*

For those aerobic beasts looking for supreme lightweight and ascent skills, testers said the Fischer Travers Carbon's Boa reel lace system hugged the foot like a trail runner and its range of motion let them fly uphill like they were wearing running shoes too.

Our women testers were particularly fond of the uphill-downhill-comfort combination of the Tecnica Zero G Tour Scout W and they gave it best-looking BC boot kudos as well.



2020 BOOT TEST MANAGERS

STEVE COHEN, 6'3", 225 lbs., 63 yrs.

Cohen is CEO and co-founder of [Masterfit Enterprises](#). He oversees operations of the [Masterfit University](#) Training Centers, America's Best Bootfitters organization with trained bootfitters at top ski shops, as well as Masterfit's insole and bootfitting products lines. He created the on-hill boot testing program in 1988 while serving as executive editor of Ski Magazine and has tested boots every year since.



MARK ELLING, 5'11", 180, 49 yrs.

Elling has tested boots since 1997 and currently manages all boot test operations as well as authors the boot reviews for this guide and the [America's Best Bootfitters](#) website. He is [Masterfit University](#) Training Centers' (MFU) curriculum director and staff manager of the MFU bootfitting workshops in the United States, Europe and Australia.



MASTERFIT INSTRUCTION STAFF BOOT TEST TEAM (BY YEARS TESTING):



JEFF RICH, 5'9", 160 lbs., 63 yrs.

Rich is co-founder of [Masterfit Enterprises](#) and [Masterfit University](#) and leader of Masterfit's Product Development team. He's a veteran boot tester (he co-founded the on-hill testing program in 1988) and board-certified pedorthist. He is the owner/operator of the [U.S. Orthotic Center](#) in New York City, a leading pedorthic and footwear modification lab.



BOB GLEASON, 5'11", 165 lbs, 67 yrs.

Elling has tested boots since 1997 and currently manages all boot test operations as well as authors the boot reviews for this guide and the America's Best Bootfitters website. He is Masterfit University Training Centers' (MFU) curriculum director and staff manager of the MFU bootfitting workshops in the United States, Europe and Australia.

GREG HOFFMANN, 5'10", 175, 63 yrs.

Owner/operator of Ski Boot Fitting of Vail and Beaver Creek, Colorado, which operates out of Vail Sports locations at each resort, Hoffmann is a senior Masterfit University instructor, former board-certified pedorthist and a long-time boot tester. He spends his summer in Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, kiteboarding, windsurfing, surfing, and fishing.



JACK RAFFERTY, 6'2", 195 lbs., 64 yrs.

Owner/operator of Thotics Inc. at Aspen Sports in Snowmass Village, Colorado, Rafferty is a slope-side veteran bootfitter and pedorthist for over 35 years. Rafferty primarily concentrates on winter sports recreational athletes, but also works with multiple sports disciplines and prescription-based orthopedic patients. He's also a senior Masterfit University instructor and a training consultant for Vail Resorts.





Ski and Snowboard
Boot Horn



Makes Putting on Boots Quick & Easy

- ◆ **HELPS** to put on boots
- ◆ **SAVES** time and effort
- ◆ **ELIMINATES** pain and frustration
- ◆ **PROTECTS** hands when putting in liners
- ◆ **AFFORDABLE** ski & ride accessory

Available on line at the [Masterfit boot fit aid shop](#)
and at many [America's Best Bootfitters shops](#).

PROUD SPONSORS OF





BILL HAIGHT, 5'7", 155 lbs., 53 yrs.

Haight is a board-certified pedorthist and owner/operator of Green Mountain Orthotic Lab (GMOL), the premier bootfitting shop at Stratton, Vermont. GMOL is also manufacturer of industry-standard stance alignment and sole planning equipment. He is a Masterfit University instructor, PSIA level I Alpine instructor and member of the education staff for the PSIA.



JIM SCHAFFNER, 5'11", 230 lbs., 61 yrs.

Schaffner has been working in the ski industry his entire adult life. Originally from the Midwest, he started in ski retail as a teen and was then picked to work with athletes in racing service for Salomon North America. His home is in Truckee, California, where he owns and operates The Start Haus ski shop.

KEVIN GABRIEL, 6'0", 215 lbs., 45 yrs.

A veteran boot tester, bootfitter, ski technician, and salesperson at [Gravity Sports](#) at Mt. Bachelor in Bend, Oregon, with over 20 years ski industry experience, Gabriel is a snowboard and Alpine bootfitting instructor at Masterfit University. He has a background in competitive hockey and splits his time between skis and a snowboard, depending on conditions.



PAT SULLIVAN, 5'9", 150 lbs., 40 yrs.

A board certified pedorthist since 2009 and Masterfit University instructor since 2002, Sullivan was the owner of Alpine Pro Performance boot lab from 2006-2013. He has been the lead pedorthist bootfitter at Jackson Hole Ski and Sport since 2013. During the off season he is a bike fitter for road and mountain at Hoback Sport in Jackson, WY. He says, *I live by work to play.*



CHRIS WILDE, 6'2", 215 lbs., 48 yrs.

Wilde is a veteran boot tester and bootfitter at Gravity Sports at Mt. Bachelor in Bend, Oregon, during the winter. A board-certified pedorthist and owner of "Sole Motion" mobile orthotic lab, Wilde is a Masterfit University instructor with more than 25 years experience in the ski industry.



MARC STEWART, 6'1", 175 lbs., 54 yrs.

Founder and lead fitter of the Boot Lab at Windham Mountain Resort in New York, Stewart has over 20 years experience as a bootfitter, is a board-certified pedorthist, and has been a Masterfit University instructor since 2013. He is a PSIA level 3 Instructor who conducts on-hill clinics for PSIA's Eastern Division.

SAM TISCHENDORF, 5'6", 140 lbs., 32 yrs.

Tischendorf comes from a clinical sports podiatry background in Australia working with athletes. She then moved to Telluride, Colorado. She is the supervising and (currently) only female bootfitter at BootDoctors. Tischendorf joined the Masterfit University teaching team in 2014 in both Australia (using her native tongue) and throughout the United States.



JEREMY JOHNSTON, 5'2", 150 lbs., 33 yrs.

Elling has tested boots since 1997 and currently manages all boot test operations as well as authors the boot reviews for this guide and the America's Best Bootfitters website. He is Masterfit University Training Centers' (MFU) curriculum director and staff manager of the MFU bootfitting workshops in the United States, Europe and Australia.





**You're Older.
You're Still Skiing.
You're Not Alone.**

SeniorsSkiing.com

The free, weekly* online magazine for
older snow sports enthusiasts.

Equipment. Destinations. Fitness. Medical Technology. Recovery. History. Humor.
Connect with other older skiers, boarders, snowshoers.

Plus, annual reports of *Best Skis for Older Skiers*; *Where Older Skiers Ski Free*;
Best Boots for Older Skiers; discounts and other features.

Subscriptions are free. Visit **SeniorsSkiing.com**
and enter email address in pop-up window.

SENIORS  **SKIING**.COM

FOR THE 50+ SNOW ENTHUSIAST

*weekly in-season; monthly off-season

ABB MEMBER SHOP BOOT TEST TEAM (BY YEARS TESTING):



DALLAS GOLDSMITH, 6'0", 145 lbs., 44 yrs.

Goldsmith grew up on the slopes of Southern California at Snow Summit. He raced for most of his youth, making it to the Junior Olympics twice. In 2007 he returned to his hometown of Big Bear Lake, California, to help with the family business, Goldsmith's Sports, established 1987. Goldsmith is also a PGA golf professional.



DANIELLE GOLDSMITH, 5'7", 120 lbs., 48 yrs.

Co-owner and C.A.O. (Chief Amazement Officer) at Goldsmiths Sports Inc., established in 1987. Goldsmith started building snowboard boots (as there were no snowboard boots yet) in 1987. She was a pro snowboarder for Simms and Morrow snowboards from 1988 to 1991. She has been a Masterfit-certified bootfitter since 2012, a snowsports industry product tester since 1987 and an ABB boot tester since 2013. Big Bear Resorts (Snow Summit and Bear Mountain) in Big Bear Lake, California, are the home resorts for Danielle and GoldsmithsSports.com.

JIM MORRIS, 5'10" 185 lbs., 60 yrs.

Morris is a Masterfit University graduate and bootfitter since 2012 at Goldsmiths Sports in Big Bear Lake, California. A PSIA certified instructor since 2002, he was a supervisor at the Bear Mountain Ski School for 12 years. He currently teaches the able-bodied at Snow Summit and teaches disabled skiers with the U.S. Adaptive Recreation Center.



STACY CRUMPLER, 5'9", 150 lbs., 40 yrs.

Crumpler is a veteran boot tester, bootfitter and shop manager for [Goldsmiths Sports Inc.](http://GoldsmithsSports.com) in Big Bear Lake, California. Crumpler has attended Masterfit University multiple times.



JACKSON HOGEN, 5'11", 175 lbs., 68 yrs.

Hogen has labored as ski designer, binding and boot product manager, freestyle competitor, bootfitter, lecturer on risk management, ski instructor, marketing director, resort feature writer, ski tester for 30 years and boot tester for 20, OLN and RSN television show host, extreme camp coach, Desperate Measures co-creator, four-time Warren Miller screenwriter, R&D chief, honorary Canadian, college racer, two-time personal therapist to Greg Stump, regular contributor to at least ten different ski magazines, and his guise as Pontiff of Powder, married Paul Hochman and Carrie Sheinberg in all ways but legally. He currently serves as a bootfitter at Bobo's in Reno, Nevada, when not providing all editorial services for Realskiers.com, including his weekly Revelation from the Pontiff of Powder. In addition to the 126 Recommended ski reviews on Realskiers.com, Hogen also provided 48 original reviews for the Masterfit Real Skiers 2018 Buyers Guide and another 99 for OnTheSnow.com, making him the world's most widely read ski analyst.



ADAM TUTSKEY, 5'8" 168 lbs., 37 yrs.

Skiing is Tutskey's passion, and he just started his own ski shop—Montana Ski Tech—specializing in custom ski bootfitting, tuning, and mounting. Tutskey also works as a full time contractor, running the ski shop in the evenings. A ski industry veteran for 20 years, Tutskey has done everything from snowmaking and ski instructing to part time freestyle ski coaching. But he has specialized in custom bootfitting for the past 6 years.





ELIMINATOR CUSTOM TONGUE

The bootfitter's go-to solution for common fit and performance problems. Provides immediate relief and performance boost. Made from premium EVA with tapered edges for maximum comfort and easy fitting. Attaches in seconds to existing boot tongues with supplied Velcro disks. Auto-molds quickly during wear. Two sizes.

ELIMINATOR USES

- Stops shin bite & instep pain
- Relieves calf pressure
- Snugs cuff fit and eliminates heel lift
- Helps get skiers out of the "back seat"
- Reduces muscle fatigue
- Prevents "black toe"

ELG, ESM

Available at most [America's Best Bootfitters shops](#) and on-line at the [Masterfit boot fit aids shop](#).

BOB TUTSKEY, 5'7", 165 lbs., 69 yrs.

Growing up in Illinois this self-described flatlander was a novice skier until he moved to Montana in 1985. Once settled in Missoula, this advertising and marketing account guy quickly immersed himself into the world of skiing and outdoor recreation, working with clients such as Big Sky Resort, Montana Snowbowl, Brighton Ski area, The North Face, Gregory backpacks, MSR, and numerous other rafting and recreational tourism businesses. He spent 30 years learning to keep up with his kids and grandson on the ski hill, and it's led to a post-retirement life that includes becoming a PSIA level 1 instructor and ski gear geek.



VETERAN BOOT TEST TEAM (BY YEARS TESTING)



MIKE EVANS, 5'6", 160 lbs., 59 yrs.

Evans is currently a full-time ski instructor at Mt. Bachelor, Oregon, and head junior Alpine race coach for Mt. Bachelor Sports Education Foundation. Evans coached Tommy Ford and Laurenne Ross as junior racers. He is certified PSIA level 3 Alpine, level I Nordic telemark, and childrens specialist I, and is also a USSA level 400 coach.



LANCE CYGIELMAN, 6'0", 180 lbs., 62 yrs.

Working hard, playing hard, and living the dream in Jackson Hole, Cygielman is a travel professional specializing in worldwide ski destinations and is the official travel provider for Bootfitters.com. When not planning travel, he tries to ski almost every day and will tell anyone who will listen the value of having the right boot fit.

NEAL SCHOLEY, 6'2", 185 lbs., 39 yrs.

Scholey is a veteran boot tester and owner of [Local Real Estate](#) in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Well, really his wife Karey is the owner and brains behind the operation, and Neal has just honed his lifelong ski industry sales pitches and taken that to the next level in the real estate business.



ERIK KORMAN, 6'1", 195 lbs., 54 yrs.

Korman is the manager and retail hard-goods buyer for Gravity Sports at Mt. Bachelor, Oregon, with 30 years ski industry experience. A veteran boot and ski tester, he was a ski racer, former coach and manufacturer's sales associate. When not skiing, he captains the "space shuttle" for the crazed Korman family.



LIZ ELLING, 5'5", 130 lbs., 50 yrs.

Veteran boot tester and former PSIA level 2 Alpine instructor, Elling has worked in the ski industry as a retail salesperson and demo technician as well as a snowcat driver and bartender at [Cat Ski Mt. Bailey](#). Currently a committed pow-skier and line-poacher, she works full-time as a vintage retail dealer in Bend, Oregon.



BRIAN ELLING, 5'9", 170 lbs., 47 yrs.

Elling lives and works in Missoula, Montana, where he's been part of the team at family-owned Gull Ski and Snowboard since 2002, and he has a decade of ski instruction experience prior to that. When he does break free of the vortex that is Montana Snowbowl, he gets over to Mt. Bachelor, Big Sky, and Big Mountain.



EMILY POORE, 5'6", 150 lbs., 35 yrs.

Boot test veteran and bootfitter, Poore has skiing in her blood—her parents married on skis and raised her on the slopes. She is the most recent addition to the instructor roster at Masterfit University. This winter you will find her as part of the team at Alpine Shop in Schweitzer, Idaho.

MEGEN JOHNSON, 5'7", 145 lbs., 41 yrs.

Johnson grew up ski racing in Washington and went on to race in college. Currently, she is the manager and soft goods buyer for Race Place in Bend, Oregon. She started coaching in 2000 and has worked a variety of jobs in the ski industry, including lift operations supervisor at Mt. Bachelor.



HEATHER ANN JOHNSON, 5'3", 140 lbs., 48 yrs.

Johnson has been in the ski industry for 25 years, working as a ski instructor at Mt. Bachelor, a race coach for Mt. Bachelor Sports Education Foundation, and as a level III certified professional ski patroller at Mt. Bachelor. She was a K2 telemark ambassador and helped design a ski for their women's ski line in 1998. She currently skis in northeastern Oregon's Wallowa mountains, where she works at Ferguson Ridge ski area coaching "The Hurricane Rippers."



LEE ANN ROSS, 5'4", 160 lbs., 68 yrs.

A ski instructor at Mt Bachelor for 18 years and a veteran boot tester, Ross holds PSIA level 3 Alpine instructor certification with a senior specialist accreditation. She was also the NASTAR national champion in 1973 and a retired Foreign Service Officer. That makes her the most worldly of our ski bum-centric test team. When not skiing, she's often found casting a fly at permit?? on a salt flat somewhere exotic.



EINO HOLM, 5'9" 235 lbs., 38 yrs.

Holm learned to ski at Crystal Mountain, in the Republic of Cascadia, from his Pa and older brothers. He has been skiing for 37 winters at various locales around the West. He prefers funky, off-radar joints like Anthony Lakes and Ski Cooper to the current push toward homogeneity and long lines at the tram. He has been a ski mechanic off and on for 11 years and generally an equipment nerd for as long as he can remember.

AMY POST, 5'2" 180 lbs., 37 yrs.

Post is a ski instructor and staff trainer at Bogus Basin in Boise, Idaho, as well as a clinician and examiner for PSIA-NI. Over the past 13 seasons, she's taught skiing, supervised snowsports schools, and coached racing in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and Utah. She loves to ski fast and go adventuring in the woods. She also enjoys the nerdier aspects of sport, like PSIA certification, as well as evaluating ski boots and movement analysis. In the warmer months, she teaches environmental education programs and owns a gardening business.



MELODIE BUELL, 5'8", 160 lbs., 33 yrs.

Buell grew up ski racing through college, then coaching, and now she shares her passion for the sport at Oregon Adaptive Sports based at Mt. Bachelor where she is an instructor and trainer. She is a current PSIA Alpine level III and Adaptive level II instructor and a NW divisional clinic leader and examiner. When she's not on the hill giving lessons, clinics, goofing off, or testing boots, you can find her at the bike park riding DH or on Bend's endless single track trails, climbing, hiking mountains, or playing with her pup, Jett.



KORI COGGIN, 5'6", 140 lbs., 26 yrs.

Born and raised in Central Oregon, Coggin has been skiing for over 20 years and ski raced for 12. She currently works at Gravity Sports at Mt. Bachelor in Bend, Oregon, as a salesperson, ski technician, and bootfitter. After obtaining an outdoor leadership and education degree, she has worked for several outdoor adventure organizations.

KAREY SCHOLEY, 5'3", 115 lbs., 43 yrs.

Scholey has been skiing for most of her life, although only regularly after moving to Bend, Oregon, in the BIG winter of 1992. She made Mt. Bachelor her second home until her job took her to [Silver Mountain Resort](#) in 2001 to develop the resort's newer amenities such as the base village, [indoor waterpark](#), and [Galena Ridge Golf Community](#).



MARK KORMAN, 5'10", 185 lbs., 51 yrs.

Currently a pledging member in good standing of the Midwestern chapter of SA, Skiers Anonymous, Korman hails from the hard pack of Hyland Hills Ski Area in the heart of Minnesota "nice and ice." A former top-ranked FIS slalom racer, he was a rinse-lather-repeat three-time state high school champion and later captained the Lewis & Clark race team van across the Northwest with slogans like "Bomb the hill, not Iraq." He's now a "forgot my heart pacer pow chaser."



KIM HOLZER, 5'3", 135 lbs., 42 yrs.

Mountainscape chaser, nature ambassador, and environmental educator, Holzer holds PSIA Alpine level III, children's specialist II, freestyle specialist I, telemark I, and adaptive I certifications and has been teaching skiing for 18 years. She learned to ski at Jiminy Peak in Western Massachusetts, then worked part-time at Vail and now calls Schweitzer, Idaho, her home.