

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

THE SHORT TURN SATISFACTION CLINIC

By TONY D. CRESPI, TECHNICAL EDITOR

The best skiers on the mountain seem to float down the hill, gracefully linking one turn with another. Like running water, each turn flows fluidly into the next. In truth, of course, while many skiers can ski fast, not every skier can connect a fast line of linked short turns.

"To me, short turns make a greater ability to ski a wider variety of terrain and conditions," explains Shawn Smith. Smith is not a typical skier. In addition to having served as guest coach for the United States Ski Team, Smith spent approximately two decades skiing with and coaching PSIA's elite National Demonstration Team. In the inner circle of ski teaching, Shawn Smith is considered one of the most knowledgeable and technically astute ski teachers in the country. Shawn hails from ski country in Vermont. "In certain conditions, you need a short turn," reflects Smith. "On steeper terrain you need that skill. Short turns are key to advanced skiing."

Of course, Smith is not the sole top skier who knows the importance of mastering a short turn. Bud Randall is another pro who appreciates the importance of mastering a short turn. The former top mogul coach who has taught at resorts ranging from Vail in Colo., to Bromley in Vermont, Randall excels in short turns. After all, mogul skiing requires short turn skills.

"Short turns are important," adds Randall. "From moguls to free skiing, it's an important skill if you want to truly master the mountain."

Welcome to the Advanced Class
The Short Turn Clinic

Here are five keys to mastering short turns

1) Face the Upper Body Down the Fall Line

Intermediate skiers often face in the direction of travel. Black Diamond experts, in contrast, face down the fall line. It is often a subtle distinction. However, to be a top gun, the difference can be powerful. "When I'm skiing really well, I'm calm, and I'm projecting down the mountain," explains Randall. "When you're moving down the steep you don't want to face sideways. I project down the hill. My feet pass underneath me as my

upper body moves downward."

The take home to remember is to face down the hill.

2) Practice Lateral Rather Than Vertical Movements

Years ago, experts used vertical movement to initiate quick turns. Today, with shaped skis, experts flex their knees and ankles as they arc from turn to turn. Modern experts steer the skis with ankles and knees using the ski's energy and foot steer to arc the skis smoothly from one side of the body to the other.

"You need to keep thinking of the direction of trav-

The key is to choose what is functional for your body type. Experts know that while pros in past days skied with their skis virtually glued together, modern experts know to keep the skis functionally apart, and their weight centered over both of the skis.

el," emphasizes Smith. "If you can't feel the shins against the front of both boots then you are likely going to end up too much laterally or back on the heels."

Think of a pendulum and emphasize lateral movement.

3) Stand with the Skis Functionally Apart

Do not to lock your feet together. You need to work both skis. Are your skis functionally apart? They should be apart wide enough so you can work both skis and be balanced.

"If your feet are too close you will probably feel that your tempo is impeded. You may feel like you are tripping," says Smith. The ideal stance varies from person to person. The key is to choose what is functional for your body type. Experts know that while pros in past days skied with their skis virtually glued together, modern experts know to keep the skis functionally apart, and their weight centered over both of the skis.

A balanced stance is critical to expert skiing.

4) Master Speed Control

"I try to pick the speed I enjoy," says Randall. "I can pick up speed, if I want, or haul it in. I do it arcing the ski." Speed control is a hallmark of expert skiing. Expert skiers learn two key points: to control the shape of the turn using rounder, more arcing shapes to enhance speed control and to pressure the entire ski to add control. Adding pressure to the tip and fore body of the ski enhances edge grip and allows the tail to release and skid, leaving a wider more controlled track.

"What's the big deal about a skid?" asks Randall. "Watch a racer and their legs, and you may see that racer use a long controlled skid. And it looks cool. Skidding lets you move across the hill. You are in a balanced stance. It does slow you."

Learn speed control, and you will own the throttle.

5) Master Effective Pole Use

"I see two primary functions of a pole," notes Smith. "It helps to hold the angles of the body and stabilize those angles and as you redirect those angles into a new turn, hopefully a gliding turn. The swing helps redirect the body into the new direction of travel. It helps smooth out our skiing." "I have a basic rule," adds Smith. "Don't just face your hands down the fall line; face your body. In other words, every time the pole is swung and planted it brings us in the direction of travel."

The final take home for you to remember and consider is top experts know that short, precise turns are truly a hallmark of black diamond skiing. Examine your skills. Examine your short swing of turning. Consider these pointers.

Be aware.

Ski with care.

Refine your short turn.

Tony Crespi has served as both a ski school trainer and development team coach. A frequent contributor to publications throughout snow country, his column and instructional pointers are published in SKIER NEWS throughout the season.

WHISTLER HOSTS WINTER PURINA® INCREDIBLE DOG CHALLENGE®

Featured events include Avalanche Rescue, Skijoring, Agility, 60-Weave Pole and Freestyle Flying Disc
Proceeds of the event to benefit local animal and pet charities

KETCHUM, ID – For the first time ever, the Winter Purina Incredible Dog Challenge (PIDC) will be held in Whistler. On Jan. 8 and 9, 2010, some of the best performance dogs in the world will show off their talents just prior to the 2010 Winter Olympic games. The dogs will be competing in a number of different events, including Avalanche Rescue, Skijoring, Agility, Head-to-Head 60-Weave Pole Racing and Freestyle Flying Disc. Proceeds from these public events will benefit local animal and pet charities. The event will be filmed for broadcast in both Canada and in the U.S.

Nestlé Purina PetCare, the title sponsor of the event, believes that any dog can be incredible given the proper nutrition, training and love. The Purina Incredible Dog Challenge certainly showcases this, with many of the top competitors through the years coming from animal shelters or rescue efforts.

"These dogs are athletes competing in events they love to do, are entertaining to watch and evoke the bonds that we all share with our four legged friends," said Jim Allen, Manager, Experiential Marketing of Nestlé Purina PetCare.

The Purina Incredible Dog Challenge is one of the most popular and well known marketing initiatives in the pet industry. Currently finishing its twelfth season in the U.S., the PIDC has been viewed by well over a billion people worldwide and has aired on NBC, ABC, ESPN, ESPN2, USA Network, TBS Superstation and Bravo TV networks. This marks the first time the event has been staged in Canada and only the second time ever outside the U.S., having gone to Australia in 2000 prior to the Olympics there.

"It is great to have Whistler host the 'Doggie Games' prior to the actual Olympic Games," said organizer Paul Carson, who is a former Canadian National Ski Team member. "We have staged these events in beautiful places from coast to coast in the U.S., but never with the backdrop as spectacular as Whistler/Blackcomb."

Event Descriptions:

Incredible Freestyle Flying Disc: This competition replicates the popular PIDC discipline, where teams consisting of a dog and human partner perform two-minute freestyle flying disc routines, timed to music. This competition is staged on a groomed snowfield. Judges score the team on dog skills, handler skills and bonus catches. It demonstrates degrees of difficulty, leaping ability, and showmanship.

Incredible Agility: Small and large dog competitors navigate an obstacle course on a groomed snowfield consisting of jumps, weave poles, tunnels and other obstacles. Dogs are timed, with penalty times added for faults made on the course. Each dog makes two runs on the course, with the fastest time winning.

Incredible Dual Course Slalom Racing: Dogs compete head-to-head on a 60-weave pole course in a tournament elimination format. Eight dogs start in four quarter-final races, with winners advancing to the semis and finals. A consolation heat will determine 3rd place.

Paw and Pole: This demonstration event is open to the public. Locals are encouraged to bring their own dogs and enter the cross-country Paw and Pole ski race. All dogs must be kept on a leash or skijoring harness. Competitors will start at one-minute intervals and go

around the course. Prizes will be given for fastest teams, best costumes, best look alike (dog and handler) and more. Dogs can pull, heal or even be carried around the course.

Incredible Avalanche Rescue: The Incredible Avalanche Rescue Dog competition is designed to simulate a real life avalanche rescue. A minimum of four teams will compete head to head. Each team has one dog, and three ski patrol members. Each team must locate a person buried five to six feet under the snow and dig the person out. This timed, head-to-head race is run in heats. The faster team from each heat will advance to the next round, culminating in a final championship heat. Individual times from the semi-final heats will determine third and fourth place. Timing begins when the dog and handlers enter the designated snowfield site, where they will search and locate a victim below the surface. The clock stops when the dog gets the pull toy from the victim's hand.

Incredible Skijoring: This competition (Norwegian for "ski driving") features cross-country skiers drawn over snow by one or more dogs. Teams, consisting of one or two dogs and a cross-country ski racer attached by a cord and harness, compete on a 5-kilometer course. Sprint speeds of 20 miles per hour are common in short races. Even though competitors are racing head to head, this is a timed event and the overall time determines place from third place on. The fastest two teams will advance on to a final championship race.

For more information on the event and Pet Care, go to www.whistler.com/events or www.carsonevents.com or www.petcentric.com

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