

CHRISTY SPORTS and SKISET FORM LARGEST WORLDWIDE EQUIPMENT RENTAL NETWORK

LAKEWOOD, CO – Christy Sports and Skiset have joined forces to create a network of ski rental shops, which collectively make up the world's largest source for booking ski and snowboard rentals.

Christy Sports, one of the largest ski and snowboard retailers in the Rocky Mountain region, recently announced it has partnered with Skiset, Europe's largest ski and snowboard rental network. The combined network of more than 800 rental and demo shops makes up the largest worldwide resource for booking ski and snowboard rentals in the United States, Canada and Europe. Shops will offer a high quality of equipment and service, supported by a centralized online reservation system and several call centers throughout North America and Europe.

"Both companies share a common vision of the ski and snowboard rental business, anchored on quality equipment, outstanding customer service, conveniently located shops, and attractive prices," said Patrick O'Winter, CEO of Christy Sports. "Christy Sports and Skiset will continue exploring additional synergies, leveraging the partnership to increase global business with lodging and travel partners as well as equipment purchases."

The North American rental networks of Christy Sports and Skiset have merged into one network, the Christy Sports Rental Network, which is managed by Christy Sports. Overall, the North American network offers more than 120 locations in the U.S. and Canada, including more than 40 Christy Sports owned shops. O'Winter anticipates developing this network to as many as 200 storefronts in North America, with affiliates that meet the same high requirements of quality and service.

"By establishing this rental network, our customers are able to access quality ski rental packages practically anywhere they want to ski or snowboard, using one booking source," said Gordon Wade, director of Internet commerce at Christy Sports. "North American customers can book European ski and snowboard rentals through Christy Sports, with fulfillment by Skiset. Conversely, European customers booking with Skiset for the U.S. and Canada are fulfilled by the Christy Sports Rental Network."

Customers will not only benefit from access to an extensive worldwide rental network, but affiliate partners will also gain additional market share and expand their customer base by leveraging the network's global marketing efforts.

To make a rental reservation, customers can visit <http://rental.christysports.com>. Visitors can select their desired location to rent skis. Once a convenient store is selected, the user will be given the opportunity to make an online reservation at a great discount.

For ski shops looking for additional information on the Christy Sports Rental Network, contact Gordon Wade at (970) 468-2428 or gwade@christysports.com.

Christy Sports, one of the largest ski and snowboard retailers in the Rocky Mountain region, launched the Christy Sports Rental Network last season. The company now has created an international network of affiliate ski rental shops that comprises a massive resource for booking ski and snowboard rentals and demo packages.

The U.S. Christy Sports Rental Network is composed of numerous affiliate ski and snowboard rental shops, more than 40 Christy Sports' locations, and the company's rental delivery service called Door 2 Door. The Christy Sports Rental Network is currently serving Colorado, Utah, California, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York and Maine. Additional locations are being added on a daily basis.

"In the U.S. we have hand-picked ski and snowboard shops from California to Maine so our customers can rest assured they will receive a positive ski or snowboard rental experience in any location within the network. Whether they are searching for a ski or snowboard rental package or a ski or snowboard demo, Christy Sports is committed to making sure its customers have easy and hassle free rental, no matter the location," he continued, "And now we have great availability in Europe and in Canada."

You can also visit Christy Sports' website via an easily found link on the homepage of www.skiernews.com and you can find this exact page, and link from it as well, on www.skiernews.net/Dec-Jan2012-Technical.pdf

With a rental scheduled 24 hours or more in advance, renters an save up to 20 percent on skis and snowboards, with some restrictions.

For direct access to the Christy Sports rental program, log on to <http://rental.christysports.com> or call 1-877-754-7627 and for discounts, mention or enter the code SN1112.

61 PERCENT NOW WEAR HELMETS ON THE SLOPES

Use Continues to Grow

LAKEWOOD, CO – According to findings of the 2011 NSAA National Demographic Study, 61 percent of skiers and snowboarders now wear helmets while enjoying the slopes at U.S. ski areas. This figure is up from 57 percent during the 2009-10 season. Helmet usage among those interviewed nationwide has increased 140 percent since the 2002-03 season, when only 25 percent of skiers and snowboarders were wearing a helmet at the time of being interviewed. More importantly, nearly 80 percent of children aged 17 and younger now wear helmets on the slopes. The annual Demographic Study is compiled from more than 130,000 interviews of skiers and snowboarders nationwide, over the course of the 2010-11 season.

The NSAA Demographic survey also revealed that 93 percent of children 9 years old or younger wear ski/snowboard helmets, and 79 percent of children between 10 and 14 wear ski/snowboard helmets. In addition, 73 percent of adults over the age of 65 wear ski/snowboard helmets. Skiers and snowboarders aged 18 to 24 have traditionally represented the lowest percentage of helmet use among all age groups. This year, 48 percent of all 18 to 24 year olds interviewed wore helmets, representing a 166 percent increase in usage for this age group since the 2002-03 season, when only 18 percent wore helmets.

"Parents and resorts continue to do a great job of promoting the use of helmets for guests, especially children," said Michael Berry, president of NSAA, which along with and its member resorts promote the use of helmets. NSAA views skiing and snowboarding in a safe and responsible manner – not helmets only – as the primary safety consideration for all skiers and snowboarders. NSAA recently launched a revamped Lids on Kids website (www.lidsonkids.org) designed to provide parents with pertinent helmet safety information that includes new videos, fun games for kids, and simple helmet sizing instructions to help ensure a proper fit.

Find more online under the Safety & Education menu at www.nsaa.org.

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

TIPS for TESTING SKIS: TEST DRIVE OFFERS PERFORMANCE EDGE

By TONY D. CRESPI, TECHNICAL EDITOR

Interested in new skis? Are you worried about spending \$1,000 for a pair of skis and bindings which afterward might not feel ideal? You should be worried. One ski is not the same as the next.

"I found that you can read and talk about different equipment, but what you hear and what may fit can vary. You need to try different skis!" notes Stratton Mountain Ski Pro Bud Randall.

"It's amazing how skis vary," emphasizes Randall.

"I'm often surprised," reflects Randall. "Last year one of the skis I tested blew me away. I never expected I'd like it so much."

It's best to test before you buy.

Do you need a strategy? To start, narrow your choices to a maximum of three – and ideally two - brands. Because there are many fine skis on the market, too many choices can become overwhelming. Then, test different types of skis and in different lengths.

"You can listen to people talk but you're investing a lot of money in a new ski," adds Mount Snow's Ski School Director and PSIA Examiner Erik Barnes. "I suggest you go to a place that has some qualified people to help sift through the options. Talk to someone who actually has skied the product."

"I was really surprised," says one veteran recreational skier I met testing at Stratton Mountain last spring. Years ago I never even thought of testing. Then I spent lots of money but the skis just seemed too stiff. I was very dissatisfied: I was stuck!"

To be truthful, this is not the first person to buy without a test ride and then groan. Many skiers have found their purchases less than perfect. Sometimes it is the model, sometimes the length. With shaped skis, relatively small differences in length can impact performance. Moreover, pre-mounted bindings with special plates change performance. In fact, side cut, flex, dampening, and core construction all vary from ski to ski. Side cut, for instance, the curve which runs from tip to tail on both sides of the ski, effects turning ability, but varies from ski to ski. Years ago, technology was such that skis could generally be constructed for preferences leading to shorter or longer turns. Today, in contrast, by blending different engineering principles skis can accommodate a wide performance band.

Are you skeptical? People should think twice before buying a ski off the shelf. Because of technology, different skis do perform differently. Sometimes - dare I say it

- the differences between skis can feel almost dramatic.

Interested? Here's a guide to use on your testing adventure.

Pro Guide to Ski Testing

1. Provide the Shop with Accurate Information.

Start your search by helping the shop personnel know your current length and model of ski, as well as the kinds of turns and terrain you most frequently enjoy. Do you enjoy short, medium, or long radius turns? Do you like cruisers or bumps? Be honest. Be accurate.

This is important in calculating the best ski to demo.

2. Start the Test Day on Your Own Ski.

Starting with your own ski provides a base for solid comparison. Remember that any new ski will outperform a poorly tuned ski. So, if possible, maximize your skis performance with a solid tune. That way you can better judge the old and new ski. Further, test at least two to three different skis in order to clearly define your preferences.

3. Maintain a Record

Prepare index cards. The following categories can help: ease of turning, stability, edge grip and fun factor.

4. Use the Same Terrain for Each Test

"We used two trails," explains Randall, who tested approximately 25 skis with me on one of two days I spent testing at Stratton Mountain last season. "We used one trail with a firm base, to test grip, and we used one to cruise and really open up. I had a ball too. We had nice conditions, and we could really get into it on some scratchy stuff. And we were like two big kids with new motorcycles."

Maintaining a consistent testing run provides for a more reasonable comparison. Choose terrain on which you are very comfortable, but which offers some variability. Test each ski on the same terrain, in the same conditions. Test on the same day to maximize your ability to compare differing sensations.

5 Find a test partner

It's great fun testing with a buddy. I know I love testing with Bud Randall, and I find it a helpful way to gauge my own reactions. In fact, we both test the same skis at the same time, taking turns sharing first impressions.

6. Maintain a Consistent Pace and Rhythm.

Start each run by going slowly to feel the essence of the ski. When speed gets to high they all generally start to behave alike. So, go slow and drive them through different arcs. Also, vary turns. Really run the ski through a test. The ski that feels the best is most likely the ski for you.

Set a speed range for each run and include setting a turning rhythm.

7. Take Multiple Test Runs.

Two runs are ideal. The first run you learn the ski. The second run you really test the ski.

Do not vary in your test and plan to retest favorites later.

8. Vary Snow Conditions.

Test different skis in different conditions.

"I like testing in crud, and on firm snow. Try skis on different snow," explains Randall. "I like to test grip and I like to test all the different elements of snow conditions."

9. This is Worth Repeating: Choose a Test Partner

"You can compare notes and it makes you think," reflects Randall. "We played off each other. We compared notes. Then you can try skis again and determine if you missed something. And friends sometimes will help you push it. We took high speed cruising runs and some when we laid back."

10. Test Your Choice Ski in Two Lengths.

The same ski can vary markedly in two different lengths. I know. My current ski, a Volkl 6 Star skied differently in different lengths. Ultimately, I chose a 168. Understand, it seemed like a different ski in other lengths. And, while I was surprised to purchase a 168 – rather my typical 175 – I loved the ski.

Conclusions

Test your final choices before making a purchase. Sometimes we pick the skis, sometimes the skis pick us. A test ride always helps me, it may help you too.

Be Aware - Ski with Care - Test Before You Buy.

Tony D. Crespi has served as both a Development Team Coach and Ski School Supervisor. A frequent contributor to regional and national publications throughout snow country, his column is published throughout the season.