

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

SKI BOOTS KEY to PERFORMANCE SKIING

By TONY CRESPI, SKIER NEWS' TECHNICAL EDITOR

What would it be like to have a proper fitting ski boot? Can you imagine a firm, snug, but comfortable fit? Can you imagine warm feet? Forget style, great boots need to work. It seems that too many people are either swimming in overly large boots or are writhing in pain. Like shoes, in the wrong size boots are not a good purchase. These days, though, manufacturers and many shops know that a boot is the link between skier and ski; it is the transmission which drives performance.

Unfortunately, while testing skis is relatively straightforward and most mountain shops can arrange for a demo ride, most folks cannot test a ski boot. The good news is that boots are improving.

In fact, the latest generation of ski boots are actually easier to put on and take off. Modern boots are easier for shops to adjust relative to such anatomical issues as stance and alignment, and these new entries are more comfortable, boasting wider toe boxes and somewhat more forgiving flex patterns designed to work in tandem with modern skis.

Thanks partly to advances in ski technology, modern ski boots can more comfortably flex as skis much more ably carve and arc from turn to turn. Still, boots do vary from one company to the next. Just as no two shoes from different manufacturers fit and have the same level of comfort, so too, different ski boots do fit different skis with varying degrees of comfort and performance.

Ideally, you will need a top shop to help you select the boot company which best fits your individual foot shape and then to help focus on a model for your needs. Do your boots hurt? Are your feet cold? Do you find your boots too stiff or too soft? Are your boot soles excessively worn? If you answered yes you might benefit from either an individualized custom boot fitting session or from a new boot fit to your feet.

The best shops will start by asking questions, sizing your foot, and by sizing the shell – minus the liner – to assess proper shell size. Pressure points, flex and stance

alignment are typically adjusted for individual feet.

Where can you begin?

“A proper boot fit can change your skiing,” emphasizes master boot fitter Paul Richelson, a Plymouth, New Hampshire based master boot mechanic who has fit and refined boot fit for top racers and pros from throughout the East.

Because skis are so powerful boots are getting softer. The primary job of the boot used to be to decamber a ski by leaning forward to create a carving arc and then you rolled a ski on edge. Now that carve is basically built into the ski so the job of the boot is like a clutch initiating a range of engagement.

In other words, you used to be “on or off” but today a skier can basically impact varying levels of input with a properly fit contemporary ski boot. Moreover, because of advances in shaped ski technology boots are significantly softer than years past. Today you can enjoy a softer flex. You can enjoy boots which open more easily for easier entry and exit. Finally, all this is now combined with enhanced performance accuracy.

The good news is that the manufacturers are getting good on initial fit. In addition many shops can grind soles, cut and trim boots, and align people so they are more balanced on the skis. This helps learning to improve.

For higher end as well as intermediate skiers these new boots are considerably more comfortable. On the other hand as you lower the performance level, the boots are also more accurate and provide more control.

This is not just marketing speakeasy. The point is that boots are significantly more comfortable and powerful. As you consider new boots it's important to understand that the first step is to find the shell best for your foot. That means visiting a mountain shop you trust. Second, try at least two different brands. If one shell is too long or too short, or too narrow or too wide, test another

brand. Find the best boot for your foot shape. Finally, consider having the shop custom fit your boots. That may involve custom foot beds and a stance alignment in order to place you in a neutral stance on your skis.

“Boot fitting can address a wealth of problems,” adds Richelson.

Lange, Tecnica, Rossignol, Nordica, and Atomic truly represent a small sampling of a much larger array of offerings. My wife Cheryl, for instance, has found her Tecnica ideal for high performance skiing. Still, this is ideal for her foot and anatomical shape.

Boots truly create the linkage between skier and ski. Equally important, though, boots must provide warmth, comfort, and many skiers seek some sense of style in ski boots. The good news, and this is good news, is that the latest generation of offerings offer enhanced comfort, warmth, and new boots are actually better at unleashing the best performance characteristics in the new skis.

At the same time, skiers truly interested in mastering the mountain need to work with a top shop in order to find the best boot for their feet. In addition, while still somewhat of an art, custom fitting might include stance alignment, custom foot beds and even an after-market replacement of the Velcro power strap with a booster strap.

A booster strap is a more flexible power strap which can sometimes further enhance the connection between leg and boot. The point is to investigate the new offerings. Talk to your mountain shop. Do not have a fit over a bad boot fit; find a top boot fitter.

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Contributing Editor Tony Crespi has served as a Ski School Supervisor and Coach. A frequent contributor to publications throughout snow country, his column is published throughout the season.

DIAMOND PEAK HAS POPULAR DEALS and BYOP – BRING YOUR OWN PASS; ADDS TERRAIN PARK

INCLINE VILLAGE, NV — Diamond Peak Ski Resort remains North Lake Tahoe's hidden gem. Located in Incline Village, Nevada, the affordable, family-friendly resort offers breathtaking views of Lake Tahoe, 1,840 feet of vertical, and some of the best tree skiing and riding around.

Progression is the name of the game at Diamond Peak for the 2018-19 winter season, with a number of exciting new developments and important reconfigurations that will provide a true Tahoe experience for the resort's skiers, snowboarders and other guests. As a community-owned ski resort, Diamond Peak stands out in the Tahoe Basin and greater U.S. ski industry as a beacon to skiers and riders looking for a friendly, low-key vibe where you can feel at home from the moment you pull in to your slope-side parking spot. Moreover, as the only Lake Tahoe resort to achieve STROKE Certified status, it is becoming the top choice for skiers and riders concerned about supporting environmentally sustainable resorts.

New Lower Mountain Terrain Park

The Village: Terrain park skiers and riders, as well as those new to terrain park features, will enjoy a new venue to progress their skills, as Diamond Peak's master park builders will be concentrating the resort's terrain park features in a new lower-mountain zone called The Village at Diamond Peak.

Accessible from all areas of the mountain, the new Village terrain park location will allow park riders to explore more of the mountain before taking a lap through the park, or simply enjoy quick park-only laps via the Red Fox chairlift. The Village terrain park will take over what used to be the Penguin and Dusty's Delight ski runs, as well as a portion of lower Wiggle, creating a comprehensive arena for Diamond Peak's park staff to build features for all ability levels and conditions. Centralizing Diamond Peak's terrain parks allows park staff to spend more time grooming and maintaining the features to ensure consistent conditions and maximum fun.

STROKE Certified

This spring, Diamond Peak was recognized for their sustainability initiatives as the first ski resort in Lake Tahoe to become STROKE Certified. As one of the early adopters of the STROKE Snow certification program, the community-owned ski resort has been diligently following STROKE's Roadmap Report to achieve best practices in snowmaking, interpretation, waste diversion, and community development. STROKE Certified – the Sustainable Tourism Operator's Kit for Evaluation – is the world's first sustainability certification body with standards built specifically for surf and ski tourism operators.

2018-19 Deals & Events

BYOP “Bring Your Other Pass” Deal

Do you have a season pass at another ski resort? Show your 2018-19 season pass from any other ski resort and save \$20 off the

Adult daily lift ticket rate every day of the season. BYOP rates start at just \$69 per day during non-peak midweek dates.

Kids 6 & Under, Seniors 80+ Ski Free

Children ages 6 and under and seniors 80 and over always ski free at Diamond Peak.

Interchangeable Parent's Pass – The interchangeable Parent's Pass is a transferable lift ticket that allows parents to take turns skiing while the other watches the little ones. It is available at any Diamond Peak ticket window for the same price as an adult lift ticket.

50 Percent off Rental Equipment with a Boarding Pass

Take the hassle out of flying with your ski equipment. Get 50 percent off standard ski or snowboard rentals when you show your airline boarding pass. Boarding pass must show an arrival destination of Reno/Tahoe, Sacramento, Oakland, San Jose or San Francisco within the last two weeks. Discount is valid for standard all-day adult packages.

Firefighters and Police

Active and retired fire or police force personnel qualify for a \$69 lift ticket during midweek dates, \$79 on weekends and \$89 during peak periods, when they present their badge or ID.

Military Discounts

Active duty U.S. military ski free midweek (non-peak) or for just \$79 on weekends and \$89 during peak periods. Retired and military dependents qualify for a \$69 lift ticket during midweek dates, \$79 on weekends and \$89 during peak periods. Present a valid military ID to receive discount.

Interpretive Ski Tours

Program participants will tour the mountain on skis or snowboards with a guide to learn about the unique plant and animal life that flourishes within the ski area's boundaries, as well as the history of the resort, of Incline Village and the Lake Tahoe region. Meet on the snow behind the base lodge near the ski racks and large trail map sign. Must be an intermediate skier or snowboarder and have a valid lift ticket or season pass to participate, unless otherwise noted. Ski tours are available Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, and April 13.

19th Annual Dummy Downhill

For the 19th Annual Dummy Downhill, participants build a dummy on skis or snowboards that are launched off a big jump. Everybody watches with delight as unique characters fly down the hill or crash hard. This is Diamond Peak's signature spring event and biggest party of the year, held on March 24.

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Visit www.DiamondPeak.com for more deals and events for the whole family and start planning your trip today.

SKI SAFELY
KNOW & FOLLOW
THE
RESPONSIBILITY
CODE

Ski resorts can be enjoyed in many ways. At the areas you may see people using alpine, snowboard, telemark, cross country and other specialized ski equipment, such as that used by disabled or other skiers.

Observe the code listed below and share with other skiers the responsibility for a great skiing experience.

1. Always stay in control.
2. People ahead of you have the right of way.
3. Stop in a safe place for you and others.
4. Whenever starting downhill or merging, look uphill and yield.
5. Use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.
6. Observe signs and warnings, and keep off closed trails.
7. Know how to use the lifts safely.

**KNOW THE CODE,
IT'S YOUR
RESPONSIBILITY.**

(This is a partial list.)