



Equipment Notes – November 18, 2004

A few brief notes, mostly directed at those families who are newer into the sport and who need some basic guidelines for ski equipment. A word of caution: I am not an expert when it comes to higher tech equipment! I will pass along some basic information, but if you have high tech questions, I encourage you to approach people at the Swap Shop and ask for help! There will be volunteers from the CCSAM, including some from our club.

POLES:

- Classic length poles come just below the skier's armpit when the skier is wearing shoes!
- Skating length poles should be at or near the level of the skier's mouth (again, when the skier is wearing shoes)
- Pole straps must be adjustable
- Look for asymmetrical baskets for higher performance – racing baskets will have a definite front and back of the basket to allow better pole performance when the poles are at an angle
- Old poles and round baskets are just fine for dryland training – a cheap pair of hill-running poles will save your better snow poles!
- Kids should not get carried away with expensive poles!! The speed increase will not be worth the cash outlay!

SKIS:

- Jackrabbits and beginner skiers should always err on the side of shorter skis, for better coordination and early success! This is especially important for bunny age skiers (4,5, even 6 if never skied). Tiny skiers (ages 2,3, some 4) do well on "Snow Party" type skis, which are used with the child's regular winter boots. The bindings are just flexible plastic straps, and a bit fidgety for parents to work with - but the warmth of the winter boots will really be worth it!!

- Older jackrabbits would benefit from skis that are about equal to the skier's height. As skill and age increase, ski length can progress towards the traditional height of the skier's wrist, as the arm is stretched upwards to the ceiling with the elbow fully extended.
- Eric Bailey of NTDC Thunder Bay suggests the general length sizing charts available in ski stores are o.k. to go by (relate skier height to ski length) – but recommends erring about 5 cm too short for more beginner skiers.
- Ski stiffness (or camber) is important – a ski that is too soft will always drag the kick wax for a classic ski, while a ski that is too stiff will never seem to have enough grip. Ski stores do have fancy pressure gadgets to gauge camber, but the good old paper test is still the best way to match a ski camber with an individual. The current trend among higher level racers is to go with softer rather than stiffer.
- **PAPER TEST**- Standing with ski boot on and in binding, skier stands on one bent leg – a business card weight paper should not be able to slide back and forth (the ski is completely compressed). To determine the kick wax pocket, skier stands with weight equally distributed on both skis and passes the card underneath the ski center. The wax pocket is the area in which the card can slide freely.
- “Rock skis” are skis that are not shiny new and expensive, which the skier can freely use in any and all conditions. The Swap Shop might provide just such a ski. This is never a bad investment, and if one day the skier acquires more expensive racing skis the rock skis are always useful for Jackrabbit sessions and poor conditions.

BOOTS:

- Probably the most important first investment. Comfort and warmth are ultra important if you want skier satisfaction! Remember to leave enough room for extra socks, and toe wiggling room will allow for some circulation of warm air.
- The boot decision will go hand-in-hand with the choice of binding system. NO 3-PIN BINDINGS any more!! You may find old Salomon system bindings around, and they are good to stock up on. But consider keeping your whole family in one system so that equipment can be easily passed around (sometimes even from child back to parent!) The investment in a good boot and binding system will likely get you much better ski control than a cheaper version on fancy skis. Look for deals on Salomon SNS bindings at the Swap Shop – often available, and worth it.

BASIC WAX BOX SUPPLIES:

- Don't worry if you don't know what to do with these items at first – you will eventually learn! (We will have a Sidewinders wax session at some point)
- Stick to one brand of wax to begin with – and learn it well!! Start with a basic range of hard waxes. Basic glide waxes (only really need two colors for our climate).
- Good quality plastic scrapers are preferable to metal, especially if you are not an experienced scraper handler
- Shop towels work as well as the more expensive fibrelene for cleaning skis.
- Citrus based wax remover
- I've heard that Nivea cream works well as a hand cleaner
- Synthetic corks are fine
- A stiff nylon brush
- Sandpaper – silicone carbide – you will need at least 120 grit for sanding the grip zones of your classic-only skis
- Old iron or travel iron for glide waxing (IF you know what you are doing and plan to do it yourself)

