

## Keeping it Simple

Two hallmarks of a great coach/teacher is their ability to simplify new information, as well as great communication skills. In order to simply information, the coach needs to understand it and own it as if it were part of their own being. In order to communicate that information accurately and effectively, the coach needs to be in tune with and aware of the clients, what can they understand based on where they are now and what they already know. New learning needs to be hooked to the already learned.

As a corp of ski instructors, are we actively training and being trained in both clear and accurate ski techniques as well as coaching skills? If you had to explain to a client the American Ski Technique, could you? Would it be the same as my explanation of it?



I've recently read articles in various skiing publications that bemoan the fact that, as a corp of ski instructors, we are becoming too simple and need to get back to the detailed understanding of technical information. Is that true or not? Why is this being said?

I've also been on some Internet ski networking sites where it seems there are some ongoing discussions amongst ski instructors that are anything but simple. Much of the time, these discussions are very complex, very confused and often very wrong. It seems that many of those involved in the discussions are not experienced, but just learning and trying to figure it all. However, they are certain that they know better than PSIA. Why is PSIA not so esteemed?

I've also had many discussions with PSIA members about confusing, yet "awesome" clinics they have taken. When I questioned them about how this could be (confusing and awesome at the same time), they have stated that the clinician knew so much and was so smart, that even though they themselves didn't understand it all, they were sure it was great because it was so confusing to them... It had to be fantastic because it was confusing and hard to understand.... Huh?

Why couldn't they understand it? Well, they viewed the clinician on such a higher level of understanding and thought and they, the poor plebeian, wasn't there yet, didn't understand the concepts and needed to take them on faith. Some day they would become enlightened.

Was it a snow job - a B.S. job? Most likely.

In continuing to question these people and ski with them, I have asked the details of what they didn't understand. I offer that maybe I could be of some help to them in their quest for enlightenment and better skiing skills. "Squish the piss out of the snow", "ten toes down", "more countered position", "check for gum", "stand on the ball of the outside foot at turn entry", "fall down the hill", "passive weight transfer", "ski on four edges at transition" or "pause on four edges at transition", "more lead change", "less lead change", "the hips are part of the upper body" ("well, only from the top of the balls of the upper end of the femurs..."), "pick up the heel of your inside foot to pressure the tip of the inside ski".... and the list goes on.

I truly believe that all of us in the ski instruction profession are very well meaning and only trying to be helpful in sharing our love and understanding of this wonderful sport. Why is it that, after all these years, there is such confusion as to the basic dynamics of skiing?

Don't the French have a basic standard framework for their teaching? How about the Austrian? The Italians?

What has happened in America? Where are PSIA's manuals that have remained constant through time only to be updated by changing techniques driven by the new equipment? Where is the science in American Ski Technique? Why do so many PSIA instructors disagree and teach different techniques? Whatever happened to the Skills Concept? Why do so few now understand and use it?

January 2011 will be the first time since 1999 that the Americans will participate in an InterSki. In the years before when America routinely was part of this International Ski Congress, the PSIA National Demonstration teams always used this event to pull together and gel their current skiing and ski teaching concepts and methods. In 1975, the Americans introduced the Skills Concept to the world. They then went on to focus on student-centered teaching methods and techniques.

Hopefully, once again this upcoming InterSki will serve to consolidate and update the American Ski Technique. As PSIA members, I believe we need to expect our organization to serve us with valid and valuable instructional theory and materials.

