

Like other technologies, ski companies evolving performance enhancements

Ski tests are somewhat akin to seeing into a looking glass into the future. Next year's skis offer a window able to glimpse new and refined models and technologies before they line the shop walls. As illustration, a few years ago manufacturers began incorporating "rocker" into ski designs as camber technologies evolved. Soon virtually every ski used rocker. Today manufacturers have learned to blend traditional camber and rocker technologies using traditional camber for harder snow conditions and rocker for softer snow. Similarly, ski shapes have also evolved. Like many modern technologies - from phones to computers - advances in ski technology offers each new generation surprising performance enhancements. This year, as I look into the looking glass in the ski industry, this trend continues.

One change is the continuation of more race skis for front side carving.

Years ago most experts owned race skis. Gradually, though, race skis became highly specific tools and many advanced and expert skiers sought all-mountain skis. These were and are versatile, strong, and offer high end performance. New race lines, though, now blend the best of race and front side carving technologies. Honestly, there's a reason recreational race skis are so popular in Europe. These skis are somewhat narrower under foot, hold firmly on hardpack, and are fun for occasional recreational races. Ski them on steep or hard snow and these boards excel. For Eastern hardpack these offerings are enticing.

"Many high performance skis are now covered by these new models," explains industry insider Jed Duke, Director of Product Marketing at Blizzard Skis and a key industry expert who brings notable depth to his work. Prior to his work with Blizzard Skis and Tecnica Boots Duke served as product manager at Volk Skis. He is a former race service director, and as a younger skier he was a collegiate and Noram racer. He understands that ski designs are changing.

"I call it evolution," explains Duke about these new race skis. "Not everyone wants the same rocker and camber! All the manufacturers have learned what the benefits and boundaries are of using rocker. We've now had years to evolve and we've all really looked at how much one needs in a specific ski. These new skis truly reflect that refinement in knowledge."

"I think the playing field and the performance of all the brands, and the technology of the companies has produced a truly great collection of skis," adds Rossignol's Deno Dudumake.

Fundamentally there is a large array of offerings. Sure, there are still multiple all-mountain carving skis we've come to see, ski, and enjoy but these new "recreational" racing and carving skis in the race lines are more forgiving than full-bore World Cup race skis and offer high performance fun for hard snow, front side skiing, and groomed terrain. They hold superbly. Their side cuts offer a versatility ideal for mixed radius turns, and

they incorporate the latest design technologies. Some, such as Blizzard's Firebird Collection, offer a range from virtually solid racing performance and narrower sidecuts to more forgiving offerings.

Just as we see new advancements to each new cell phone, so skis seem to evolve with advancing innovations. While some folks still clutch their older flip phones most know that phones that are several years old simply are not comparable to newer technologies. As we glimpse our window into the mountain shop we see that new skis also offer extraordinary performance advancements.

For those taking a turn on a race course now and then, skiing the front side regularly, and those who primarily ski Eastern hardpack, here is a sampling of options. Oh, yes, we're showcasing all-mountain skis as well as race skis. After all, many skiers like a ski for powder days as well as a pair for front side carving. Modern skis are so well designed that the radius of the turn for a specific model varies by ski length. This means that the same ski in two lengths can perform like two different skis.



A skier enjoys fresh powder at Mount Snow in February.

That's why ski tests are important and why buyers might test their final choices.

If you are someone who has enjoyed technological changes in phones, computers, and cars you might be impressed by technological changes recent skis have also enjoyed. Most impressively, Eastern skiers who are confronted by groomed terrain as well as harder snow conditions will find that these new race collections are offering skis ideally suited for front side carving. As we look into our looking glass into the future, these new skis offer something quite exciting.

May your test ride be equally exciting, from that first run to that last run.

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This Week's Cup Series Race: Food City 500

Race Details

Location: Bristol, Tenn.
Date: Sunday, April 7, 2:00 p.m.
Last Year's Pole: Kyle Busch - 128.822 mph

Race Preview

In the fall of 1989, Bristol Motor Speedway was redrafted and re-measured. The turns were banked at 36 degrees and it became

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