

How many times, has the little voice inside your head re-minded you to stay forward when skiing? How often, only three turns into the run have you failed? Or how many times have you wished your left turn could be like your right and then practiced everything the instructors have so diligently and repeatedly taught over the years. Well if you spent more time with experienced boot fitters you may be able to rapidly leave those problems behind. Because people familiar with human biomechanics and balance understand that it is difficult if not impossible for most of us to overcome problems caused by improperly setup equipment.

Welcome to the first of a monthly series of articles on boot fit, alignment and balance. The purpose is to dramatically increase the pleasure you obtain from skiing by making the sport easier and your feet comfortable. In these articles I will cover footbeds, canting, cuff alignment and perhaps most importantly binding mounting position. In this first article I will debunk some popularly held misconceptions just to get you thinking about possibilities. Later articles will cover specifics. Please feel free to at any time contact me directly at lou@lous.ca to ask questions or to make article suggestions.

The first misconception is that boots should rigidly hold and control foot motion so that turns can be started and their radius controlled by knee position. Absolutely incorrect! Especially with modern skis, but even before. You must be able to roll your foot inside the boot through its complete and uninhibited range of motion. Turns can easily be started and largely controlled with foot motion alone. In fact, the smaller the muscles we use the finer our control and balance are.

Second is the two finger shell fit. Unfortunately most shops don't even do a shell fit. If that happens to you, go elsewhere. But, common knowledge is that with the boot liner removed and your foot in the boot with toes lightly touching the front, there should be length enough to fit

two fingers between your heel and the shell. At least two problems exist with that technique other than that is more space than is necessary anyway. Firstly is whose two fingers? Second is how does anyone with a normal hand, insert their fingers all the way to the boot bottom between your heel and the shell. At best this method is a very rough estimation. Better is to use a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wooden dowel in the same space.

Finally, and I think most importantly is the idea that ski binding location is carefully designed in by very smart and expensive engineers and should never be questioned. You might ask yourself the following questions: 1) How is it that some manufacturers have used the same mounting location even after extensive ski redesign? 2) How can some manufacturers use a position three even four cm. ahead of their competitors for the same classification ski? 3) Why don't elite level racers use factory recommended locations? The best answer is that recently completed blind research, supported by Nordica has shown that some skiers prefer a position as much as four cm. ahead of the manufacturer's recommendation. And that these skiers reported they felt more balanced, skied more easily and that the skis were more responsive. In short, their ski experience was better.

So, understand that difficulties may absolutely be caused by your equipment and that many shops unfortunately do not have the knowledge to solve your problem. Seek out a professional with a good understanding of proper skeletal alignment and balance and then go enjoy yourself. One final note. Even if you ski very well, you may be surprised at the improvement an experienced fitter can make. It never hurts to ask for an assessment.

Louis B. Rosenfeld
MSc. Mechanical Engineering/Biomechanics