

**IAIN MacMILLAN** first tracks

# fall like a star

**AFTER A TRULY SPECTACULAR WIPEOUT** right under the busy chairlift, it's reassuring to know that you can always save face by loudly declaring it wasn't your incompetence but indeed your bindings (or gear attached to them) that was responsible. This excuse works across all abilities and experience levels of skiers.

But we mustn't lose sight of the ultimate goal here, and that's simply if you're going to fall, make it a good one.

Anyone close to the culture of the terrain park knows that new tricks are quickly named and virtually trademarked faster than you can say "Corked 900." If you're not a park and pipe rat, however, you can always name your own wipeout.

While driving over the Duffy Lake Road from Whistler to Sun Peaks last spring, my buddy Leslie and I started this *Ski Canada* guide to the nomenclature of ski falls. With a little help, I've come up with a dozen of the most recognized ones. The next time your heels are over your head, try to mentally record the details so you can pass them along for inclusion in this useful guide.

**THE DREADED SCORPION** Who hasn't done a faceplant once in their ski career? The question technical editor Martin asks is, have you done it with enough gusto and arch in your back that your feet have kept going up and over your head so your ski tails are tickling your ears? This gem can be done both with arms flailing above the head or simply left loose down at your hips.

## THE COW TIPPER

Funny at so many levels, the classic Cow Tipper is loved by everyone. Created on a steeper slope simply by standing on your downhill pole-basket (which prevents you from moving your leg out to maintain your balance), the actual falling part is secondary. The real entertainment

occurs when your distracted friend realizes he's reached that point of no return, eyes pleading, mouth gasping and the eventual slow downward motion with earth's gravitational pull begins....

**THE HOMER SIMPSON** The subtleties of the Homer Simpson are indeed this move's strongest sell. Demonstrated with expertise by Publisher Paul last winter in Fernie, the trademarked fall is initiated by said skier quietly admiring a view or listening in on a conversation and not realizing he's actually on a slight slope—and slipping backwards. (In this case, backwards, not switch.) Before an attempt at a reverse snowplow has been made, he's struck someone, something or the tails of his skis have slid neatly under a heavy snowbank into which his backside will shortly follow.

**THE YARD SALE** Ah, the Yard Sale. Is there a more elegant skiers' fall? Given the competition these days, the most traditional of wipeouts needs gussying up if you really want to be noticed. I try to differentiate between the precursors to the Yard Sale: the Rag Doll (à la Todd Brooker) and the Starfish/Cartwheel, which eventually leads to the Yard Sale simply from the centrifugal force involved. To jettison with style, brightly coloured accessories are always recommended.

**THE COMBO** Liz, our editorial intern, likes to mix things up and offers her perennial favourite the Tumble Weed, which consists of a fall into a couloir after a standard Cow Tip, followed by a graceful transition into a Starfish and finished off with a timeless Yard Sale.

**THE COMMON BUCKET** A simultaneous double-heel release characterizes the Common Bucket, which typically presents itself in a mogul trough. Suddenly hitting heavy snow after a run in light and fluffy knee-deep can lead to the same result when executed correctly.

**THE BIRD'S NEST** Tree skiing will leave you with a whole new memory when you and your gear are still not extricated from the branches while your buddies are onto their third beer down at après ski.

**THE WATER HOUND** Like a Labrador retriever after a stick has been thrown, some skiers are instinctively drawn to water hazards like creeks and base-area slush ponds in the spring. This one's best done wearing over-sized wools and fleeces.

**THE LIFT LINE CRASH** Advice for all school bus teens: Objects at the bottom of the hill (lift lines, day lodges, avalanche rescue dogs...) are closer than they appear.

**THE TOASTER** "I'm carving! I'm carving! I'm toast!"

**THE GREMLIN** This one always happens when you least expect it. I see it occur most often on a long, flat cat track back to the lift or base area where chatting with your buddies is more important than watching where you're going. The shadowy Winter Woodland Sprite waits until you're distracted before it swiftly darts out of the woods and grabs your edge, tripping you up and stealing your kinetic energy.

**THE SPLAT** Performed unexpectedly down onto a cat track after a brilliant powder run, this fall, so poignantly demonstrated by Wile E. Coyote, is also done simply by falling off the chairlift—but that's another story.

Ordinary or extraordinary, the *Ski Canada Wipeout Patent Office* (i.e. *Letters to the Editor*) is always ready to hear about your favourite falls on the slopes: [mac@skicanadomag.com](mailto:mac@skicanadomag.com) ☒

Skier: Charley Mariam; Fall: The Scorpion; Photo: GRANT GUNDERSON, Mount Baker, Washington