

FERNIE TEST '05



PERFORMANCE ON-PISTE

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NOT ALL SKIS FOR GROOMED SLOPES ARE FIRE-BREATHING TRENCH-DIGGERS. In fact, some of the nicest rides on the mountain are found in this category for intermediate to advanced skiers who prefer groomed terrain. Reviewing the results to find a clear consensus was a technical editor's nightmare. Every ski had several advocates who named that model the most enjoyable ride of the day. This was one of the most satisfying groups of skis in the test, and nowhere was it more clear that different skiers like different things. There truly is something for everyone in this 10-ski lineup, but remember they span a wide range of performance so tester recommendations are key.

TEST CONDITIONS

Although the test slopes started out groomed to perfection, they didn't stay that way. As temperatures rose to a beach-party 8 degrees, testers slowed down and hugged the shade. Maybe it wasn't necessary. Most of these skis handled the soft conditions with aplomb, impressing everyone with their range.

THE CATEGORIES

1. High-Performance Freeride: backcountry, deep-snow, big-wave board. (September 2004-Gear Guide '05)
2. High-Performance All-Terrain: experts only; go-anywhere, do-anything on the mountain.
3. High-Performance On-Piste: de-tuned slalom groomed-slope carving machine. (November 2004)
4. Performance All-Mountain: frontside groomed or ungroomed conditions; intermediate to advanced skiers.
5. Performance On-Piste: groomed slopes; intermediate to advanced skiers. (This Issue)
6. Twintips: beyond the park and pipe, their birthplace, some twintips are just as happy hucking cliffs in the backcountry.

TEST CRITERIA

Testers evaluate a number of characteristics out of 10 points to help paint a complete picture of how each ski stacks up. Here's what they're thinking about. Weigh our test results against what's important to you and how you ski.

INITIATION: how easily the ski releases its edge and enters into the turn when steering is applied. Skis with greater shape usually initiate more easily.

EDGE GRIP: how well does the ski hold its line once it's up on edge. Usually the stiffer the torsion the better the edge grip. Edge grip is important for carving.

ACCELERATION: once the turn begins, how quickly it's completed. Skiers have no gas pedal so acceleration is realized by reducing braking in the apex of the turn.

Acceleration is a measure of skier skill as well as good ski design.

STABILITY: as speed and snow conditions vary, so does the feel of the ski

underfoot. A ski that's too soft may feel loose and floppy; a stiff ski may feel heavy and be difficult to initiate into a turn. Well-balanced skis tend to be stable at designed-for speeds but still retain liveliness for turning.

AGILITY: the result of easy initiation, good edge grip and good acceleration. In other words, the skis are doing just what they should and feel light on your feet. Except for big cruising turns, agility is a good thing.

VERSATILITY: for many skiers versatility is one of the most important factors. Skiing is a classic open-skill sport where the environment is always changing. Versatile skis can perform acceptably in all conditions.

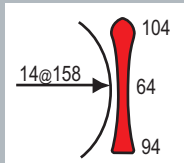
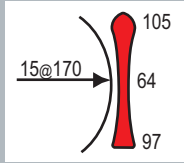
▲ Women ▼ Men

ATOMIC SX:7 ★ Editors' Choice
ATOMIC B:9 PULS ★ Editors' Choice (women)

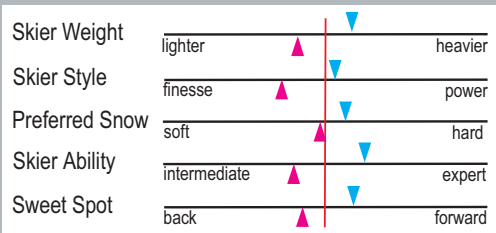
Stats
 Suggested retail: \$849 with bindings /\$799 with bindings
 Sidecut: 15 @ 170/14 @ 158
 Lengths tested: 170, 180/148, 158
 Lengths available: 150, 160, 170, 180/148, 158, 168
 Best in: Groomed/Acceleration

TARGET: ■ ◆ Advanced performance-oriented skiers

Women declared the B:9 Puls fun and responsive as long as speed did not exceed the red line. It was one of their best rides of the day, especially for lighter skiers. The SX:7 blew the men away with its precise performance mixed with friendly manners. A wide range of intermediate skiers will find the SX:7 a great ski to develop better skills. This model defined the category putting a smile on almost everyone's face.



TEST RESULTS

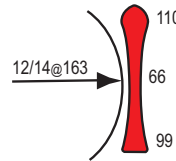


BLIZZARD FIREBIRD X0-7 TI
 ★ Editors' Choice (Women)

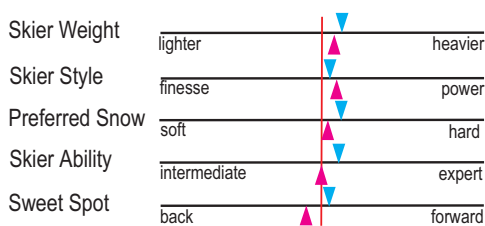
Stats
 Suggested retail: \$649 with bindings
 Lengths tested: 170, 177/163
 Lengths available: 148, 155, 163, 170, 177
 Best in: Groomed/Groomed

TARGET: ■ ◆ Experienced skiers looking for an easy-turning all-rounder.

Blizzard designed an easy-turning ski for enjoyment by the masses and the women agreed. Although some wanted a bigger platform, the general consensus was a thumbs-up. Men were a tad less impressed, although they found that the best attribute was snappy agility and good edge grip for this category. An agile ski needs an agile skier; technical skills will help with this weapon.



TEST RESULTS

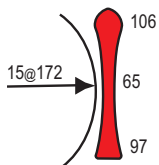


DYNAMIC ZR 57 ★ Editors' Choice

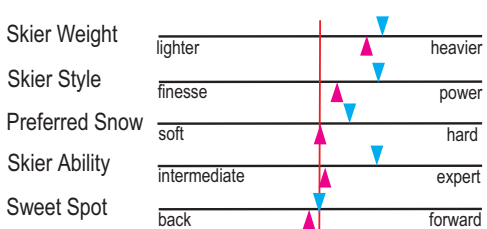
Stats
 Suggested retail: \$899 with bindings
 Lengths tested: 172, 181/163, 172
 Lengths available: 163, 172, 181
 Best in: Groomed/Edge Grip

TARGET: ◆ Performance-oriented skiers.

Dynamic has produced a performance-oriented ski that takes a strong driver with some skills to get the most out of it. In particular, testers noticed a characteristic flex pattern of stiffer tail than tip, which can make the ski perform like a de-tuned slalom with great acceleration out of the arc, but the rider must be ready. Good performance for good skiers but not for everyone.



TEST RESULTS

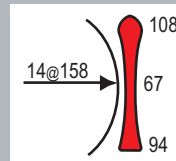
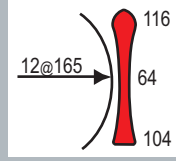


DYNASTAR OMECARVE 9
DYNASTAR EXCLUSIVE 10 SPICE

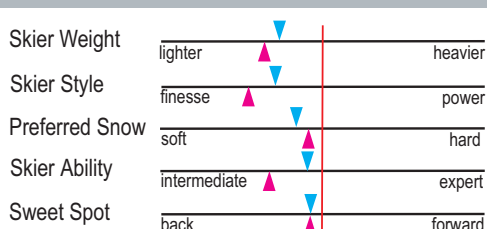
Stats
 Suggested retail: \$800/\$700
 Lengths tested: 165, 172/158
 Lengths available: 152, 158, 165, 172/150, 158, 165
 Best in: Initiation/Short Radius

TARGET: ■ Intermediates

Recommendations clearly show that testers thought light skiers would enjoy these best. The narrow waist and soft flex caused these easy-turn models to struggle in the slushy conditions on test day. At slow speeds they were nimble and playful, but advanced skiers may find them lacking in versatility and stability when pushed. Tester results indicate that these models are predictable and gentle for intermediates at moderate speeds.



TEST RESULTS



PERFORMANCE ON-PISTE

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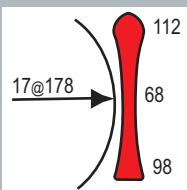
ROSSIGNOL Z5 ZENITH TP

★ Editors' Choice

Stats
 Suggested retail: \$900
 Lengths tested: 170, 178/162
 Lengths available: 146, 154, 162, 170, 178
 Best in: Short Radius/Groomed

TARGET: ■ ◆ Wide range of skiers

Testers ran out of superlatives to describe their run on this new model from Rossignol. Women called it the best ride of the day. The combination of excellent manners and versatility hit the bull's eye for this category. Men were not quite as enthused but they also gave it the nod as one of the stand-outs of the day.



TEST RESULTS



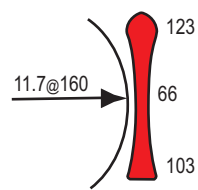
SALOMON ITF STREETRACER 10

★ Editors' Choice (women)

Stats
 Suggested retail: \$950 with bindings
 Lengths tested: 160, 165/155, 160
 Lengths available: 150, 155, 160, 165, 170
 Best in: Initiation/Short Radius

TARGET: ■ ◆ Frontside carvers

Big aggressive skiers on the men's side couldn't warm up to the Streetracer 10, but lighter skiers enjoyed it. Women had much more fun on this energetic ski, and loved the smooth even flex and serious sidecut. Keep the speed under the red line and it's a ball.



TEST RESULTS



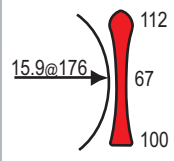
▲ Women ▼ Men

ELAN FUSION S-10 ELAN FUSION S-8

Stats
Suggested retail: \$950 with bindings
Lengths tested: 160, 168/176
Lengths available: 152, 160, 168, 176
Best in: Groomed/Short Radius

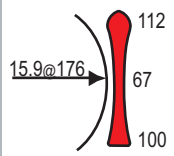
Men/Women
Suggested retail: \$950 with bindings
Lengths tested: 160, 168/176
Lengths available: 152, 160, 168, 176
Best in: Groomed/Short Radius

TARGET: ■ ◆ Sport carvers



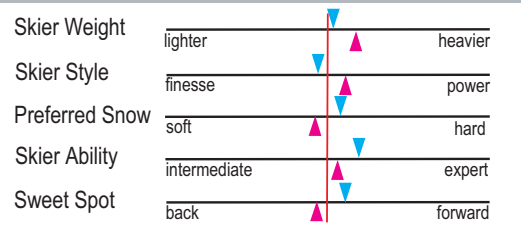
Fusion S-10

Feedback for both models of Elans was consistent. These skis are solid and stable to the point where some testers wished for more snappiness. On the plus side, stability was praised by everyone and speed was no problem, despite the changing conditions. These Elans are best for heavier skiers with good skills.



Fusion S-8

TEST RESULTS

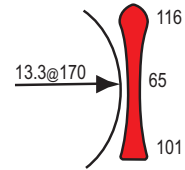


HEAD I.XRC 800 Editors' Choice

Stats
Suggested retail: \$1,125 with bindings
Lengths tested: 170, 177/163, 170
Lengths available: 149, 156, 163, 170, 177
Best in: Groomed/Groomed

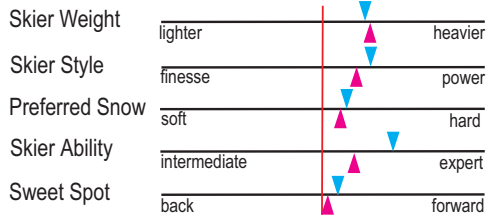
Men/Women
Suggested retail: \$1,125 with bindings
Lengths tested: 170, 177/163, 170
Lengths available: 149, 156, 163, 170, 177
Best in: Groomed/Groomed

TARGET: ■ ◆ Advanced skiers not afraid of speed.



The firm tail on this cruiser demands a driver with some skills, but the ride is impressively solid and responsive. The skiercross pedigree of the i.XRC 800 puts this model at the performance end of the category, but excellent design managed to please almost all testers in all situations. Advanced skiers will find it can grow a long way as skills further develop.

TEST RESULTS



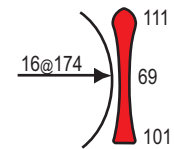
PERFORMANCE ON-PISTE

K2 OMNI 5.5 Editors' Choice K2 T-9 TRUE LUV Editors' Choice

Stats
Suggested retail: \$640/\$630
Lengths tested: 167, 174/160
Lengths available: 153, 160, 167, 174, 191/153, 160, 167, 174
Best in: Groomed/Groomed

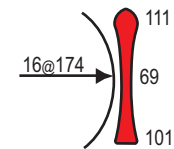
Men/Women
Suggested retail: \$640/\$630
Lengths tested: 167, 174/160
Lengths available: 153, 160, 167, 174, 191/153, 160, 167, 174
Best in: Groomed/Groomed

TARGET: ■ ◆ Performance



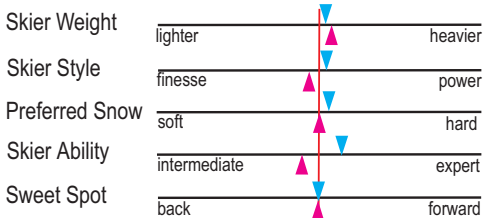
Omni 5.5

The widest waists in the pit (except for the Technical Editor's) pleased testers who had to deal with progressively softer snow. That, combined with the K2 large sweet spot, made for very competent skis that delivered in a confidence-inspiring way. They were predictable and reliable—excellent candidates in this category.



t-9 True Luv

TEST RESULTS

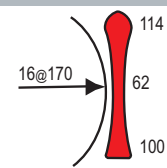


NORDICA SPEEDMACHINE 12 XBS Editors' Choice

Stats
Suggested retail: \$1,180 with bindings
Lengths tested: 170, 178
Lengths available: 154, 162, 170, 178
Best in: Stability, Groomed, Long Radius

Men/Women
Suggested retail: \$1,180 with bindings
Lengths tested: 170, 178
Lengths available: 154, 162, 170, 178
Best in: Stability, Groomed, Long Radius

TARGET: ■ ◆ Aggressive carvers



This ski was at the top edge of the category and testers loved it. Although it's too much for many skiers, the 12 XBS was a stable, smooth hot rod that combined stability with performance. The narrow waist will prefer groomed snow, but the huge sweet spot ate up the crud on test day without a hiccup. This ski is for advanced skiers or better.

TEST RESULTS

