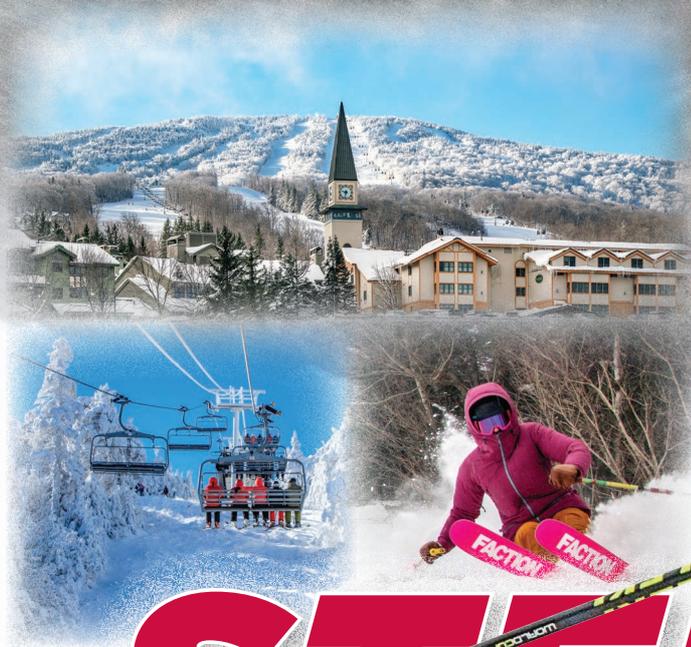


# NEW ENGLAND SKI JOURNAL

Spring 2019



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## PATS PRIDE ON DISPLAY AT THE 'LOAF



**T**here's nothing like the energy of having a Super Bowl contender making a run for the title during the height of ski season. And there's nothing like the home team winning it all.

Sugarloaf captured this spirit by offering a promotion on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 3, inviting skiers and riders to show up wearing New England Patriots jerseys and rewarding those who did with a \$59 lift ticket. Pats fans who donned the jerseys and who participated in a group photo/ski down the Whiffletree trail, also received a voucher for a complimentary lift ticket.

The resulting imagery made national news and garnered plenty of

positive attention across social media. Coupled with a Patriots victory over the Rams, the promotion was a win-win.



### 24 hours of charity

The River Fund, formed in 2018 to support youth enrichment initiatives in Greater Sunday River, Maine, will be the full focus of supporters' attention for 24 consecutive hours as they participate in the first 24-Hour Charity Challenge on March 16-17 at the resort.

From 9 a.m. to 9 a.m. the following day, participants will get the chance to compete in dual giant slalom on the Race Arena trail. People can compete as individuals, as teams or as corporate entries in the event, which will feature both on-snow and off-snow activities.

Participants can register online as an individual or as a team up to 12 people. Each participant is required to pay a \$50 registration fee in addition to fundraising \$250 prior to the event. Organizers are hoping to raise \$125,000.

A pre-event party will be held Friday night, March 15, at the Foggy Goggle. In addition to skiing and riding, a slate of off-slope activities will include a Mechanical Unicorn challenge and a Giant Twister challenge.

### Red Parka Challenge set for March 15

Sharpen those edges and get ready for another legendary day on the slopes at the 46th annual Red Parka Challenge Cup Race, taking place March 15 at Attitash Mountain Resort.

The race, considered the longest-running dual giant slalom in the nation, also is the second-largest fundraising event for the Eastern Slope Ski Club, a nonprofit that provides ski equipment and helps in ski development programs in the Mount Washington Valley.

In 2018, the Challenge Cup committee successfully rallied its racers and supporters to "bump it up," beating a set goal of \$15,000 for fundraising totals, up from \$10,000 in 2017. That 50 percent increase was thanks in part to a new initiative that challenges racers to fundraise using PledgeReg, an online fundraising system that racers can opt-in for when they register for the Challenge Cup.

When a racer hits \$300 in fundraising efforts, the registration fee is waived. There also are grand prizes for individuals and teams that raise the most money.

"This race is all about coming togeth-



► Red Parka Challenge

er for a day of friendly competition with a single goal in mind, which is to raise as much money as possible for ESSC," said **Terry O'Brien**, longtime Challenge Cup event director and owner of the Red Parka Pub. "PledgeReg has enabled us to get support and awareness beyond our racers, sponsors and event attendees, which in turn helped us raise \$15,245 last year."

The Red Parka Pub Challenge Cup Race is a 21-plus race and features top

racers from throughout New England. The registration fee is \$70 and includes a full-day lift ticket, guaranteed two runs on the course, an official race hat, a raffle ticket and a buffet dinner at the awards ceremony served by the Red Parka Pub in Ptarmigan's Pub after racing concludes.

Registration for the event is now open at [skireg.com/red-parka-challenge-cup-race](http://skireg.com/red-parka-challenge-cup-race). Online registration closes on Wednesday, March 13.

### Kearsarge Brook begins phase 2

After selling all 18 units of its Kearsarge Brook Condominiums at the base of Cranmore Mountain, resort officials are now accepting non-binding reservations for phase 2 of the project, which will consist of 19 new ski-in, ski-out units at the base of South Slope.

Residences in the second phase will include two- and three-bedroom units and range from 1,250 to 2,100 square feet. Construction of the second building is projected to begin as early as spring. Based on this schedule, the 19 new units would be ready for move-in prior to the 2020-21 ski season.

Phase 2 is the second of what will eventually be six new base area buildings at the base of Cranmore. New buildings eventually will replace all of Cranmore's existing facilities, with the exception of the Cranmore Ticket Office building and the historic summit Meister Hut.

New ski facilities will include a restaurant, cafeteria, seating, locker rooms, restrooms, changing areas, rental shop, ski retail shop, snowsports instruction registration and other skier service areas.

## Krass nabs World Championship silver

New Hampshire native **Julia Krass**, a freeskiier whose six-year tenure on the U.S. Ski Team has focused on slopestyle events, took home a World Championship silver medal in her first-ever big-air competition at Park City Resort in February. Krass' best-scoring runs included a right-side double-cork 1080 safety grab, followed by a switch 1080 safety grab.

The Hanover native who first learned to ski at New Hampshire's Whaleback Mountain made the U.S. Ski Team as a member of its inaugural slopestyle team that competed at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi. Age 16 at the time, Krass finished 11th at the Sochi Games.

Her first major career result was a second in both halfpipe and slopestyle at The North Face Park and Pipe Open at Waterville Valley in 2011. She then reeled in a few Revolution Tour podiums as well as a fifth at the 2013 FIS World Junior Ski Championships and a silver and bronze at the 2013 USSA Junior Nationals.

Krass started competing in moguls at age 8, training at one time with the Whaleback Core Team under coach Evan Dybvig, a two-time Olympian in the discipline. Shifting her focus to terrain parks, she moved part time to Park City to train with Team Axis.

In Hanover, Krass is captain of her high school soccer team in the fall and enjoys freeskiing at Waterville Valley.



## Stephens captures bronze

**Laurie Stephens** of Wenham, Mass., earned her eighth career World Championship podium by capturing a bronze medal in super-G sitting at the 2019 World Para Alpine Skiing Championships, held in Sella Nevea, Italy. Stephens, a four-time Paralympian, also finished fourth in the super-combined. She was the Paralympic champion in the discipline at the 2006 Torino Paralympics.

"There's plenty of room for improvement, but I had fun out there," Stephens told the press afterward. "I'm glad that I could come away with a medal at these World Championships."

Born with spina bifida, Stephens started skiing at age 12 at Loon Mountain and began racing at about 15, joining **Chris Devlin-Young's** New England

Disabled Ski Team. By 2004, she was the overall and giant slalom World Cup champion as a rookie.

She secured a spot on her first Paralympic Winter Games team in 2006 and was named Paralympic Sportswoman of the Year in 2006 by the United States Olympic Committee. She was a 2006 ESPY Award nominee for Best Female Athlete with a Disability.

## Ski Vermont joins climate partnership

Ski Vermont joined six other state ski trade associations from across the country in pledging support for the Outdoor Business Climate Partnership, formed to provide leadership on climate change.

"Pursuit of climate change solutions is a defining issue for ski areas across the United States," Ski Vermont states. "Many meaningful solutions are possible with action at the state and regional level. As economic drivers in our respective states, we urge policy makers to understand that we can't wait for lasting, bipartisan action to reduce carbon emissions, promote energy innovation and support a rapid, responsible transition to a clean energy economy. We applaud and join with the broader outdoor recreation community and the National Ski Areas Association as they pledge leadership and advocacy for climate solutions across the country. We pledge to do the same with our respective state advocacy efforts."

Other ski trade associations united in support of the climate partnership include Colorado Ski Country USA, Ski Utah, Ski California, Ski Areas of New York, Ski New Mexico and the Pacific Northwest Ski Areas Association.

## Sunapee snowmakers win accolades

Garnering nearly 4,000 votes over a 12-day contest period, the snowmaking crew from Mount Sunapee topped five other finalists representing resorts from across North America to win the HKD I AM a Snowmaker contest. The crew will receive a prize from HKD Snowmakers and recognition for their accomplishment.

"The dedication of our snowmaking crew is second to none," said **Bruce Schmidt**, Mount Sunapee's vice president and general manager. "They deserve the recognition this award provides."

Other finalists in the HKD I AM a Snowmaker contest were Mammoth Mountain, Mont-Sainte-Anne, Panorama, Taos and Wildcat. Each crew created a compelling video for the contest, and the public was asked to vote for their favorite. All of the videos highlighted the hard work and camaraderie shared by snowmaking teams across North America. The contest aims to recognize how critical these crews are to the success of the industry.



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# Speakeasy, Loon: A rewarding ribbon



By Tony Chamberlain

If Speakeasy trail at Loon seems to tip off the kind of trail it is, Speakeasy also is one of the best anywhere to strengthen your early intermediate skiing and test yourself with a long top-to-bottom run without stopping.

Perhaps the easiest thing about Loon, however, is getting there from the Boston area — just about two hours of highway driving (Route 93) to the town of Lincoln, just short of Franconia Notch.

Actually, that highway is in large measure why Loon exists in the first place, and is attributable to a one-time hiking enthusiast and President Eisenhower's chief of staff, Sherman Adams. Adams, who was in the lumber business, had hiked all over New Hampshire's outback lands, and when the state opened a 100-mile tract into central New Hampshire, Adams' friend and Olympic skier, Sel Hannah, reported that the land could be made into a great ski area near Cannon Mountain and Mittersill.

It would be different from the rock-hard challenge of a Cannon, Hannah



reported, but rather a good family mountain. And now, half a century after those origins, Loon is indeed one of the most popular family mountains in New England, and for that reason, best skied during weekdays.

Of Loon's two peaks, South Peak is a bit lower with shorter, steeper runs

such as Ripsaw, Twitcher and Jobber — often kept in a natural state. One long blue cruiser over here is named just that — Cruiser — and provides an escape route for more moderate challenges. On North Peak, which provides a trio of four-passenger quads among the plethora of lifts at this, by far the

busier side of the resort, is where most of the action is on big weekends and provides cruising from blue to mild black on such old faves as Walking Boss, Flume and Northstar.

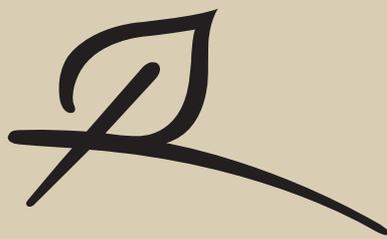
Also over on this side is Speakeasy, which at times is wide and flat, other times more like a narrow, old-fash-

ioned New England ski trail. It starts with a quick left off the Loon Peak trail, beginning with a wide and a fun jumbled fall line. Then it straightens out with a hard right and a fairly broad cliff road that lets you pick up some good speed and work your turns within a broad, moderately pitched slope that leads you to a hard right. Now the trees close in and you have to work fairly quick turns (depending on your speed) and make a right-foot turn onto a nice steeper roll that lets you cruise, taking some wide super-G turns as the slope eases out to a flattish long ego run that bends left past the midway lift station.

You can opt for the upper half or flash on by toward the bottom. The lower half is less interesting with a string of long flats and few turning opportunities, and yet the long flats let us enjoy the gorgeous views of peaks receding before us in bright late sunshine — Osceola standing out sharply among them.

Then a nice descent into the village for an après treat of a Sam Adams draft and a crock of baked French-onion soup.

**S**



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Sunday, March 24 | King Pine

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DRAMATIC LINES  
Photo by Stowe

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### March 1-3

**Cranmore** — Hannes Schneider Meister Cup Weekend

### March 8-10

**Stratton** — Vermont Open

### Saturday, March 9

**Sugarbush** — Castlerock Extreme

### March 9-10

**Pats Peak** — 28th annual Hawaiian Weekend

### Tuesday, March 12

**Sunapee** — Ladies Day Extravaganza

### Sunday, March 17

**Wachusett** — Polar Plunge

### March 22-24

**Stowe** — Retro '80s Weekend

### Saturday, March 23

**Attitash** — Grandstand Mogul Jam

### March 23-26

**Waterville Valley** — Toyota U.S. Alpine Tech Championships

### Sunday, March 24

**Ragged Mountain** — Back in the Day Pipe Jam

### March 29-30

**Sunday River** — Pro Ski Challenge

### Saturday, March 30

**Bretton Woods** — Beach Party

**Mad River Glen** — Triple Crown competition

**Smugglers' Notch** — 24th annual BrewFest Part 2

### Saturday, April 6

**Okemo** — Slush Cup & Splash for Cash

**Wildcat** — Wildcat Pond Skim



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# TEAMWORK MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

By Matt Boxler

**N**ew England native and longtime industry professional Molly Mahar is in her second year as president of Ski Vermont (also known as the Vermont Ski Areas Association). The nonprofit trade group represents the state's 20 alpine areas and 30 cross-country centers, working to promote a vibrant cultural and business climate where tourism generated by the industry can continue to grow and thrive. A lifetime skier with decades of experience in resort marketing and sales, Mahar's focus as Ski Vermont president centers on governmental affairs and lobbying on behalf of the state's ski areas, while still overseeing all the association's programs and operations.

Mahar took some time from her busy schedule (it isn't all skiing and riding), to talk about the work she is doing to promote skiing and snowboarding, which the Vermont legislature has declared as the state's official sports.

**New England Ski Journal: Vermont ranks No. 1 in the East as a skiing and snowboarding destination and is among the top destinations nationwide. What does it mean to you to be the chief representative of this proud tradition?**

**Molly Mahar:** Being able to represent and advocate for the ski industry in Vermont, where it is such a big part of the economy and the culture, is both a responsibility and a privilege. Supporting our members, helping them be successful and finding new ways that we can engage to help solve issues is very interesting work, and I feel very fortunate to have this opportunity. There's still a lot I need to learn and a lot of work to do!

**NESJ: This is your second go-around with Ski Vermont, having served as its director of marketing from 1995-2001. Can you talk about how the association's work has changed over the last 20-plus years?**

**Mahar:** The industry is constantly evolving and it's important for Ski Vermont to be able to evolve, too. The business has become more sophisticated and technology has changed operations and marketing and communica-



■ Ski Vermont prez takes collaborative approach to inspire resorts and lend a crucial, united voice to industry's cause

tions immensely. We remain focused on strengthening the Vermont brand and telling the stories that illustrate why it is a special, authentic and unique place ... and this hasn't changed. The ski industry is important to Vermont in a number of ways, and our goal is helping to make Vermont to be a better place to live, work and play, which can take many avenues.

**NESJ: What do you see as some of Ski Vermont's specific agenda items important to achieving its overarching goals?**

**Mahar:** We talk a lot about needing

to help new skiers and snowboarders discover the sports we love so much. While some areas have done and continue to do a great job with this, growth probably doesn't get enough of the consistent focus that it needs. Understanding demographic and societal issues that are at play and how we can approach them is important. Also, keeping the industry connected and working collaboratively

on growth and other issues is very important for its resilience. The ski areas are competitors but face very similar challenges, and the more we can all improve together, the stronger and more successful the industry will be. Another key issue is climate change, which is a huge topic for not only skiing, but humanity. I think about this a lot and it's a topic that I look forward to engaging with others and working on.

**NESJ: Government relations is an important industry focus that I'm sure most visitors and guests take for granted. What are some of the legislative issues you are lobbying for on behalf of your member ski areas?**

**Mahar:** Starting this job, I really benefitted from working here earlier in my career, knowing the lay of the land, many people at our member ski areas and in Montpelier, and having a good idea how the organization operates. I'm now in my second legislative session and I really learned so much going through last year's session. One of our board members said that it was the most rigorous in recent memory, so that is a helpful frame of reference. We had a broad array of issues touching on employment, the environment and legal issues that we were following and engaging on. While I had done some limited lobbying in the past,

this was all pretty new to me and I had to figure it out quickly. Fortunately, I had some great help, and some transferable skills. Outdoor recreation is a huge draw for Vermont, and skiing and snowboarding is the largest piece of that, accounting for about a third of all tourism spending in the state. It brings in millions in direct spending and millions in tax revenues. The ski areas are often the largest employers in

their town or region and they really support their local communities in many ways that go way beyond the economy.

**NESJ: Hopefully you don't spend all of your working hours in the state-house. Do you get to conduct "re-**



### search" at the areas you represent?

**Mahar:** I really try to take advantage of being able to ski everywhere in Vermont and so far this season I've skied equally in south, central and northern Vermont. It's part of my job to ski everywhere. How great is that?

### NESJ: What are some of your earliest memories in skiing?

**Mahar:** My dad got me started on skis early, tromping around in the backyard and the woods ... and then of course, later I took lessons. I grew up in central Massachusetts and my mother worked at Wachusett Mountain when I was in middle and high school. I spent every weekend there, all weekend.

When I was a kid, Wachusett had a rope tow and a couple of T-bars, so it's changed a lot. I participated in seasonal programs and started teaching skiing when I was in high school. Some days, I would ride the bus after school right to the mountain to teach a couple classes. Making time for skiing was always a priority, and since I grew up around the business, when it came time to go to college I decided on recreation management instead of a liberal arts type of major, figuring I could always switch if I didn't like it.

### NESJ: You liked it ...

**Mahar:** I chose to pursue a private sector track at the University of Vermont for recreation management, which included business and marketing classes. I designed and completed an internship at Sugarbush Resort so I could get more experience before graduating: ops, ticket and season pass sales, events, reservations, marketing and sales. That led to a sales job after graduation, seasonal at first and then year round.

### NESJ: Since then, you've never looked back, building up invaluable experience at some of New England's top resorts — Sugarbush, Bolton Valley and Loon (N.H.). Can you share a little about what makes each such a successful resort and how you worked with each unique situation to help move it forward?

**Mahar:** I worked at Sugarbush twice, right out of college and later as director of marketing. The resort offers a nice diversity of terrain including the all-natural Castlerock area, and it's also located just a few miles from Mad River Glen. The Mad River Valley, where Sugarbush is located, is quintessential Vermont with its farms, barns and covered bridges, and it's a bit more off the beaten

path, so building trial was what we were after (build trial is a marketing term to attract prospectives and ideally convert into loyal customers).

Bolton Valley is largely an undiscovered gem. Its location overlooking the Champlain Valley means it often gets generous lake effect snow and there's a lot more terrain there than many people realize. Again, we were trying to build trial, appealing to the local market and also to families looking for a new destination to try.

At Loon, the challenge was different. We didn't need to build trial, but the task was about evolving the positioning of the area to a destination — one that just happens to be extremely accessible. Shortly after I got there we opened the long-awaited South Peak area, which expanded the terrain and created another portal to the resort. We also invested heavily in snowmaking, which really was a game changer for Loon. My team led the charge on the messaging and communications of those projects, which were successful and a lot of fun. We told the world about it and the mountain ops team delivered it — great teamwork!

### NESJ: Teamwork is obviously one of the reasons you've devoted your

### career to this sport. Can you talk more about what skiing has meant to you personally?

**Mahar:** Skiing is a great industry with great people. When I started, I had my friends and then there was work and over the years, the two have really melded together. And, while you may think, "It's just the ski industry," what we do on a daily basis to give people access to the days they remember and dream about is so important. We really are helping to make peoples' lives better. It takes so many different kinds of people doing many different jobs to operate a ski area, but it's the teamwork that really brings it all together and makes the difference for the guest. It's not an easy business and people work really hard — whether they are making snow, teaching a lesson, driving a shuttle, maintaining the lifts, ski patrolling, serving a burger, grooming or whatever it is — to provide the best for their guests every day.

Behind the scenes at a well-run resort, you'll find a well-oiled team with members who have each other's backs. When you're part of a team like that, you naturally develop respect and some great friendships. S

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## POSITIVE TRENDS SPOTLIGHT SALES GROWTH AMONG WOMEN, BOARDERS

By Matt Boxler

**T**here is plenty of good news to report in the snowsports marketplace this season — even if growth in participation remains somewhat flat — and it is thanks in large part to women. Not only is a women's-specific ski the overall best-selling ski across the entire industry, but women's snowboard equipment sales represent the fastest-growing segment of the market as well — outpacing men's and juniors — with sales up 18 percent this season.

The numbers, and some of the insights behind them, come from The NPD Group, global market researchers who have partnered with Snowsports Industries America to provide its members with the most up-to-date analysis of trends in apparel, accessories and equipment across alpine, snowboard and nordic segments.

“One of the biggest stories that we've seen so far is the growth in women's alpine skis,” said Bruce Dotterer, outdoor industry analyst for The NPD Group. Dotterer joined with his colleague, Julia Day, in presenting research to SIA members at the Outdoor Retailer Snow Show held Jan. 30-Feb. 1 in Denver. “We're seeing a 21 percent dollar sales increase for women's skis over the past few seasons.”

Whether the trend can be attributed

to the incredible World Cup and Olympic success of icons in the sport such as Mikaela Shiffrin and Lindsey Vonn, or simply due to higher snowfall rates in North America this season vs. last, there is no debating that equipment manufacturers and retailers are taking notice.

“This is significant,” said Day, executive director of business development at The NPD Group. “We looked years ago when women's skis started to show up and now we're still seeing this continued growth. The new consumer has changed, and this is really exciting to see.”

In a marketplace where, overall, 60 percent of the top-selling skis fall into the 91- to 100-millimeter underfoot category, sales of Blizzard's all-mountain 88 mm women's ski — the Black Pearl — outpaced them all. With a lightweight construction, early rise in the tip and tail and camber underfoot, this ski is designed to perform on groomers, in the trees, through bumps and in powder. It's not simply by chance that the company developed such a winning product.

In 2015, Blizzard Tecnica created its Women to Women brand, focused on developing a comprehensive product collection designed specifically for female skiers. The company's approach is to bring women together who share the same passion but come from different lifestyles to compare ideas about moun-

tain life, colors, trends and product needs.

“Through intensive workshops, athlete summits, product testing and scientific on-snow research, we continuously challenge our product development teams to specifically design and build relevant women's products addressing those wants and needs,” the company states. “Through innovative technology and engineering, issues such as warmth, comfort, customization and performance are solved in the boot collection while the need for lightness, performance and playfulness are addressed in the ski collection.”

Besides the Black Pearl, top-selling skis included the Nordica Enforcer 100, Nordica Enforcer 93, Salomon QST 99, Völkl Mantra M5, Blizzard Brahma, Rossignol Experience 80, Salomon QST 92, Rossignol Smash 7 and Völkl Yumi (women's).

Total snowsports sales reached \$6.1 billion last season (2017-18), which was up 2 percent during a year when skier visits were down overall. SIA reports that 24.3 million Americans ages 6 and older participated in winter sports during the 2017-18 winter season, a 1.5 percent decrease from the previous year. Poor weather was among the top three reasons for not participating, further illustrating how climate might affect the market. Of the \$6.1 billion in sales, e-commerce was up 8 percent over the previous year (\$1.1B), snow specialty stores, i.e. brick/mortar,

was up 1 percent (\$2.8B) and chain stores remained steady (\$2.2B).

“When you think about what happened last year with skier visits, it's a positive story given that it was the third worst season in almost two decades from a snowfall perspective,” Dotterer said. “So, that 2 percent growth actually had several bright spots. And for '18-19, sales are already trending up 16 percent.”

### Snowboarding revitalized

Meanwhile, in terms of equipment sales, snowboarding was another stand-out performer in sales, providing the highest gains. Snowboard equipment sales reached \$232.8 million from August through December 2018, up 13 percent over the same period last year, with double-digit sales gains for snowboards as well as boots and bindings.

Some major brands — including Burton with its “Stand Up, Stand Out” marketing initiatives — are placing greater focus on their women's business.

“I often say that women's is an underserved market across many facets of the sports industry, but it brings with it big opportunity for brands and retailers to grow their business,” said Matt Powell, senior industry advisor, Sports, The NPD Group. “Brands today are finding their sweet spot by getting behind particular social or environmental initiatives that are of growing concerns for today's consumers.”

And while there are different schools of thought about what impact the Olympics might have on equipment sales, Dotterer noticed a correlation. “There are a couple of categories that really saw some growth that were associated with gold medals for the Olympics,” he said. “The U.S. took home all four gold medals in slopestyle and halfpipe. We know that it's maybe not a direct correlation, but we're seeing double-digit growth in both units and dollars. And it's not only boards, it's boots and bindings as well.”

Also, smaller snowboard brands are really starting to contribute to the growth of that segment. The top three snowboard brands account for 28 percent of sales, while brands 4-10 account for 50 percent of sales. And, again, women's snowboard equipment sales growth is outpacing that of men.

When the snow finally settles and melts away for good, the big picture suggests that 2018-19 will be a winning season for snowsports retailers.

“The weather has been very favorable to snow-loving consumers and the snowsports industry this season,” Powell said. “As long as the conditions are right, consumers will be inclined to make purchases. With time still left to hit the slopes, I expect the industry will end the season with strong sales growth.”

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# Celebrating the First Lady of Ski Fashion

U.S. SKI AND SNOWBOARD HALL OF FAME TO HONOR BARBARA ALLEY SIMON

I am dedicating this month's Vertical Runway Report to my ski fashion idol and trailblazing mentor, Barbara Alley Simon.

On April 4, Barbara will receive the United States Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame's first Women in

Industry Award to recognize her more than 50 years of dedication to alpine fashion. This award, which will be given annually, provides recognition to the outstanding women whose lifetime contributions have helped shape the U.S. snowsports industry.

The recipient of this award is a pioneer of the industry who has made

an extraordinary impact through innovation, product design and functionality, fashion, marketing or any area within the industry. Barbara's love of snowsports, the mountains and fashion spans decades, and I am thrilled that her incredible contributions to the growth of the snowsports industry are being recognized.

She always has been a head-turning beauty who has never shied away from breaking through glass ceilings and empowering other females to challenge the status quo, and ultimately, themselves. Barbara's journey from fashion student and glamorous model to the fashion editor of Skiing Magazine and producer of nationally televised ski fashion shows is incredibly inspiring. Her next-level zest for adventure led her to not only ski the world but also climb mountains such as the Grand Teton and the Matterhorn. She has flown airplanes solo, made many parachute jumps and never allowed others to quell her exuberance for challenging herself.

After graduating from the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Barbara studied fashion design at the esteemed Parsons School of Design in New York City and learned to ski in her 20s at Snow Valley in Vermont. She fell in love with the sport and became a weekend ski instructor at Hunter Mountain, where her good looks and style caught the eye of her future husband, ski show pioneer Jerry Simon.

Barbara had posed for a photo at the fall 1967 ski show to promote a February 1968 pro race. Simon spotted that picture in the Hunter base lodge and wondered how it had been taken at the ski show without his meeting her. He turned around and saw her across the room, and the connection for both of them was immediate. They would go on to marry at the top of Jackson Hole, but first there was work to do.

Barbara was selected to manage the fashion booth at the 1968 ski shows, but there was a problem — no one stopped at the booth to ask about the 6-foot slides on display. Jerry solved that problem by creating,

▶ Clockwise from top left: Barbara Alley Simon with husband and ski show pioneer Jerry Simon in front of the Matterhorn; wearing Moncler in the Italian Alps; at Val d'Isere wearing Bogner jacket and stretch pants; at a ski show; at the 1995 SIA show; at Breckenridge wearing a Henri-Charles Colsenet one-piece.



with no budget, a live fashion show utilizing the slides as background, and calling on exhibiting ski shops to supply sponsor-dressed employees as models. Barbara was a natural narrator at her fashion shows and never used a script or notes. With each season, Barbara's ski fashion shows grew in size and scope. She brought in performance by hiring dancers

as models and choreographed fashion presentations that wowed audiences and drove sales for the brands that she featured. "I don't know that people think of fashion or fashion shows as promoting the sport of skiing, but they do," she said. "Seeing good-looking people in appealing outfits certainly attracts attention, and it is my personal conviction that stretch pants played a great part in the growth of skiing. Everyone looked sexy in them . . . and wanted to try this new sport of skiing!"

Her passion for ski fashion and presenting it to consumers led her to take a live choreographed ski fashion show to local and then national TV shows. Barbara and her troupe of ski fashion dancers appeared on popular shows such as the "Today Show" and "Oprah." For many



years she also produced and styled the fashion shows at the Snowsports Industry America conventions, the most important annual gathering of snowsports industry leaders.

From 1974-80, Barbara was fashion editor of Skiing Magazine and later was the ski fashion editor at Snow Country Magazine. Over the course of her career, she collected and preserved hundreds of pieces of ski fashion and accessories. In 2014, The Barbara Alley Collection of "30 Years of Ski Fashions" officially opened at the Alf Engen Museum in Park City, featuring 65 accessorized outfits plus TVs screening 11 years of TV fashion shows and a display of fashion pages on mens' styles, which Barbara produced/wrote for "Skiing

History" magazine. Since its initial installation, the museum expanded the exhibit to 70 outfits with 350 assorted accessories.

Olympic gold medalist Donna Weinbrecht donated a one-piece Bogner to the exhibit and has this to say about Barbara: "I love the forward-thinking spirit of fashion, style and enthusiasm that Barbara has brought and continues to bring to the skiing lifestyle with her zest for and love of life."

Today Barbara lives in Las Vegas, and while she had to give up skiing for health reasons a few years ago, she still travels the world seeking new adventures and excitement. Beloved and respected by the industry, athletes and those who understand her tremendous contributions to alpine fashion, Barbara Alley Simon is my fashion hero.





# STRATTON

**Southern Vermont hot spot**





# STRATTON

**delivers across the board**

By Brion O'Connor

**T**here is a strong, inescapable sense of nostalgia as you exit Interstate 91 in Brattleboro, Vermont, and make the final 30-plus mile jaunt to Stratton Mountain. If your GPS is like mine, you'll duck onto Cedar Street in Brattleboro, where the Harris Hill ski jump appears almost out of nowhere. Carved into the hillside with a corridor of trees to either side of the jump and long, steep landing area, Harris Hill dates back to the 1920s, and still hosts events.

You'll then take a hairpin left onto Route 30, which hugs the West River, and motor northwestward. Along the way, you'll pass the now-defunct Maple Valley Ski Area in Dummerston, one of those classic New England "learner" hills that spawned generations of local skiers but has sat dormant since 2000 (despite numerous rumors of re-opening). The narrow two-lane meanders through a number of historic Vermont towns, like Newfane and Jamaica, conjuring memories of ski vacations with the kids crowded into the "way back" of the family station wagon.

# SKI WEEKEND Stratton Mountain Resort



## Continued from Page 17

The long access road climbing from the valley floor up the hill to Stratton, which begins just past the Startingate ski shop (if you're traveling north), is reminiscent of so many New England resorts, and particularly Killington and Sugarbush. Four miles later, you roll into the village of Stratton. Most ski resorts boast a "village" at the base, but that's usually a turn of phrase. Stratton offers a real village, built in the true Tyrolean style — like a miniature version of Ischgl or St. Anton am Arlberg in Austria — with a wonderful assortment of restaurants, bars, shops, a market, a delicatessen and a day spa, populated by carved black bears (Stratton's mascot) large and small, surrounded by lodging options. But more on those later, because you're here to ski, and Stratton has the goods.

To be perfectly honest, Stratton is an ode to the wonders of intermedi-



ate terrain. I say that as an unqualified compliment. Yes, it has expert trails, and challenging glades, but those are unquestionably in the minority. During our recent visit, the trails that shone the brightest were the playful variety of blue-square routes, from wide-open cruisers to gentle serpentine tracks that let skiers and boarders work their turns without picking up too much steam.

The breakdown at Stratton looks like this: There are 99 trails spread out across almost 700 acres of terrain — with another 160-plus acres if you include the glade areas — spilling off the 3,875-foot summit, the highest peak in southern Vermont (with fabulous views to the north and east, including Bromley). Top to bottom, the resort offers 2,003 feet of vertical drop, and the longest trail — Mike's Way to Wanderer — is three miles long. To say the least, it has come a long, long way from the ski hill that opened in December 1961 with eight trails, three

Hubert Schriebl



double chairs, a three-story base lodge and a pockmarked access road that terrified drivers (said one long-time Stratton skier).

According to Stratton, the breakdown of terrain is 40 percent novice, 35 percent intermediate, 16 percent advanced and 9 percent expert. But we found even some of the advanced terrain — notably Upper Kidder Brook — was solid intermediate. Which, again, isn't a bad thing (and it's reassuring to beginners, or parents with youngsters, to know that they can always find gentle terrain leading back to the base lodge).

Upper Kidder Brook, along the eastern edge of the resort, gets ample sun, and in the right conditions the trail is a celebration of fast, carving GS turns, where you

can really set your edge and feel your skis pop out of each turn. Just a delight. But its pitch is manageable for almost anyone other than an absolute beginner. The same can be said for Upper Standard, which runs underneath Stratton's gondola. These are broad-shouldered trails that, because of their topography, offer up a reliable canvas for the snowmaking and grooming crews, and therefore offer consistently solid conditions.

Speaking of the overnight crew, Stratton officials claims they have roughly 95 percent snowmaking coverage (which is something of a stretch), with more than 1,200 snow guns pumping out man-made fluff. Even during this mercurial winter, when mid-season warm spells and rains gobbled up tons of snow, the snowmaking and grooming crews at Stratton have done a remarkable job keeping the majority of the trails open. That bodes well for this spring.

Getting everyone up the hill is a col-



## During our recent visit, the trails that shone the brightest were the playful variety of blue-square routes, from wide-open cruisers to gentle serpentine tracks that let skiers and boarders work their turns without picking up too much steam.

lection of 11 lifts, highlighted by the six-person gondola (which, I don't mind saying, is a godsend on cold, windy days), four six-pack chairlifts, and three quad chairlifts. All combined, the resort can move 34,000 skiers and boarders up the mountain every hour, an impressive number that keeps lift lines moving quickly.

Don't know where to start? The resort offers free tours with a Stratton ambassador at 10 o'clock every morning. Expert terrain, such as Bear Down, Grizzly Bear, Upper/Lower Liftline and Upper/Lower Spruce, as well as glade areas like Moon-dance, Vertigo and Shred Wood Forest, require more precision and legs like shock absorbers. If you possess both, you'll love these runs. They also require more natural snowfall, and are prone to closures if Old Man Winter isn't cooperating. But when he does, these trails are a blast.

Our favorite intermediate trails were found on opposite sides of the hill. From the summit of Shooting Star six-pack, Black Bear is a rollercoaster to the base

of the Ursa Express 6, or you can continue to the base of the Sunrise Express 6 by hopping directly onto Gentle Ben. From the summit of the Snow Bowl quad (which is new this year), Get My Drift/Upper Drifter/Lower Drifter also is a real treat, with undulating turns that reward cardio fitness as well as youthful exuberance. Frank's Fall Line, Upper Tamarack and Upper/Lower Switchback are similar but with a bit more pitch for gravity fans.

Frank's and Tamarack also funnel into the Mid-Mountain Lodge, home of Mountain Smoke. A terrific lunch option, Mountain Smoke serves up house-smoked barbecue from Vermont farm-raised beef, chicken, turkey and pork, traditional sauces, house-made sides, beer brats and salads. As the restaurant says, "Slow cooked, served up fast." The Mid-Mountain Lodge also hosts the resort's Snowcat Dinner Excursions through March, featuring seasonal beverages and a three-course fine-dining experience.

Grizzly's at the base lodge is another excellent midday or après-ski dining op-

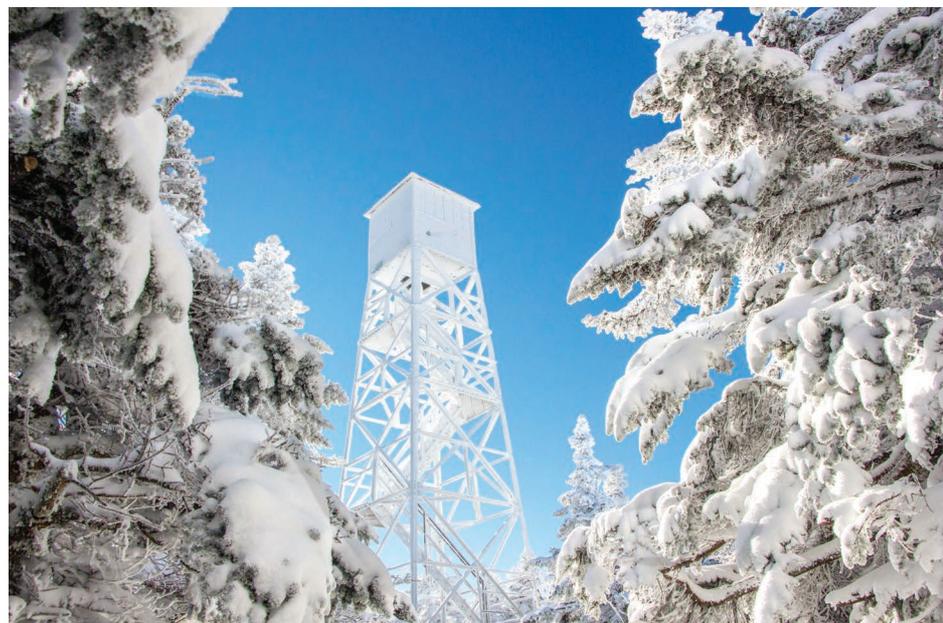
tion, with outstanding views, a spectacular wood bar and vaulted ceilings. The base lodge itself also has a nice selection of food options. You'll pay top dollar — an Asian noodle and vegetable bowl runs \$14, while a burger and fries will set you back \$15 — but the people I spoke to all agreed the food was delicious.

The base lodge also is home to Mugs Coffee Shop, "the cleanest ski bathrooms in Vermont," said one Stratton loyalist, and a boot bag check, which always provides a little extra peace of mind. Taking "peace of mind" to the next level, the nonprofit Carlos Otis Clinic, located just behind the gondola, staffs orthopedic surgeons and emergency physicians providing urgent care. The fact that the base lodge is situated close to both the gondola and American Express six-pack is another bonus, especially if you have youngsters in tow.

Parents also will appreciate the extensive menu of lessons offered by the Stratton Ski School, which has been a presence since the resort first opened, and teaching snowboarders how to link turns since 1983. In fact, Stratton was home to the first Burton Snowboard School. Stratton also is home base for the Stratton Mountain School and several local colleges. You can find racers zooming around the hill almost every day of the week, not to mention the race courses, which are set first thing in the morning, as well as dedicated moguls and ski-cross courses.

For families (or couples) that have

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Hubert Schriebl; Alex Malloy/Stratton Mountain Resort



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**MARCH 13-17**

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someone who either doesn't ski at all or isn't interested in grabbing the first lift and last lift of the day, the resort's village provides diversions for a variety of interests. Shops range from ski-specific items at First Run Ski Shop and Boot Lab, Stratton Sports and Head Case (anything you need from the neck up, including helmets and goggles), snowboard-specific product at the Burton Store, clothing options at the North Face Summit Shop, Lole, Stratton Clothing Company, Syd and Dusty's, and the Dashing Bear Boutique, confectionaries at Mountain Sweets, and even fine jewelry at Von Bargen's.

The Day Spa at Stratton is open seven days a week to take care of all those knots that can result from stress, or skiing (or boarding). Reservations recommended. For something a bit wacky but tons of fun, bring the kids over to the Coca-Cola Tubing Park at Sun Bowl, which offers lift-service tubing (guaranteed to help you find your inner child) under the lights.

After a day full of turns, Lauri and I turned our attention to après ski. And Stratton really shines here as well. We had a dizzying selection of restaurants and bars, ranging from Bar 802, the Green Door Pub and Benedicts to Verde (specializing in high-end Mediterranean fare), Snowfish Sushi Room, Elevation at the Stratton Mountain Club and Table 43.1 at the Black Bear Lodge. We popped into Mulligan's, bellied up to the bar and struck up a delightful conversation with a couple from New York who were just finishing their lobster specials.

After defrosting with a couple of cocktails, we made our way back to our room at the Long Trail House, located just across the street from the village (see Check In/Check Out), me for a well-deserved nap and Lauri for a well-deserved date with the hot tub.

For dinner, we opted for the Fire Tower Restaurant and Tavern, intrigued by a number of their small plates. The ahi nachos (featuring tuna tartare, crispy wontons, pickled onion, wasabi aioli,



▶ Stratton boasts 99 trails spilling off a 3,875-foot summit, with a diversity of terrain to please all snowriders.

hoisin-lime and Daikon radish), coupled with the jerk chicken (Jamaican spice rub with a tamarind aioli) and a winter salad (mixed greens, spicy pecans, Chevre cheese crumble, dried cranberries and truffled vinaigrette) made for a full meal. Bourbon lovers really ought to treat themselves to a bacon old-fashion (house-infused Maker's Mark with bacon, Vermont maple syrup, muddled cherry, orange bitters, bacon garnish and a splash of soda). You'll thank me later.

I also have to give a tip of the hat to the Fire Tower for offering outdoor tables with gas fire pits, allowing patrons to enjoy a cigar along with their cocktails. Clearly, though, some took this amenity

for granted, and insisted on copping "the world is my ashtray" attitude. The next morning, as Lauri and I shuffled over to the base lodge, we spied several cigar butts on the stone walkway, revealing a distinct lack of respect for the beautiful surroundings. I mean, why spend a ton of cash to stay here, and then trash the place?

That said, Lauri and I really enjoyed chatting up the Stratton regulars we met, whether it was the couple from Manhattan at Mulligan's, or a host of folks on the lifts. There was a pair of hilarious local guys who insisted on calling themselves "Ver-Monsters," some old-timers sharing stories of surgeries ("You two are proba-

bly too young for this conversation," one told us. "Oh, don't worry, we fit right in," replied my wife), and a slew of visitors from the metro New York area, including New Jersey and Connecticut, many of whom now own second homes in the area. Being a New Jersey native (though 45 years removed), I loved their unmistakable accents and garrulous nature.

And that's what skiing ought to be — having fun, getting outside, tackling the elements and meeting likeminded enthusiasts. Stratton checks off all the boxes, with a manicured hill, ample lodging and a welcoming and diverse village. **S**

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## EVENTS CALENDAR

Like almost every New England resort, Stratton puts together a fun schedule of special events to provide added value, and a fun diversion, for their customers. Spring is a particularly active time at the resort.

### The Wailers, March 2

Spring skiing gets a jump start with one of the best-known reggae bands on the planet playing live at Grizzly's.

### The Vermont Open, March 8-10

The seventh annual Vermont Open is truly open, inviting snowboarders of all ages to come together to ride, party, enjoy the snow and compete for a prize purse of more than \$20,000. Partial proceeds of the Vermont

Open benefit the Ross Powers Foundation. Live music and post-event parties throughout the weekend.

### 24 Hours of Stratton, March 16-17

The seventh annual 24 Hours of Stratton is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to ski or ride around the clock as Stratton lights its trails for a most magical weekend of the season. This family-friendly, ski and ride party puts the fun in fund-raising with live music, spectator events, fireworks, good food and great times.

### Girls Time Out Snowboard Camp/ Women on Snow Camp, March 22-24

The multi-day Women On Snow Camp is designed to increase confidence in a supportive, fun environment with other likeminded women.

Elite guest coaches and Stratton's top women instructors make the camp the ultimate in personalized coaching, camaraderie, fitness and fun.

### Taste of Vermont, March 23

A fundraiser for the Stratton Foundation, this gathering brings together Vermont chefs, caterers, bakers and specialty food and spirits vendors for an evening of culinary camaraderie.

### Marchdi Gras, March 30

Enjoy specialty food and drinks and celebrate the seventh annual Marchdi Gras. Get down with live music after watching who can make it across the water in the annual pond skimming contest. The event runs in conjunction with the Penguin Plunge with Special Olympics Vermont.

For a full calendar, check out [Stratton.com](http://Stratton.com).



# Connect Sit Back & Connect

We're 30 feet off the ground. It's the middle of winter and we're flying through the air in a chairlift with an orange bubble overhead. Sometimes the best memories are made in unexpected places.



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By Brion O'Connor

**S**ki lodging is a distinctly personal choice. Some folks prefer ski in/ski out slope-side condos stocked to the gills with modern appliances. They are the epitome of convenience, whether you're skiing or entertaining. Others prefer a quaint bed and breakfast, steeped in history and chock full of antiques and comfy quilts. Then there are a raft of properties that fall somewhere in between.

The funny thing is, I can call myself a fan of all of these properties, depending on what I'm looking for during a particular visit. If I'm with a large group of family or friends, the condo is a terrific option. If I prefer a romantic getaway with my wife, I might go with the cozy B&B. During our recent visit to Stratton, the one-bedroom condo at the Long Trail House was ideal.

The Long Trail House, named after the legendary trans-state hiking route, is one of several large condo complexes built on the Village Common, just steps away from the resort's Welcome Center and Stratton's eclectic village and base lodge. Other buildings on the Vil-

**Long Trail House**  
Stratton Mountain Access Road,  
Stratton Mountain, Vermont  
Reservations: 1-800-STRATTON | stratton.com

lage Common include Founders Lodge, Hearthstone Lodge, Rising Bear Lodge and Black Bear Lodge (situated behind Founders), and all offer the same basic amenities and packages.

From the outside, the broad, yellow facade of the Long Trail House, built in 1999, is nothing to write home about. The two buildings that make up the "house" are fairly nondescript, but with clean, architecturally straightforward lines (by comparison, the Hearthstone Lodge next door, modeled after the grand National Park lodges of the West with exposed timber and stone, has a



far more appealing exterior). However, for my wife, Lauri, and I, our fourth-floor unit was really the perfect "ground central" for a few fun days skiing at Stratton.

We were able to park our Subaru Forester in the heated below-ground garage (guests are provided a pass for one vehicle), and though we had to navigate through a sea of SUVs with New York, New Jersey and Connecticut license plates, often parked askew, we managed to find a spot. As I've mentioned in the



past, there's something to be said for parking your car, locking it and just being able to forget about it for a few days.

The hotel has plenty of luggage carts to help you get your gear (yes, like any good New England couple, we overpack to a fault) from your parking spot to your room. Once we got our bags to the fourth floor (there are a pair of elevators in each building), I loved feeling the tension of the long drive just oozing out of my body. The Long Trail has ski lockers on the first floor (to avoid bringing skis to the rooms, which is a common request in New England), and a combination lock for the lockers waiting for you in your room. Like the underground parking spots, the lockers are available on a "first come, first serve" basis. Stratton also offers Stor-A-Ski and snowboard storage right next to the gondola.



Stratton Mountain Resort

The Village Common condo complexes all have a variety of units. Long Trail offers one-, two- and three-bedroom condos, plus the five-bedroom penthouse (just a bit out of my price range). Each floor has a common washer and dryer, while each well-lit unit is fully equipped with solid-if-not-spectacular furnishings, including quality bedding and linens, sofas, tables, chairs, full bathroom and a full kitchen. The kitchens are well-stocked, with a refrigerator, oven, stove-top, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, dishwasher and garbage disposal.

That was a great reminder — never underestimate the joy of a well-stocked kitchen. Despite the fact that Stratton's village has a slew of excellent restaurants, they charge a pretty penny. A condo with a full kitchen allowed Lauri and I, and other guests, to bring dinners that allows everyone to save a few bucks compared to the offerings in Stratton's village restaurants (in our case, a delicious Mexican enchilada casserole on the night we arrived, with a couple of fresh, homemade margaritas). Same holds true for breakfast. Yes, Stratton's base lodge (including Mugs), and spots like Benedicts offer a commendable array of early morning fare.

The key, of course, is having plenty



of options. We could fry up a couple of eggs with toast and bacon in our unit, or saunter over to a local breakfast nook in the village. If the Folgers coffee packets in your condo don't measure up to your morning brew standards, the Long Trail does offer Starbucks coffee on the first floor (if you bring your own coffee, bring filters too).

The neat-as-a-pin condos at Long Trail offer large flat-screen TVs, with a full array of channels, and free WiFi for all your personal electronic devices (ask you kids how important that amenity is). Gas fireplaces and air conditioning supply year-round comfort and, yes, atmosphere. Our unit also had a nice-sized deck overlooking the Village Common pond. On our second night, Lauri and I relished an après-ski cocktail while enjoying the tableau of youngsters skating, and I couldn't imagine anything speaking to the soul of New England winters quite like this Norman Rockwell moment.

Other après options at Long Trail include the outdoor heated pool, a collection of three hot tubs and a sauna, all of

which will help untangle all those ski-induced knots in your legs, lower back and shoulders. Or enjoy some down time in the hotel's Hearth Room, with its plush furnishings and historical images and antiques (like old wooden snowshoes) celebrating the Long Trail's storied history. Though I might be in the minority, given that I'm in my 60s, I love this shared sense of history that connects us to the generations that came before us.

There is no restaurant or bar on the Long Trail premises, but you don't have to go far to find one (in fact, almost everything at Stratton is within walking distance, though the resort does have a complimentary shuttle service). The eclectic Fire Tower Restaurant and Tavern is directly across the street, and the Black Bear Lodge houses Table 43.1 restaurant, which specializes in local fare. Not sure where to go? The Long Trail has a staffed concierge desk that can make dining recommendations and answer most questions that guests might have.

If Mother Nature isn't delivering the best ski conditions (despite the best ef-

forts of the Stratton snowmaking and grooming crews), or if members of your group simply aren't interested in spending a day on the hill, these condos also provide access to the resort's Training and Fitness Center at discounted rates (\$20 daily for individuals, \$30 for families).

The benefit of the fitness center can't be overstated, particularly if you've got children. Open seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., the center offers a 75-foot indoor salt-water pool, cardiovascular equipment, weight training center, a dedicated spin room with Peloton cycles, a yoga room, a stretching room, saunas, massage therapy and two indoor tennis courts. There's also a long, long list of classes (some free, but most available for an additional \$15 fee) including several varieties of yoga, pilates, a combo of the two called yogalates, indoor cycling and body bar.

So whether you're skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, skating, working out at the fitness center or simply chilling after a full meal, there's a very good likelihood that you'll be looking forward to a good night's sleep by the end of the day at Stratton. And the Long Trail House makes sure you've got everything you need to drift off quietly into dreamland. **S**

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# SPLASH INTO SPRING



▶ Pond-A-Palooza at Sunday River

## SPLASH PONDS ARE A SKIER'S SPRINGTIME RITE OF PASSAGE

By Meghan McCarthy McPhaul

**A**h, springtime — that season of soft snow, goggle tans and skier celebrations. Since there have been ski areas in New England, the end of ski season always has included jovial events that are part bittersweet adieu to winter and part happy salutation to spring. Easter parades with wacky costumes, picnic lunches enjoyed along the sides of trails, and — in recent years — a celebration of neon colors and one-piece suits known as '80s Day.

Amid all the hilarity is what has become a favorite at many ski areas come March and April: the pond skim.

"Pond skims have grown in popularity, especially in the last couple of decades," said Win Smith, principal owner at Vermont's Sugarbush Resort, which lays claim to the longest continually run pond-skimming event in the country. "You have the people who are really intent on making it across, and you have people who are just there for the fun and frivolity."

While Smith couldn't pinpoint the exact start date of Sugarbush's pond skim, he figures it started soon after the resort



▶ Pond-A-Palooza at Sunday River

first opened for the 1958-59 ski season. That means New Englanders — some hearty souls, anyway — have been attempting to ski across barely unfrozen water for more than half a century.

As a perpetual pond-skimming spectator, I've often wondered about the appeal of throwing oneself down hill and attempting to skim across a long, slushy pool while a huge crowd watched — and hoped for a spectacular, splashing crash.

"I guess there's no rhyme or reason

to it," said 13-year-old Ryan Ayers, who's participated in Mount Sunapee's Slush Cup since he was 10 years old. "Your friends are cheering you on, or you just want to do something fun, or it's tradition. For me, it's all of the above. I do it because my friends are there, and I have family watching — and it's fun."

Ayers has made a tradition out of the annual Slush Cup despite failing to make it across — instead sinking into the pond — on his first attempt. And despite



▶ Pond Skim at Sugarbush

the firsthand knowledge that, "It's really cold water. It's slushy."

Smith also participates nearly every year in his resort's pond skim and has since his first winter there, in 2002. While he has cruised the entire length of the Sugarbush pond unscathed every time, he said a big part of the spectator allure is the dramatic crashes that soak participants — and sometimes the on-lookers closest to the pond.

Besides being the oldest pond skim, Sugarbush also has one of the longest ponds, measuring somewhere between 100-120 feet each year.

"You really want about 90 percent of the people not to make it," said Smith. "If 100 people made it across, people would be bored to tears after about 10."

Sunday River Resort: John Atkinson/Sugarbush Resort



▶ Pond-A-Palooza at Sunday River



▶ Ryan Ayers competes in the Slush Cup at Sunapee.

New Hampshire's Sunapee takes a slightly different approach, said marketing director Megan Burch: "Perfect pond-skimming size for success is 84 to 87 feet, so this is what we do."

Sunday River in Maine ups the ante with two ponds to skim across, and a snow buffer in between to maneuver.

"If participants clear the first pond, they have to contend with a fairly significant drop into the second pond," said the resort's marketing manager, Karolyn Castaldo. "Many will try to earn style points from the judges by backflipping into the second pond."

Ah, yes, the judges. While every pond-skimming event varies, most have some competitive component, with prizes

awarded in categories like Best Skim, Best Crash (or Biggest Splash) and Best Costume. At Sunday River, the panel of judges is made up of the resort's snow-making crew.

Costumes, while not generally mandatory, are highly encouraged at these splashy events. These range from Storm Troopers to gorillas, Indiana Jones to the Cat in the Hat, and dinosaurs to cartoonish penguins. I've even seen a three-piece-suit-clad businessman cruise across a pond while reading the newspaper and clenching a cigar in his mouth.

Ayers suggests pond skimmers should consider the aerodynamic properties of a costume before making a choice. Those blow-up T-Rex costumes

are cute and all, but they'll slow you right down mid-water. He offers a couple more tips for skimming success: Keep up your speed, and lean back just a little bit.

"I think commitment is a big part of it. My first year I was too afraid and just fell over," Ayers said, adding, "If you lean too far forward, you're going to take a digger."

In the end, the teenager said, pond-skimming — like all those celebratory spring skiing events — is really all about having a good time.

"Even if you crash, just laugh about it, because a lot of people crash," he said. "You've just got to have fun with it." **S**

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# SPLASH SAMPLER

Three pond-skimming events to check out this spring in New England:

## Slush Cup Mount Sunapee, New Hampshire

**Date:** March 30  
**Pond length:** 84-87 feet  
**Number of skimmers allowed:** 250  
**Registration:** Starts at 8 a.m. in Spruce Lodge; \$10 (proceeds go to the Make A Wish Foundation)  
[www.mountsunapee.com](http://www.mountsunapee.com)

## Pond Skim Sugarbush, Vermont

**Date:** April 6  
**Pond length:** 100-120 feet  
**Number of skimmers allowed:** 110  
**Registration:** 9-11 a.m. in Castlerock Pub, \$20 (cash only)  
[www.sugarbush.com](http://www.sugarbush.com)

## Pond-A-Palooza Sunday River, Maine

**Date:** April 13  
**Pond length:** 75 feet  
**Number of skimmers allowed:** 100  
**Registration:** South Ridge Lodge, free  
**Bonus:** The Maine Brew Fest's Spring Session is the same day at Sunday River, with live music and more than 100 different craft beers.  
[www.sundayriver.com](http://www.sundayriver.com)



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By Joan Wallen

**D**oes your family commute to the mountains every weekend? Do you spend early morning hours each Saturday and/or Sunday getting the family organized to be at the slopes for the start of the day?

Many families opt out of this weekly hassle by renting a house or condo near their favorite resort. Ski gear and clothing can be left there. Drive up on Friday evening, relax and be ready to go on Saturday morning without the stress of an early morning drive.

What should you look for when renting a property in ski country? That depends on your lifestyle and the resort where you want to spend your time. If young children are part of the mix, you might want to find something slopeside or close to the mountain so one family member can take a child home when he or she tires out. A ski-in, ski-out unit is best for this, but even a house or condo a mile or two from the area will let someone be delivered home easily without disrupting the entire day.

Another thing to consider is what you like to do in the evening. If you're content to return to your rental after the lifts close, have dinner in, watch TV or movies or play games, then you might look for something out of town in a quiet, country setting. But if you want entertainment, like to eat dinner out frequently, sample the nightlife, then perhaps a house in a town or around the base area (depending on the resort you choose) is a better option.

As far as the actual property goes, you need to again examine your lifestyle as well as your budget. How many bedrooms do you need? Will you or the children be bringing guests? Is one living space, whether large or cozy, where you can all be together preferable? Or would separate spaces for relaxation work better for the family? Do you prefer something upscale, in a condo community with amenities such as a spa, swimming pool, workout equipment? Or will a simple house work fine for your group?

Budget is an important consideration. If you rent a single-family house, in addition to the



## TAKE THE PLUNGE ON A SKI HOUSE

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rent, you likely will be responsible for paying utilities including cable and wifi as well as plowing costs. Be sure to ask about the type of heat the house has and how efficient it is. Fuel costs over the course of a winter can come as a surprise sometimes and you want to be prepared.

When searching for a seasonal rental property, it is a wise idea to use a real estate rental agent. These folks know the properties and by asking a few questions can often direct you to something you might not find on your own. They will have a handle on expenses for the winter, condition of the property and lots of tips on location relative to the mountain and other activities that might be of interest to you. There are plenty of ways to book lodging online, but if you go this route, be sure to use reputable websites and ask a lot of questions.

Another option is purchasing a home in ski country — clearly a more complicated process. Perhaps you've rented for a season or two and decided that a second home is right for you. Or maybe you're just ready to take a leap of faith and go directly into ownership. What are some of the considerations you should take into account?

First of all is location. If you've

been renting and enjoying the area you are at, or if you've been day tripping and love a particular resort, the decision is easier.

If you don't have a preferred area, think about what's right for you and your family. Do you want to ski one mountain all the time or be in a location where you can easily reach several resorts? Are you purchasing near a resort that will be good for your family for future years? You don't want to end up at an area that the kids will outgrow too quickly.

There are also many choices once you decide on a particular area or region. Do you want to be slopeside or is a home in town or out in the countryside preferable? Should it be a condo or single-family home? There are advantages to each.

If you decide on a condo, there are several things you should investigate. Is it a new development or an established community? If the development is older, you would want to know the history of upgrades to the buildings and grounds. What has been done in terms of roofs, building siding, roads, etc.? If there are amenities like a swimming pool or fitness room, check out their condition and how they have been maintained.

Condo fees are another con-

sideration. Are they reasonable or so high as to feel like a second mortgage? You also should carefully review the condo association documents to be informed not only of rules and regulations but also the association's financial status. The capital reserve fund should be adequate to cover both planned and unexpected maintenance costs so you don't get hit with a surprise special assessment.

You also want to consider usage of the condo in the offseason. If you won't be coming to the mountains in the summer, you might want to rent out the unit. Some associations enforce minimum rental periods of anywhere from two weeks to three months or more. This could impact your ability to secure a tenant. And if you want, or need, to rent it out in the offseason, be sure it's in a location where there are summer activities and a demand for rentals. Although condo fees add to the cost of ownership, there are advantages also. In addition to outside maintenance, these fees cover snow removal, shoveling and trash pickup. You won't have to worry about tromping through snowdrifts when you arrive on Friday night, storing your trash because the recycling center isn't open when you are

leaving, or spending your summer weekends mowing the lawn. You can simply walk away at the end of your stay and know these things are taken care of.

Condo living is not for everyone, however. You might prefer the privacy of a single-family home either close to town or in the country. While you won't incur condo fees, you will have other expenses. You'll have to arrange for plowing and sanding after storms, perhaps someone to check on the house after a power outage when you're not there, and of course all maintenance will be your responsibility. The advantages are privacy, perhaps a more tranquil setting and, if you're in the country, you likely can cross-country ski or snowshoe right out your front door. If you wish to rent it out, you'll be your own boss, with no association restrictions. But of course you'll have more responsibility. If something goes wrong, you can't just call the office; you're on your own to find a repair person.

No matter which way you go, there are things to assess before buying. Does it make financial sense? Will you use it enough? What will you do with the property in the offseason? Is it in a location where you and your family will use it in the summer, or if you want to rent it out, is it in a rentable location?

Once you settle on a property you should have a building inspection done. Inspectors are licensed and can give you a thorough picture of the condition not only of the building itself but also of the heating system, appliances, wiring and many other parts of the infrastructure a layman cannot see.

Buying a home in ski country is a big commitment but can bring big rewards. As a gathering place for family and friends to enjoy the outdoors together, many lasting memories will be created. Family members who might not ski will still have a base from which to enjoy other outdoor activities, or to just hang out by the fire and read. And you don't have to worry about making reservations, finding a place to stay after that two-foot snowfall or lugging your gear and clothing back and forth. The home and your belongings are right there waiting for you. **S**

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■ Friday nights at Black Mountain, Andrew Drummond's ski touring visions come true, and the momentum is gathering steam among backcountry lovers of all ages and skill levels



# TOUR DE FORCE

By Eric Wilbur

**A**NDREW DRUMMOND was in Alaska visiting his brother when he had his epiphany.

Prior to 2012, the 37-year-old native of Conway, N.H., already had plenty of alpine experience as a member of the Attitash racing program, in nearby Bartlett, and the Eastern Slope Ski Club. He raced as a member of the ski teams at Kennett Middle School and Gould Academy, and he has done work as a ski patroller at both Attitash Mountain Resort and Sunday River.

But it was in Alaska where Drummond went backcountry skiing for the first time. He soon realized it was his calling.

"I knew that was for me," Drummond said. "Ever since then, I just made it a point around my winters to focus on the skiing."

In 2016, Drummond transferred that burgeoning passion into Ski the Whites, a Jackson shop dedicated to outfitting backcountry enthusiasts with the proper gear, as well as serving as a central source, of sorts, for both locals and visitors interested in winter touring, something that abounds in the area with routes available throughout the White Mountains including, obviously, Tuckerman Ravine.

"I had this idea to curate my own backcountry ski shop because there was nothing like that in the (Mount Washington)



valley,” he said. “And it seemed like a void that needed to be filled because backcountry skiing in general was growing and was something I was passionate about.”

As Drummond puts it, he didn’t have a job at the time, so he created one, spending much of his first season pushing himself into the local backcountry to become an expert on terrain in the White Mountains, Green Mountains and Maine. He tested different equipment from Fischer and Dynafit as well as a few different skin manufacturers, and provided demos and rentals out of the back of his truck. He came away from the season with a lot more experience.

“Backcountry skiing was perfect because it combined endurance sports, which I was really getting into — I was really getting into running — and then it lets you ski anywhere,” he said.

That’s the message that Drummond hoped to convey to a certain degree with the advent of Friday Night Lights last year. The evening uphill series at Black Mountain — where Ski the Whites now has its own dedicated space — turned out to be a hit in its debut season, welcoming more than 200 skiers of all abilities, ages ranging from kids to senior citizens.

“If you can ski, you can alpine tour,” Drummond said. “Really it’s just hiking up a hill. Really simple.”

“You go through a couple different transitions with the skis from uphill to downhill and downhill to uphill, and you’ve got it pretty well figured out.”

More than 30 lights are set up along the course for that particular week (Drummond has never used the same course more than once at Black), and results are kept for those competing in one- or two-lap options. Cost for the series runs \$50 for six events throughout the winter, or just \$10 to drop in on a Friday night. Ski the Whites doesn’t provide equipment (rentals are available for \$25 with reservation), but recommends which headlamps and clear goggles to purchase for participation.

Now finishing up its second season on March 15, Friday Night Lights has turned out to be a backcountry staple in the Mount Washington Valley.

“When I made it, I selfishly made it for myself,” Drummond said. “I thought it might target more people in my demographic, 20 to 40 years old, more into the competition. What that turned out to be is maybe 20 percent of the people are there for that reason. They’re actually just out for a tour and have a good time.”

The interest was large enough that Drummond was able to expand his offerings over the course of the 2018-19 ski season, establishing a Thursday night uphill series at Shawnee Peak, and



► Ski the Whites partners with Black Mountain in Jackson, N.H., for the Friday Night Lights evening uphill series, which wraps up its second season on March 15.



Wednesday nights at Cranmore Mountain Resort. His hope is that he’s able to tap into the Boston and Portland markets and spark an interest in the pleasures of backcountry skiing.

He also realizes the challenges. Case in point; during his first year with Ski the Whites, he set up a booth at that November’s Boston Ski Expo, where he played videos and had backcountry gear on display. He estimates about one out of every 100 people who strolled by stopped to chat.

“In my small fishbowl world, it’s the biggest thing happening,” he said. “But on the grand stage, it’s still a niche sport. To survive on just backcountry skiing if you’re a retailer is definitely a challenge. Think of how many people are coming to the valley to ski, and how many are coming to backcountry ski, and it’s a really small percentage.”

He hopes his uphill series can change that in the coming years.

“I just think it’s a matter of time that the word has to get out,” he said. “People need a mentor. They need someone to

show them what’s possible. It’s really satisfying when you set someone up with the gear and they have this great experience.”

“That feedback loop is just representative of the future of backcountry skiing because it’s combining all these elements that you just can’t get in any other discipline.”

Drummond’s personal passion for his backcountry endeavors is documented on the Ski the Whites website, where he writes summaries of recent hikes, shoots video and photography, and even offers the ability to track him via GPS on his next adventure.

So, while Alaska might have planted the backcountry bug, New England has only enhanced Drummond’s interest.

“While Alaska is amazing and has arguably the best terrain in the world, all that stuff has been skied,” he said. “There’s nothing really new. Look at the terrain we have. It’s not only relatable, but it’s something that anyone can access. It’s also something that hasn’t really been captured well through pho-

tography and video, and that was something that really intrigued me, going out and documenting all my tours and sharing that on a bigger stage so that people could get excited and motivated.”

It’s also a prime way for visitors to check out the family-run Black Mountain in quaint Jackson Village. Drummond said that mountain ownership was completely open to kicking off the backcountry series, which has probably led to some new skiers visiting the small area, unaware of some of Black’s gnarly terrain and comfortable vibe.

“I really wanted to showcase the terrain and get people excited and hopefully get a new crop of talented backcountry skiers out here,” he said.

*Ski the Whites is open Thursday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., but Drummond asks customers to email him (andrew@skithewhites.com) to confirm availability. Visit [www.skithewhites.com](http://www.skithewhites.com) for more information including products, events and trip reports.*

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# A lifetime dedicated to the SLOPES

By Brion O'Connor

**T**HE UNITED STATES Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame understandably evokes images of the sport's legendary competitors. You're likely to think of accomplished racers, like the great Olympians such as Phil and Steve Mahre, Bill Johnson, Billy Kidd, Diann Roffe, Tamara McKinney and Donna Weinbrecht. With the incomparable Lindsey Vonn recently announcing her retirement after 82 World Cup wins, you certainly can add her to the list.

But the U.S. Ski Hall is an inclusive body, celebrating a sport that goes well beyond the competitive arena. It recognizes the pioneers of the sport, from resort visionaries such as Killington founder Preston Leete Smith and freestyle legends like Wayne Wong to groundbreaking filmmakers like Warren Miller (not to mention a number of the "extreme skiers" that took star turns in Miller's movies, like John and Dan Egan).

For Bernie Weichsel of Wayland, Mass., induction into the Ski Hall of Fame in 2017 was tantamount to a lifetime achievement award.

"I view being inducted into the Hall of Fame as a great honor — and a gift from the sport and lifestyle that I love and has bestowed on me many great experiences and, more importantly, many friends," said the 70-year-old Weichsel.

It has been a dizzying ride for the New York City native, the son of German immigrants who became a legend in ski marketing circles and a tireless advocate for the sport. Under the umbrella of Waltham-based BEWI Productions, Weichsel is president of Ski Show Expos. He also has a long résumé of achievement in marketing the sport on a global basis, and even reviving the moribund Hall of Fame.

"I'm sure I can't say I planned, or studied, to be a ski entrepreneur," said the affable Weichsel. "My father had skied in Germany — he was raised in an area of small mountains, a lot like the Catskills —



■ Ski expo guru  
Bernie Weichsel  
turned his passion  
into a career that has  
brought the joy of the  
sport to the masses

before he came to this country in 1927 as an immigrant looking for opportunity. He had planned to go back to Germany, but once the Nazis came to power he couldn't so he stayed and became a citizen."

Weichel's mother immigrated in 1937 "as a refugee fleeing the Nazis. Sadly, she was the only survivor of her family," he said. At the age of 4, Weichsel started skiing in 1952 at Belleayre, a state-owned ski area in the Catskills.

Mike Cohen, I met Harry Leonard, a founder of ski shows," he said. "As a kid, I had wanted to run away and join the circus. I thought what Harry did — oversee as many as seven annual ski shows around the country each fall — was a close second."

While matriculating at City College of New York — where he again formed the school's first ski club — Weichsel began an apprenticeship with Leonard.

"I took on the duty to help Trailside with its exhibit at Harry's New York Ski Show, and that included doing some 'marketing' for the show," he said. "So one night I organized a bunch of friends from the ski club to spray paint on city sidewalks 'Go go, Ski Show!' Harry loved it. The police didn't."

Soon, Weichsel was working with Leonard, first as a volunteer, and eventually as a paid employee. He'd work ski shows in the fall, and then took a variety of odd jobs — ranging from being a clerk at a Vail drug store to tour guide in Innsbruck — to feed his skiing habit. In 1979, he formed BEWI Productions, and in 1982 bought Leonard's ski show business.

Weichsel's BEWI Productions still operates Ski and Snowboard Expos in Boston and Denver, but over the course of his career it has put on shows in 11 different cities. Also in 1979, Weichsel launched the Ski USA International Marketing Program to give United States resorts a greater global footprint. He ran Ski USA until 1996, when he donated it to the National Ski Areas Association.

"The satisfaction and enjoyment I got from running this program came not only from the success this program had — even to this day about 10 percent of the business seen at U.S. resorts nationwide comes from visitors from outside our country — but, on a personal level, the friends I made worldwide," he said.

But there was more to the entrepreneur. Since 1969, he has served on the board of Youth Enrichment Services to help introduce inner-city youth to skiing. These days, when you see a terrain park at a ski area, you see Weichsel's influence. He played a major role in the

"As best I can recall, I liked skiing pretty much immediately," he said. "I have vivid memories of learning on Belleayre's rope tow and T-bars and of using very basic skis, with no edges and bear-trap bindings, and, at best, wool pants."

Weichsel formed the first ski club at Brooklyn Technical High School and became involved with the Trailside Ski Lodge and Camp at Killington.

"Through Trailside and its owner,



► From top left, Bernie Weichsel on the hill; Weichsel at Sun Valley in 2010 with freestyle legend Wayne Wong; Weichsel with Billy Kidd, Herbert Schneider and Phil Gravink; Weichsel with marketing exec Greg Bowen.

growth of “hot dog” skiing, running the International Freestyle Skiers Association tour from 1974-76.

“Bernie was one of the key players in getting freestyle skiing as popular as it was,” said David Ingemi, former president of the Washington, D.C.-based Ski Industries Association. “It sure was a major element in helping to grow skiing participation in the ’70s and ’80s.”

Weichsel also is a longtime supporter and board member of the Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame, serving as chairman from 2009 to 2014.

“Bernie is personally responsible for saving the U.S. Ski Hall of Fame,” said Mike Bisner, who once ran the Ski Market chain throughout New England. “With a beautiful museum located in Ishpeming, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula, it was

a well-kept secret to the evolving fast-paced ski world. Bernie brought the organization out of the shadows of obscurity, and took the induction ceremony on the road to be hosted by world-class U.S. ski resorts.”

In 2017, for Weichsel’s induction, that road show was held at Stowe, Vermont. In the past, it has been hosted by resorts such as Vail and Aspen in Colorado, Sun Valley in Idaho, and Park City in Utah.

“This has been a complete game-changer for the Ski Hall of Fame and increased exposure not only for the hall, but (also) for the athletes and sport builders being inducted,” said Bisner.

Finally, Weichsel, with his focus clearly on the health of skiing, doesn’t shy away from the daunting challenges facing the sport, and the industry that supports it.

“The biggest challenge, of course, is growth, and getting more people involved with the sport, especially as the group that is still the core of participants — Baby Boomers — are starting to slow down and ski less,” he said.

The flip side is that children today

not only have abundant alternatives, but also other sports are so organized that those schedules make a ski weekend, or week, less likely, said Weichsel.

“Then there’s the cost factor,” he said. “But, being the eternal optimist, I think the plus side of skiing and snowboarding is that no sport, that I’m aware of, brings one more joy, or delivers more health benefits. And that, I believe, will win the day in the end and keep people out skiing and snowboarding as long as we have snow.”

On the environmental front, Weichsel doesn’t mince words regarding his concerns.

“Climate change is the greatest challenge to the future of the sport,” he said. “As far as dealing with this challenge, you have to keep in mind that snowsports occupy a very small position in our world.

“As long as our country elects leaders who deny the problem — and therefore won’t put into place policies that can turn around the changes in the climate that we’re seeing — I really don’t know what the snowsports community can

do on its own,” said Weichsel. “My solution is to elect leaders who support and implement the Paris Climate Accords, and will work to reduce, and eliminate, the carbon gas we spew into the atmosphere.”

Such weighty sentiments, though, are rare for Weichsel. Within the industry, he’s known for his unfailingly upbeat attitude.

“A big part of skiing is the après-ski gathering at the end of the day with a cold beer or beverage,” said Bisner. “Bernie might be the only person who doesn’t drink in the entire ski industry, and will order a cold glass of milk to toast with other skiing friends.

“We all love him for his passion for the sport, and the time we get to spend with him sharing his insights and opinions on a chairlift.”

S

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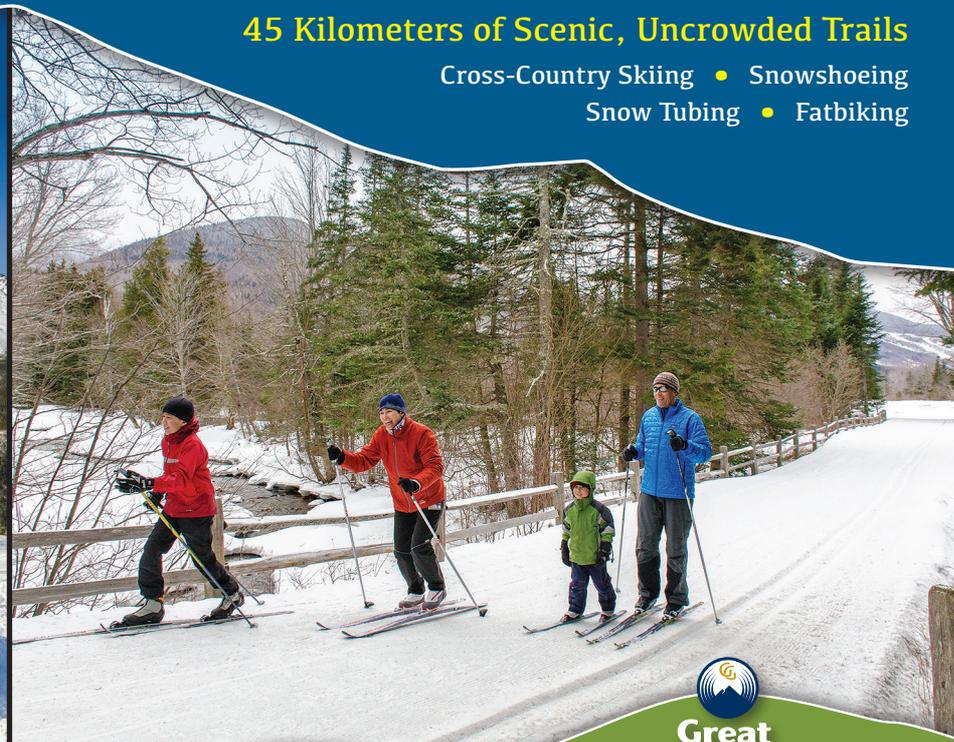
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# COMMAND THE SPRING

■ Sugarbush's John Egan's go-to mentality for tackling the variables of late-season snow

By Brion O'Connor

**S**pringtime in New England. Is there any season that is more alluring, and more perplexing, for skiers?

Depending on Mother Nature's whims, and often where in the Northeast you find yourself, you might get boilerplate, you might get granular, you might get fresh powder, you might get mashed potatoes. And those conditions can change from day to day, and even hour to hour. Oftentimes, you'll get a mix with each turn.

For me, and many other skiers and snowboarders, this is the biggest challenge to skiing, particularly in New England. The varied and variable conditions are the true test of mind and body. They are, I think, the reason why people believe, "If you can ski New England, you can ski anywhere."

It's not unusual for me to be linking turns on groomed granular when I suddenly hit an icy patch, and my form (and composure) completely falls apart. I get upright, I get tense, I lean back — everything you're not supposed to do.

So how do you handle those changes that require so many different techniques, and a large skill-set? For answers, we went to legendary freeskiier John Egan, Hall of Fame inductee, star of numerous Warren Miller movies, and chief recreation officer at Sugarbush Resort in Vermont.

My wife and I had a chance to catch up with Egan in early December. Sugarbush was still enjoying the fruits of "Snow-ember," when the region got a massive amount of early season snow. It was the first turns of the winter for Lauri and I, and we were predictably a bit apprehensive. Egan, meanwhile, already was in midseason form. During November, Egan had skied on three different continents — North America, South America and Antarctica — and encountered almost every snow condition imaginable. So he was in the ideal position to offer some tips on our skiing

John Atkinson/Sugarbush Resort



and the conditions, which were remarkably similar to what we typically experience during March and April.

Egan's first piece of advice, which has become my wife's mantra, was smiling. Sounds simple, but the act of smiling has a raft of benefits. Not spontaneous smiling, but consciously smiling.

"It really does start with skiing with a smile on your face," said Egan, noting that smiling helps us to relax. "A happy body works much better, ergonomically. The whole being just works much better, like the suspension system it should be."

Second, Egan kept reminding me to breathe. This is something I've developed over the years, to the point where I don't even notice that I'm doing it. But whenever I'm exerting myself, like lifting weights or pointing my mountain bike down a gnarly stretch of singletrack, I tend to hold my breath. Which, of course, makes my entire body tense.

Egan saw it immediately, and kept shouting, "Brion, breathe!" He was right, every single time. When I started breathing, my body felt more pliable, more athletic. As a bonus, I wasn't getting tired as quickly, because I wasn't expending all my energy on muscle tension. I was allowing my muscles to do what they're designed for, which is moving.

According to Egan, varied conditions emphasize that skiing requires constant movement, constant adjustment. Once you've graduated from the bunny slopes, where you might have gotten away with locking your knees without falling, you need to be flexible and agile.

"In skiing, you're always changing the weight you have from right foot to left foot and from left foot back to right," he said. "There is never a time when the legs just freeze and you stand there and glide with weight on both feet equal, and you're not transferring weight from one to another. If you were walking, and all of a sudden you left both feet on the ground, and expected to keep going, we'd probably check you for a head injury."

In short, there are very few times when you're simply cruising, and not "interacting" with the slopes. That requires maintaining a proper stance relative to the pitch, and the pull of gravity.

"It's a very dynamic sport," said Egan. "We pick the opponent we're playing with. Usually, you think it's the hill — it's so steep, there are rocks, the trees are too narrow. Yet we can't see what we're playing against in this sport."



► **No matter the terrain and snow conditions, skiers should be dynamic, confident and in a positive mind-set, Sugarbush chief recreation officer John Egan stresses.**

"Normally, we see the puck, the ball, the playing field, the opponent," he said. "In this situation, it's energy, it's gravity. It's freakin' invisible. But it's so easy to understand. It pulls stuff downhill."

Egan, at this point, can sound something like a ski Zen master (or Chevy Chase's Ty Webb from "Caddyshack," if that's more your speed). But he's talking about basic physics. If we get ski rigid, we tend to lose our optimum angle to the slope, which is 90 degrees.

"When you're afraid and you back up, now you're not 90 degrees to the hill anymore," said Egan. "If you were standing up right now, and you lean back, not 90 degrees to the floor, how long would you stay on your feet? Now add slipperiness, and now push yourself downhill because you're adding gravity, and you're in trouble."

"Most people are just being pushed down the hill with five foot pieces of plastic on their feet," he said. "They're not very active with their movements."

Of course, spring conditions can exacerbate that sense that the mountain is dictating the rules of the game.

"The snow tends to be thicker, the powder might be heavier, the corn snow might be deeper; it's different from the substance they've skied all year," said Egan. "You've got to remember that you're not playing with that substance, you're overpowering it. You're commanding that it does what you want it to. And you're facing the fall line, playing with gravity, the actual energy that is making you go down the hill."

"A lot of people in heavier snow will try to twist their skies, or sit back, or turn away from the fall line, because they want to 'turn,'" he said. "Yet, the ski is what does the turning, and you need to make it work more in the thicker, heavier snow. A lot of times, you're coming down, and all of a sudden there's an ice patch after you've been skiing corn snow. Just because the surface changes does not mean that you can stop doing what you've been doing to play with the energy of the game."

Egan likes to refer to his skis as "really cool sneakers," and he advocates that

skiers treat them like any other athletic shoe, and treat changing conditions, like moguls or death cookies, much like you'd jump over a curb.

"If it's a curbstone, I'm going to step up and over the obstacle just like I would if I was running on a lawn, across a sidewalk, onto the street and into the park," said Egan. "Gravity's pulling you down the hill. Feel it, run, jump, dance, skip — use your ability to move."

Here's one more challenge to spring skiing — flat light.

"Flat light is the same as too steep, or rocky, or trees. It affects your vision, instead of your fear, but it still results in

fear," said Egan. "Because you're human, you're going to do one of three things when you're afraid. You're going to open up, you're going to back up, you're going to stop moving, or you're going to do all three."

"The same thing happens when you can't see," he said. "You lose part of your vision, and you don't rely on your other senses. You're not feeling what's going on. You're looking and hoping that that stuff happens, where you can ski. It's really important that you're feeling what's going on." **S**

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▶ Canadian Phil Brown barrels over a jump in the Waterville dual slalom. Insets below, from top: Waterville GM Tim Smith, CBS Sports Network reporter Pam Fletcher and WPST president Edwin Rogers; Nolan Kasper; Robert Cone, Phil Brown, Michael Ankeny and Kei Kullberg.



## Brown rules WPST slalom at Waterville

**C**anadian Phil Brown seized top honors as the World Pro Ski Tour barnstormed through New Hampshire's Waterville Valley Resort for the season's second stop.

Held Feb. 9-10, the Waterville leg of the World Pro Ski Tour was contested on the World Cup trail. On Saturday, Mother Nature brought in severe weather with 65-mph winds bringing the temperatures well below zero. A decision was made to move the qualifier to Sunday prior to the super slalom event.

Sunday, under clear, warmer skies, 30 racers competed for prize money and points toward the year-end overall title. Brown, a 27-year-old from Toronto, took first-place honors, claiming the \$8,500 winner's check. Michael Ankeny of Minnetonka, Minn., took second. Robert Cone from Killington, Vt., finished third and Kei Kullberg from Cornwall, N.Y., took fourth.

Brown, a silver medalist at the 2015 World Championships in the team event at Vail, Colo., and a Canadian ski team member, was challenged a few times by his competitors but his consistency set a fast pace as he raced to victory.

"I am super stoked to leave Waterville Valley with my first Pro Tour victory," Brown said. "The race yesterday was wild with three big jumps, icy conditions and a challenging set. There was a lot of action especially in the early rounds. Anything could happen and you needed to stay focused right to the finish.

"Unfortunately I wasn't selected by the Canadian team to compete at the FIS World Championships in Sweden, so being able to come back to North America and compete in the WPST has been an amazing opportunity. I am having so much fun skiing this format and competing against these athletes. WPST definitely does a great job making ski racing fun, which is most important."

WPST serves up a dual format of racing, head to head, not against the clock, with horse-style start gates, identical race courses, and, at Waterville, three pro jumps made racing even more exciting.

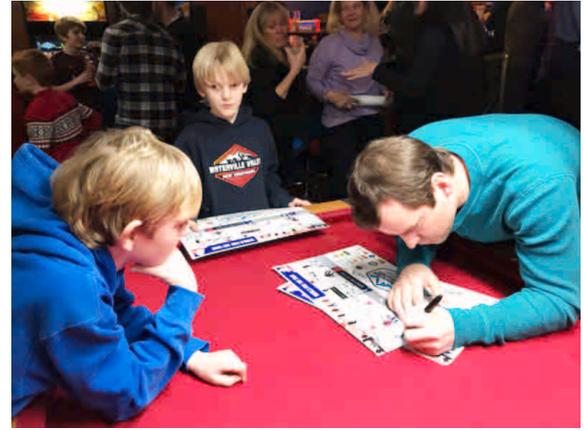
A large spectator crowd gathered to watch a field of Olympians, national champions and NCAA champions face off on the dual-slalom course. Olympian and overall 2018 World Pro Ski Tour champion Nolan Kasper, of Warren, Vt., finished in the round of eight. Gabriel Coulet from Cham

Chamonix, France; Jack Schibli of Charlotte, Vt.; and Alex Tarberry from North Conway, N.H., rounded out the field. Burke Mountain Academy and Dartmouth Ski Team had a strong showing with a number of their ski team members entering the event. Countries represented stretched from the USA, France, Canada, Russia and Sweden.

The WPST is currently a men's professional ski racing tour, yet it is open for all racers. This event highlighted three women who came to test their skills — Mardy Haskell from East Burke, Vt., Laura Halupowski of North Conway, N.H., and Lisa Wedsjo from Sweden.



► Top row, from left: Phil Brown; Michael Ankeny, Brown and Nolan Kasper take photos with young fans; Kasper signs autographs.



► Bottom row, from left: Kei Kullberg; the Waterville Valley crowd; Nolan Kasper with Tito's Gals at a Tito's After Dark Party following the competition.

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# TONY CHAMBERLAIN'S LAST RUN



► After taking third in the FIS Alpine World Championships downhill, Lindsey Vonn shares a moment with Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark.

# FAREWELL, G.O.A.T.

■ Lindsey Vonn, the greatest ever, punctuates career in style at World Championships

By Tony Chamberlain

**E**arly in the winter of 2002, Picabo Street said she had had enough. “Once you’re afraid of speed and have the least hesitation about committing yourself to going as fast as you can to try to win, you might as well not be out there.”

Thus did the best female downhiller of her generation step away from the sport that made her famous.

Fast forward to mid-February 2019 to the press conference that Lindsey Vonn held in Are, Sweden, after crashing off course in a super-G race at the Alpine Ski World Championships. “I said to myself, ‘Why am I here in the fence again? I’m getting too old for this ----.’”

It was kind of a joke for the packed postrace press conference, but what Vonn said a little later was no joke at all. Irreparable injuries were forcing Vonn to retire from ski racing. “If I hadn’t met Picabo Street when I was 9 years old,” Vonn said, “I wouldn’t be here at all. She was my hero and mentor.”

The 34-year-old Colorado woman who for a couple of years became known in wider sports circles as Tiger Woods’ girlfriend also became known as the all-time winningest female ski racer in history.

In fact, when her injuries forced her out of the sport after nearly 15 years at the World Championships last month, with 82 victories on the World Cup circuit, she was just four short of the 86 wins by Sweden’s Ingemar Stenmark four de-

acades earlier. As Vonn started this season, there seemed a reasonable chance she could surpass Stenmark to claim the sport’s most impressive milestone.

Of course it must be noted that Vonn and Stenmark competed in essentially different sports, the Swede racing only in the slower technical races, slalom and giant slalom. Vonn raced in all disciplines, her specialty being the 80-mile-per-hour downhills that she approached the only way she knew how — go big or go home. And she has the body to prove it. Her list of injuries over 14 years is staggering, with at least one a year.

She has suffered multiple knee ligament tears, a broken ankle, broken arm, torn tendons, multiple concussions, deep bone bruise and permanent nerve damage, and a history of slamming into the ice-infused downhill tracks at high rates of speed. One season, after a bad cut to her hand, she ended up racing with her ski pole taped to a cast on her wrist.

Last month in Sweden, Vonn took to the start of the super-G and quickly

crashed off course and found herself again in the fence. Vonn said she didn’t know exactly what happened, but that she thought she missed seeing a section with broken snow. Her reaction was typical: “I think I’ll be fine,” she said. “I’m going to be really sore, and I think I wrung my bell a little bit.”

Translation: a new concussion. She had hardly recovered from her previous crash in a downhill training run in Cortina, Italy, in January when the Swedish worlds at Are came along. She left the Cortina course in a medical helicopter.

After she gathered herself, in a tearful press conference, Vonn admitted that her career was over, clipped several weeks short of her expectation. The truth was, she said, her knee never healed from Cortina, and she couldn’t take the pressure of high-speed turns anymore.

Earlier in the month, she wrote in social media: “My body is broken beyond repair and it isn’t letting me have the final season I dreamed of. My body is screaming at me to stop (ski racing).”

But she did ski one more downhill, on Feb. 10 to close out the worlds. A large crowd was on hand to witness the planet’s best-ever female skier, and there were doubts — doubts among coaches, doubts among her fans, doubts in Vonn’s head.

“I never get nervous at the start of a race,” said the one-time Lindsey Kildow, a Minnesota native who married her U.S. Ski Team teammate, Thomas Vonn. “But

today I really had a case of nerves. I just wanted to finish my career on a high note.”

Running third on an Are course shortened because of high winds, Vonn showed quickly that she was solid, making smooth if not overly aggressive turns. She pre-jumped the final bump before making the hard lefty down the finishing slope and flashed across the finish line with the lead. Of course there were at least a dozen first-rate downhillers to run behind her.

With the sunlight going in and out, some racers had better luck than others, but Vonn’s run was solid and stood up to several challengers, before the race was over, and Vonn stood on the podium with a bronze medal.

“To me this was an incredible race,” she said. “I fought with my heart the whole way down. I’m going to put this medal right up with the gold.”

And then she stood there, saluting the roaring crowd, trying to make sense of the fact that her fearless, incredibly ferocious racing career had come to an end. A man in a yellow parka walked out to her with a huge bouquet of white flowers and gave her a long embrace during which they whispered, no doubt congratulations on dreams realized, on results topping the record books, on jobs now finished.

Ingemar Stenmark.

**S**

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