

## Ski Test 2005

Contributed by The Editors  
Monday, 31 January 2005

"Enter the next generation of shorter, wider skis...enter the new breed of skis that cruise through off-piste snow with the ride of a Cadillac yet change direction with the alacrity of a Ferrari." Nearly a decade ago when this ran in Backcountry's premier issue, we were talking cutting-edge wide bodies, sporting 70mm waists and new cap technology.

With the typical 90mm-plus waist of the new large breeds, today's sticks are another large step farther (and fatter)—not to mention quicker, damper and suppler—from the hot rods of years past. The big picture for '04 is literally just that...big; Atomic serves up an XXL offering with a dramatic 124-99-114 profile. Black Diamond seeks to wreak havoc on big hills with their largest ride ever. Fischer also comes out flagrantly fat.

Another development is an entirely new breed of skis this season from Rossignol, spawned from serious reconsiderations in construction and concept. Rossignol releases their new T series telemark line that incorporates new alpine-derived technology, new flexes, new sidecuts and a rounded, skin-friendly tip and tail profile.

Besides a wide-ranging line makeover, K2 introduces two women-specific tele skis after the wildfire debut of last year's She's Piste. Karhu keeps the blaze burning with the arrival of the Jil, the equally behemoth sister of the Jak. Most companies are getting the message; If they haven't come out with dedicated femme designs, they are at least offering shorter lengths.

Goode hopes to transfer the success of their well-established composite ski poles to the Carbon 82, a mid-fat ski made entirely from carbon fiber, with the exception of its base and edges. Said to be less than 60% of the weight of the average fiberglass ski, with twice the flex-to-torsion ratio—a versatile development for the light-minded in a backcountry of powder, crud, and ice. Voile is in the same frame of mind with the employment of their appropriately named Carbon Surf (carbon/fiberglass).

Also new for this year is the innovative employment of mounting inserts by K2, the only manufacturer so far to adopt snowboard-style binding inserts for tele skis, resulting in increased pull-out strength, easy binding transfer/adjustment to an entire quiver and universal binding-mount patterns.

With all the incredible changes taking place in '04 skis, we didn't want to let anything subtle slip by. This demanded a review that was as accurate and precise as possible. All skis were mounted with the Voile Hardwire binding. Plain and simple, this binding leveled the playing ground—the Hardwire was remarkably neutral in feel and with removable heelpieces, testers were able to quickly transfer their own sets from ski to ski.

A fully automated Winterstieger MicroJet Pro tuning machine, provided by Three Mountain Equipment at Vermont's Smugglers' Notch Resort, helped whittle away any additional inconsistencies by applying a consistent one-degree edge, one-degree base bevel. Our gratitude also goes out to Action Outfitters (Stowe, VT) and Vermont North (Waitsfield, VT) for allowing us to buff out some late arrivals.

In conjunction with the North American Telemark Organization's Tele Fest at Mad River Glen, Vermont, we tested skis as early in the season as possible on a variety of mid-winter conditions from powder to crud to the all-natural super firm. The skis saw additional months of testing in Wyoming, Colorado and Washington.

AK No Ka Oi \$795

sizes [cm]: 170, 180, 193 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 116/78/111 weight/pair [g]: N/A

New to North America this season, AK follows Stokli's lead as a fully hand-made traditional Swiss laminate import. In the case of the handsome, finely crafted No Ka Oi (i.e. 'no messing around') that means stiff and powerful. While the Oi arced massive troughs on the hardpack, we felt the 111cm tail hooked a bit in softer snow. The 193cm mounted tele was a lot of ski even for our crew in Jackson—they said they'd opt shorter given the choice. But for the larger breeds, this might be worth a look—if you can find them.

#### ATOMIC TELE DADDY

sizes [cm]: 163, 173, 183 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 124/99/114 weight/pair [g]: 3980 (173cm) \$675

When Atomic introduced the stubby, ultra-wide, felicitously named Sugar Daddy alpine powder ski last year, more than a few backcountry skiers wondered how it would work without the massive alpine binding plate. Wonder no more. Atomic has lost the plate, reinforced the binding area, retained the twin tip, half-tube Beta construction, tweaked the Texalium wrap in the mold to soften the forebody flex and called the resulting ski the Tele Daddy. The big guy was a big hit with testers, many of whom were surprised at its versatility: 'They rail groomers, ski powder, and have an incredibly light swing weight making them ideal for tight trees,' said one. 'Skis felt much longer than the 175cm tested but still felt maneuverable.' Other testers were impressed with its edge hold and dampness, along with ease of turn initiation and completion, and there was talk of it being an invitation to open bowls.

#### ATOMIC TM-RX

sizes [cm]: 160, 170, 180 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 104/64/91 weight/pair [g]: 2810 (180cm) \$442

The RX is Atomic's prescription for skier's who want to, as they say, 'take a stab at speed.' It's the replacement—slightly wider tip and tail—for the TM18. But like that ski, its stiffness doesn't overwhelm its versatility and capacity for some off-trail performance. 'Its narrow waist sets a strong edge for solid, short, sharp turns,' one tester said, who added that he wouldn't hold back from taking it into the trees. 'Quick on hard pack conditions and way fun,' said another. A couple of female testers accustomed to raging on fatter skis said that the narrow-waist of the RX felt like wearing high heels.

## ATOMIC TM-EX

sizes [cm]: 168, 177, 184 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 118/84/110 weight/pair [g]: 3540 (184cm) \$643

No longer the biggest ski Atomic fields, the second-year EX is still a ride on the wide side. And as we found last year, the TM-EX still impressed with its versatility. Given its width, its proclivity for quick turns—both alpine and tele—impressed testers. “Stable ski, surprisingly good in bumps for how wide they are,” one tester said. Several testers found them a little squirrely when taken up to speed on hard snow. Perhaps the ultimate expression of dirtbag candor came from one tester who said, “I wouldn’t sell them if I was given a pair!”

## ATOMIC TM 9

sizes [cm]: 153, 161, 169, 177 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 105/72/97 weight/pair [g]: \$310

Once known as the Tour Carve, last year as the TC 9 and now as the TM 9, this is what Atomic characterizes as “affordable randonnée ski”—its tip is notched for skins, it comes in short sizes, and it has a slightly heavier (i.e. cheaper) core. It’s also considerably wider than its predecessors. This is a ski that will appeal to a wide variety of skiers. “Felt very stable, fairly snappy turner,” said one tester. According to another: “Great for many skiers; easy to turn, holds well—can get away with less muscle.”

## ATOMIC TM 11

sizes [cm]: tip/waist/tail [mm]: weight/pair [g]: \$349

This is a rare bird: an ultralight, stiff-flexed ski in two short lengths designed for Euro-style randonnée racing. It has a light, airy, cellular Nomex core found in Atomic's cross-country race ski, which yields a dramatically pared-down weight. Whether they have any wider utility remains to be seen—and skied. When we get on them, we'll report.

## BLACK DIAMOND CROSSBOW

sizes [cm]: 163, 171, 179, 187 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 115/82/105 weight/pair [g]: 3310 (179cm) \$549

We'll say it again: the Torsion Bow still looks more longbow than crossbow to us. The idea behind its defining asymmetric rib (it bows inward) is that it stiffens up, increasing edge hold, as the ski is loaded through a turn but remains neutral floating through powder. Beamy as it is, in its second year it's no longer the biggest ski in BD's line. And now, along with its stable mates, it has a C-Matrix Cap (a combination fiberglass/metal shell) to reduce chatter and improve edgehold. Tester assessments were generally positive, with some gushing on the order of: "If you're looking for a one-ski-does-it all, this will fit the bill." Others found it less responsive in short radius turns on admittedly hard snow. But for many, it had a fairly light feel underfoot, was notably stable at speed and through turns, and excels in softer snow despite its torsional rigidity.

## BLACK DIAMOND HAVOC

sizes [cm]: 163, 173, 183 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 120/88/113 weight/pair [g]: 3610 (183cm) \$549

Think of this as BD's wishbone offense. Take the rib from the Crossbow, double and shorten it into a kind of tuning fork, put it at tip and twin-tip tail of the widest ski BD's ever offered and let Havoc reign. The two-rib configuration along with the new combination fiberglass/metal C-Matrix laminate layer helps remove weight without sacrificing edgehold, BD says. Testers were aware that, in the words of one, "this was a lot of ski to work with." Even so, the Havoc was a crowd pleaser.

## BLACK DIAMOND MIRA

sizes [cm]: 162, 175, 188 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 112/79/102 weight/pair [g]: 3160 (175cm) \$499

The Mira debuted two years ago as BD's showboat ski—at that time the widest in the line—and quickly followed. What's changed is the addition of the new C-Matrix cap construction, which should improve the hard-snow performance of a ski that BD touts as its most balanced and predictable. Testers concurred, with almost unanimous praise for its all-around capabilities. "Lightweight, nice feel; seems like a great ski for West and East—dependable, solid," said one tester. "This is a great, all-mountain ski suitable for steeps, bumps, groomers. It does it all," another tester summed up.

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#### BLACK DIAMOND NUNYO

sizes [cm]: 159, 167, 175, 183, 191 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 107/73/97 weight/pair [g]: 3190 (183cm) \$499

The Nunyo is Black Diamond's easy rider: a reasonably priced successor to the Arc Angel at a reasonable price, designed to satisfy a wide range of skier abilities and ambitions. Like the rest of the skis in the line, it has a C-Matrix cap. And at the tail it shares Torsion Bow Technology with the Havoc. But it is softer in the tip for easier turn initiation. It worked for our testers, even on hard snow and at a variety of speeds. "Quick, stable, surprisingly solid in crud. Great trail, bump, and tree ski," said one tester. Although another found it a little chattery on hard pack, it proved to be "quick in tight spots, fun in the bumps, very forgiving."

## DYNAFIT 410

sizes [cm]: 130 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 100/72/90 weight/pair [g]: 4lb 4oz (130cm) \$225

As Dynafit distributor Life-Link sees it, thinking of the D 410 as an approach ski is selling it short. True, it's 130cms—one size only—and being used by the likes of snowboarder Stephen Koch on uphills. But its length and its generous width makes it not merely a sliding snowshoe, but "a true ski," designed for Euro-style summer skiing. Life-Link brought in only a few pairs last year. More are available now, and when we can get on them we'll report.

## DYNAFIT 812

sizes [cm]: 160, 170, 180 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 111/72/101 weight/pair [g]: 7lbs 6oz (170cm) \$490

The 812 replaces last year's Tourlite Tracer. It is nearly as wide at the tip and has a slightly turned up tail, overall shape—the tail is considerably narrower—is more inline, Life-Link believes, with the carvy feel that North American skiers relish. It has titanal top and bottom with a mid-ski carbon fiber insert. Another late arrival, it will be on the snow as soon as we can get at it.

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#### DYNAFIT 914

sizes [cm]: 154, 165, 176 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 92/64/80 weight/pair [g]: 4lb 8oz (165cm) \$500

This new lightweight has a cross-country race ski core—Nomex honeycomb with carbon fiber—that puts it in the category of skis designed for randonnéé racing. But Life-Link thinks it will also appeal to skiers who simply want a short (down to 154cm) and ultralight ride with a fairly substantial tip and a dampened feel courtesy of a carbon fiber topsheet.

#### DYNASTAR INSPIRED BY J NOBIS

sizes [cm]: 158, 168, 178, 188 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 117/89/104 weight/pair [g]: 4360 (188 cm) \$775

Whether it's the Inspired in the US or the Intuitive Big in Canada, both names speak to some creative thinking by Dynastar's designers. The resulting big ski pleased testers as much this year as it did in its debut last year. The Inspired features Dynastar's Autodrive SD cap/sidewall construction developed for its racing skis and a ribbed "hull-shaped" tip for powder-cutting capability. Though Dynastar terms it as light, testers found it on the heavier side. But that wasn't enough to dampen rampant enthusiasm: "This ski will take it all" Trust it in a turn in the weirdest condition and it will come around for you," said one tester. "This ski rocks and can handle almost anything you throw at it," said another. "Floating in powder at high speed is comfortable and big fun."

#### DYNASTAR LITTLE BIG FAT

sizes [cm]: 158, 168, 178 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 116/88/109 weight/pair [g]: 3840 (178 cm) \$650

This twin-tip is a virtual clone of the Inspired, with a millimeter shaved at the tip and (kicked up) tail and a slightly splay up that pares 200g off its weight. "Stable in all conditions, quick turning, starts and finishes turns smoothly," said one tester, pretty much summing it up for all.

### FISCHER FX 10.6

sizes [cm]: 170, 180, 190 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 135/106/123 weight/pair [g]: 4500 (190cm) \$795

It's a numbers game: 10.6 in centimeters or 106mm—underfoot. Not surprisingly, the tip is a humongous 106mm. As a Fischer sales manager said, "It's amazing what people want to tele on." Presumably women are among them; and with a woodcore ski that comes in a 170cm length they will be served—or possibly over-served. This model was, well, largely unavailable for testing. If we can report later, we will.

### FISCHER BIG STIX 8.6

sizes [cm]: 170, 180, 190 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 120/86/107 weight/pair [g]: 4680 (190cm) \$750

This is the successor to last year's BIG STIX 84. But it's far lighter, thanks to a new Carbon Fiber Core (CFC) that appears here and in one other ski and consists of a light wood core wrapped with carbon. The net effect is said to improve both torsional and longitudinal flex. Again, a ski we didn't have on the snow. Expect to see this ski more readily in the West than in the East.

## FISCHER BIG STIX 7.6

sizes [cm]: 165, 175, 185 tip/waist/tail [mm]: weight/pair [g]: \$695

This is the ski Fischer is banking on for the backcountry. It has a width that these days puts it in the mid-fat category. It has a ready-to-carve profile. Along with that, Fischer's CFC carbon core makes this their lightest and, Fischer believes, their most versatile big tele/AT ski. It was untested by us. But its predecessor, the 750 was a test fave last year. Given the pedigree, this one—lighter and wider but in the same user-friendly lengths—should be worth checking out.

## GOODE Carbon 82

sizes [cm]: 156, 166, 176, 186 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 118/82/108 weight/pair [g]: 2567 (176cm) \$790

It's somehow fitting that the designer who introduced the ultra-light carbon "pencil" pole should work the other end of the spectrum and launch a fat ski. Like the pole, it's all carbon, discounting the base and the open-cell foam—for dampening—between the five longitudinal carbon ribs. And it too is light: hefting the Carbon 82 after pulling other tele/bc skis off the rack is like having a pair of xc race skis in hand. The weight of these hand built skis comes in with their price. Both the overall flex and the tail are conspicuously soft. But one of the advantages of carbon is that the ski is torsionally stiff. It was a hit among testers, even on a day when hard, but natural, snow was served up. Many were surprised at the grip and stability of such a palpably soft ski. "Nice and light, quick to turn, surprisingly good on ice," said one. "Quite reactive but forgiving. Nice shape to it—the tail was not too soft for bumps," said another. "Nice even flex, holds throughout the turn—very stable for such a light ski," said a third.

## KARHU JAK

sizes [cm]: 170, 180, 190 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 127/97/117 weight/pair [g]: 4052 (180cm) \$475

In its second year, the behemoth Jak is still the biggest of the big, as well as answering the booty call like no other. It's the most prominently turned up tail on the market. This led us to experimenting a bit with mounting and putting bindings some 2-4cm back of Karhu's recommendation—a preference of several testers. Overall though, the "super damp" Jak—as a couple of testers characterized it—blew through crud. "Fun and versatile. A great ski for the

quiver," said one. Others said that in hard conditions they'd opt for a ski with better edge hold.

### KARHU JAK BC

sizes [cm]: tip/waist/tail [mm]: weight/pair [g]: \$499

This is a Jak—as wide-winged and soft-flexing as before—lightened up for backcountry travel. It's some 15% lighter than its namesake, thanks to the substitution of carbon fiber for titanal stiffening (hence the price) in the lay-up and a core that's all aspen instead of the aspen/birch laminate of the Jak. Karhu believes that the Jak BC will also have a better swing weight.

### KARHU JIL

sizes [cm]: 160, 170, 180 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 120/90/110 weight/pair [g]: 3174 (170cm) \$475

The name begs the question: So do they? Well, yeah. The midfat, stiffened Rox is Karhu's ski primarily for piste carving. And at that, it got reasonably high marks from testers for short and long turns. "Quick from edge to edge," said one tester. From another: "Fun, fun ski. Very responsive, held very good running rails. Sidecut is perfect for running groomers. Nice rebound."

### KARHU RUCKIT

sizes [cm]: 150, 160, 170, 180 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 105/74/95 weight/pair [g]: 2988 (180cm) \$425

Now in its second year, this relatively narrow (by current standards) and medium-weight (as it seemed to testers) is a swivel-hip design for natural and man-made pipes. Meaning that it shines through short turns but doesn't dominate when taken up to speed on big-radius arcs. "These skis want to turn fast and frequently. Fun, silky, made for tricks not tracks," said one tester. "Easy turning," concluded our novice tester. "Good for a beginner."

### K2 She's Piste

sizes [cm]: 153, 160, 167, 174, 181 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 107/70/97 weight/pair [g]: 3000 (174cm) \$459

Like many great ideas, this one seemed simple: respond to the surging number of female tele skiers by assembling a group of hard-skiing women and set them to plunder K2 technology to design a ski flexed and sized for femmes. Ask them for ski graphics, and then watch as they laid on plenty aloha [no, not plenty of aloha] and came up with a deservedly edgy name. The result was the She's Piste, an overwhelming bestseller. Given that kind of reception, it appears unchanged in its second year except for the ever-welcome addition of a smaller size

### K2 InStinx

sizes [cm]: 160, 167, 174 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 114/79/105 weight/pair [g]: 3000 (174cm) \$479

The InStinx builds on the wild success of the She's Piste. It, too, has Big Island graphics. But with over all dimensions, it's designed to kick okole ("ass" in Hawaiian) in soft snow and crud. Basically, the InStinx is a softer version—a layer of titanal has been dropped—of the well-liked World Piste. The result is what K2 considers to be a softer but livelier and more agile ski. It's also not strictly a hammerhead's ski: a majority of testers thought it would appeal to beginners and less experienced skiers. Most testers also wanted to ski it in a shorter length than the size (174) available at the time. Despite its greater girth, the InStinx weighs the same as the She's Piste. Its light feel was perceptible to testers. All in all: "A nice even flex, nice weight, great all-mountain ski," one tester said. "Stable, solid, feels like surfing," said another.

## K2 PISTE PIPE

sizes [cm]: 159, 169, 179 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 112/80/103 weight/pair [g]: 3800 (179cm) \$449

From the menacing graphics to the oversize S & M rivets to prevent tip delamination to the agro layup, this is not your average Pipe. It's bigger and thicker and, in short, crush resistant—what K2 characterizes as a "trust" ski. So forget the notion of a cap: the sidewalls are durable ABS. It got overall high marks from testers, whose playful sides were evidently tweaked. "Will go over and through a lot of weird stuff. Troughed-out gullies were a lot of fun," said one tester. "Skied through crud, spring snow great," said another. Also cited as a good "poking about" ski, it invariably led testers into the bumps, where the Pipe was universally pleasing.

## K2 WORK STINX

sizes [cm]: 167, 174, 181 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 107/70/97 weight/pair [g]: 3100 (181cm) \$479

It does indeed—and that includes having to work skis to get them to turn. With that in mind, K2 has overhauled the Stinx, giving it a significantly wider profile for flotation and a deeper sidecut. It also joins the rest of the K2 line in getting a low profile, reconfigured tip that's designed to put more edge on the snow and draw a skier into a turn more quickly. Several testers similarly described its "nice round flex," along with its flotation and shorter turn capability. "They have a solid feel [but] they're quicker than I thought they'd be," said one.

## K2 SHUKSAN

sizes [cm]: 160, 167, 174, 181 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 114/78/105 weight/pair [g]: 3100 ( cm) \$439

This is another ski that keeps its venerable name but gets a complete makeover, right down to a radical re-sizing—a 160cm—that puts shorter skis at the disposal of skiers who are prone to tour, but want a ski with punch-through downhill power derived from a core that includes double sheets of titanal. Overall, the new Shuksan is slightly wider and has a more pronounced profile. It also joins K2's other skis in getting the wider, low profile tip with greater contact length.

## ROSSIGNOL T4

sizes [cm]: 168, 178, 185 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 122/94/112 weight/pair [g]: \$499

Rossignol's entire line is new this year. While the model names may be a little clinical, the technology comes right out of their similarly new alpine line—forget the year long delay that it took before Rossi's alpine tech trickled down into tele and randonnée models. The T4, which replaces the Megabang, has it all: a cut-away tip designed to inhibit deflection and improve swing weight (more skin-friendly as well); Free Dualtec construction featuring angled sidewalls—Rossi calls them Shockwalls—that have a shock-absorbing layer on top of a more rigid layer for edging power. Compared to the Megabang, the T4 is slightly wider underfoot and in the tail. It also comes in a welcome shorter size. Our testers were impressed. "A standout ski," one said. "Drives hard and fast, with an amazing amount of control."

## ROSSIGNOL T3

sizes [cm]: 160, 170, 176 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 113/76/103 weight/pair [g]: \$449

Wider than its predecessor, the Big Bang, the T3 is slated as Rossi's all-around, workhorse ski, with a flex scales in between medium and soft. It has all the Free Dualtec features, and as with all Rossignol skis this year, comes in shorter length.

## ROSSIGNOL T2

sizes [cm]: 160, 170, 176 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 109/70/99 weight/pair [g]: \$399

Aimed at the skier who does a lot of lift riding, but also has a mind for shaggy side excursions, the T2 may actually

surpass the T3 in utility. It too has full Free Dualtec construction and, like its three stable mates, comes in the shortest length Rossignol has ever offered. The phrase "all-around" was heard most often from testers. "Carries a lot of speed, smashes through crud and is still surprisingly light and quick for shorter turns," one tester said. There was also a general appreciation of its light feel underfoot.

## ROSSIGNOL T1

sizes [cm]: 150, 160, 170 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 109/68/98 weight/pair [g]: \$299

Rossignol's cheapest ski (aimed at beginner tele skiers making shorter turns on groomers) still has plenty of techno muscle, including new, full-length Free Absorber dampening, along with Free Dualtec features. The short lengths offered—down to 150cms—also make it appropriate for some women and children. For most testers, this obviously soft-flexing ski still held on hard snow at a confidence-inspiring level. "Soft but adaptable," one tester put it.

## STÖCKLI SCOT SCHMIDT PRO MODEL

sizes [cm]: 186, 194 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 123/91/111 weight/pair [g]: \$809

Stockli's formula for producing big, stiff, experts-only powder skis has not changed much since the Asteroid seasons ago, but in North America its top sheet has gotten a makeover. With the same wood core and titanium laminate from before, this year's Scot Schmidt Pro Model comes at exactly the specs of the Europeans' DP model—except that here it comes in only two lengths. Sidecut changes (a wider shovel and tail) have decreased the turning radius slightly. That withstanding, the SS Pro Model, like its European cousin, is "a whole different beast of a ski," according to Schmidt that demands a committed skier "prepared to go fast in order to make the skis perform."

## STÖCKLI STORMRIDER XL OFFROAD

sizes [cm]: 164, 174, 184, 194 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 116/75/102 weight/pair [g]: \$799

The XL Offroad is an extremely stable and stiff blend of a carving ski's edge control and a larger, more all-mountain footprint. Underfoot it has the same titanium laminate as Stockli's race stock atop a seventy-five millimeter waist, enabling solid edge grip on essentially an expert's all-mountain ski. Meanwhile the beefy shovel and tail offer more float in variable conditions than most skis in its category. Characteristic of Stockli though, is the ski's stiffness, which demands more aggressive skiing—and constant attention—to effectively bend the ski and arc with confidence.

## VOILÉ CARBON SURF

sizes [cm]: 158, 168, 178, 188 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 120/87/112 weight/pair [g]: 2950 (178cm) \$425

Surf's up at Voilé—in a couple of ways. The venerable Mountain Surf, a cult classic, is gone. But a new world is building. It's the Carbon Surf, a radically different ski from construction to dimension. Built in the US, the new Surf has a combination carbon/fiberglass core construction that makes it some 900g lighter than its predecessor. It still comes in three sizes, which widen progressively with length—all of them wider than the old Surf. Testers responded to its lightness and its soft, powder-friendly flex, the latter calling for some careful skiing on hard snow. "You need to pay attention to your speed and edge," said one. "Easy skiing," said another, "as long as you respect the soft tail and stay out of the backseat." "An amazing soft snow ski and intermediate trail ski," opined a third tester.

VÖLKL Mountain Norbert Joos sizes [cm]: 156, 163, 170, 177, 184 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 104/70/92 weight/pair [g]: 2950 (170cm) \$575

There is literally less to like about Völkl's Mountain Norbert Joos, formerly known as the Mountain, which was a highly favored ride in last year's test. The new Mountain has been slightly slimmed down, resulting in a considerable weight savings over last year's version. (Indeed, the two smallest sizes are slimmer still.) Norbert Joos? He's a well-known Euro ski mountaineer who collaborated with Völkl on a skin system, which explains the conspicuous hole in the Mountain's tip. It accommodates an adapter for a skin—a choice of either nylon or nylon/mohair—that is precisely contoured for each of the Mountain's five sizes.

## VÖLKL Outback

sizes [cm]: 149, 156, 163, 170, 177 tip/waist/tail [mm]: 105/71/93 weight/pair [g]: 2860 (177cm) \$500

The Outback is now Völkl's widest backcountry ski. Like the Mountain, it has an oversize tip perforation to accommodate skins and a flanged tip protector. Otherwise, aside from a cosmetic makeover, it's unchanged from last year. Then, it got high marks from testers for its definitive mountaineering ski performance—fun, turny and secure, though at a bit of a width disadvantage in deep powder. Noteworthy this year is that the Outback now comes even shorter, in a 149cm length.

{easycomments}