

2007 Telemark Bindings

Contributed by Hardy Avery & Mickey Stone
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For the record, Hardy Avery (“1”, 180lbs.) is an aggressive, fall-line oriented tele skier. Whether grazing on fresh snow in the woods, chutes or resort fringes, Hardy prefers a binding active enough to lay down a proper carve with big skis.

Telemark Bindings 2007

On his days off from the vertical game, Hardy heads to “a special spot” on waxless backcountry skis, leather boots and three-pins for relaxing powder runs.

As a ski pro of 23 years and a PSIA educator, Mickey Stone (“6”, 165lbs.) loves to show people how to enjoy the winter environment. Whether instructing on the hill or touring for turns East or West, he responds to diverse terrain and conditions with consistency and finesse in his tele skiing. Mickey prefers the flexibility of a mid-range performance boot.

Black Diamond 02

weight: 3lbs. 5oz.

Buy Now From:

Black Diamond: The 02 features an underfoot dual cartridge design that converges under the middle of the boot at a beefy yoke to maximize torsional rigidity. The stainless toe box is sleek and free of bulky mounting points thanks to the underfoot design. There are three different cartridge choices to change the feel of the flex.

Hardy: The 02 is the more aggressive binding in the BD line. Even with the "ridiculously stiff" cartridge, the 02 is not as active or as torsionally rigid as other bindings tested. This is due in part to the smooth, unrestricted underfoot cable routing. I felt the 02 was very smooth and easy to ski, but at high speeds or during emergency maneuvers it did not deliver the power I needed. The cable/cartridge changes were a bit nerve-racking due to the small clip that holds the ends of the cable together.

Mickey: The 02 is a neutral feeling binding that skis very intuitively but is easy to overpower. Although the 02 reacts well to your commands, it will not drive a big ski without putting some effort in. The boot size adjustment is very easy to use, but initial installation can be a bit confusing.

Black Diamond 03

weight:

2lbs. 15oz.

Buy Now From:

Black Diamond: The 03 is the lighter, more neutral binding in the BD line. The 03 is specifically designed for those who are looking for an easier flexing, more tour friendly binding. The 03 uses an underfoot cable routing system that keeps the forward flex very neutral and the stainless toe box low profile and free of mounting hardware.

Hardy: The 03 is a great binding for skiing soft snow or touring most of the time. With its neutral feel and relatively low torsional rigidity, the 03 can lose control of the rear ski, especially if you are a bit too far forward. As with the 02, the 03 has the little clip that holds the cable ends together and could be a bit of a pain during mid tour binding emergencies.

Mickey: The low profile toe box of the 03 makes for a light, responsive touring binding. Skinning, striding and traveling over snow are this binding's strengths. Its low profile and lightness will allow you to use it with lighter skis to put in a lot of miles. This is an easy skiing binding that lets you really move your weight around on the ski. The 03 will help you to find your center, as long as you're careful not to get too forward.

Bomber Bishop

weight: 4lbs.

(titanium: 3lbs. 7oz.)

Bomber: The Bishop is a complex, fully rebuildable and adjustable plate binding, constructed of billet aluminum and stainless steel. For a few extra bucks, you can also have the titanium version. The Bishop uses an adjustable toe bail (think snowboard hard plate) instead of a fixed toe piece.

Hardy: The Bishop is by far the most intricately designed heavy binding available. To change the flex point to a more neutral point, the toe bail (along with the whole boot) is moved forward to let the toe overhang the base of the binding. So when the boot is flexed, the toe actually dips down below the base of the binding making it feel more neutral. To create a more active feel, the bail (and the boot) is similarly moved back so the whole toe is on the binding; therefore, the boot has to flex more and feels more active. To some extent this works, but it is the long way around. The platform is small and centered under the foot. When on edge it feels like there is a stack of quarters under the ball of the foot, which took away from my potential edge pressure.

Mickey: The Bishop is not for the faint of heart. It's a bit heavy and needs a strong skier to make it work. When pressuring the back cuff of the boot, the toe bail allows the toe of the boot to rise off the ski about a half-inch, which is the most interesting thing I have felt in a tele binding. My parallel turns were the strongest on the stable platform of this binding.

Burnt Mtn.

Tele Bulldog

weight: 2lbs.

Burnt Mountain: Beginning this season, the third-year Telebulldog will be marketed and distributed by TwentyTwo Designs (builder of the HammerHead). The Telebulldog is a hands-free step-in three-pin binding. It's meant to be more reliable and more responsive than the other three-pin bindings. The riser and toe piece are made of stainless steel and billet aluminum, and the pins are a larger diameter and a bit longer than those found on other brands. How it works: The pins stay fixed to the plate as the toe box pops up at a 45° angle to accept the boot, which is then slid in and pushed down to engage the pins and latching mechanism. The boot is released the same way as any other three-pin with a front mounted tab. Upon release, two nifty stainless brake wires protrude to keep your boards in one place while you eat lunch.

Hardy: The Telebulldog is a very well designed binding with a large platform to stand on and more lateral rigidity than any three-pin tested. With plenty of torsional rigidity this binding can compete with resort-oriented bindings, despite the inherently neutral feel of a three-pin. The prototype removable heel wires we tried this year should be in production for 2005—these will give the Bulldog a more active feel, putting them on my map as a full-on resort and touring binding.

Mickey: The Bulldog is a very easy to use three-pin that is great for climbing and touring when a normal three-pin is quite enough and a full on cable binding is too much. Mounted on skis 80mm under foot or wider, this binding will not tilt and turn the ski like a cable binding, but then again it isn't one. If you enjoy long days of touring with lots of striding and like a neutral feel on the descents, this is the three-pin for you.

G3

Targa / T9 / Roxy

weight: 3lbs. 10oz. /

3lbs. 4oz. / 3lbs. 10oz.

Buy Now From:

G3: The Targa line has become a mainstay in the binding world due to its simplicity, light weight and overall quality. The bindings in the Targa line are based on the same riser, anti-ice plate, Quad riveted toe box and soft wire platform. With the choice between a stainless (Targa) or titanium (T9) toe box, three spring cartridge stiffnesses and a women-specific model (Roxy), it is easy to find a binding for most anyone.

Hardy: The Targa is a lightweight binding that is as comfortable touring as it is charging the fall line. G3's design is both durable and has a nice semi-neutral flex due to its low and sleek mounting point. For bigger people looking to take the Targa to the next level, the World Cup cartridges are a great upgrade to make this binding feel more active and powerful. And the new heel throw is great for taking stress off the bindings for touring.

Mickey: The Targa is simply designed and easy to use. It flexes very much where your foot naturally flexes, giving a very comfy feel while touring and a nonbinding (pardon the pun) flex for those essential deep tele turns. The three cartridge choices really changed the feel of the binding from neutral and soft for lighter less aggressive skiers to super stiff and active for the most hardcore free rider. If you like an active binding go for the World Cup cartridges.

Karhu

7TM Tour

weight: 4lbs.

Buy Now From:

Karhu: The Tour was introduced last year as an answer for all the die-hard tele-heads that wanted the friction free climbing of an AT binding without having to sacrifice style on the descent. The Tour skis like the previous 7tm All-Mountain with the added advantage of a touring mode. The AT-like hinge is activated with a small easy-to-use lever mounted on the side of the binding. This binding is also releasable like Karhu's other 7tms.

Hardy: The 7tm Tour is an amazing binding. To be able to incorporate a release, a tour mode and a ski mode all in one binding is a major feat. The Tour mechanism worked very well and the efficiency gained was unbelievable. For the folks looking for the ultimate efficiency in climbing and touring in soft snow, this binding is an all-in-one beauty. As with the other 7tm models, the Tour's compatibility with my style suffered from the very neutral feel and relative lack of torsional rigidity.

Mickey: If you prefer a binding that releases in the backcountry, this is the binding for you. It has a very neutral feel climbing and traveling over snow, but it's still responsive enough for softer conditions. While in tour mode, this binding really allows for some forward movement. I was careful with this on hardpack and firm conditions due to its forward feel.

Karhu

7TM Power

weight: 3lbs. 2oz.

Karhu: This year, Karhu is introducing the 7tm Power model to their line. The 7tm Power uses the same releasable platform as the old 7tm, but the flex point has been moved back almost an inch to create a more active, powerful binding.

Hardy: The 7tm Power is a noticeable improvement over the original. But due to the relatively small platform and lack of torsional rigidity that I look for, this binding still did not inspire much confidence when charging. The release mechanism has not changed and works well, although it can take some heavy persuading to get the plate back into the base.

Mickey: The 7tm Power is a very light feeling binding, especially for a releasable. For those who find many of the boots and bindings too stiff and restricting, the Power may be a safe, easy to use option. The boot-length adjustment is very easy to use and that, with the release, would make this binding great for demo skis.

Linken

weight: 4lbs. 10oz

Linken: The Linken is a high-tech aluminum step-in plate binding that has a heel-height adjustment, a flex adjustment and a tool-free boot-length adjustment. The Linken uses a grooved heel module that locks into place giving more power to the front ski. The wide aluminum hinge point makes the Linken quite torsionally stiff.

Hardy: The Linken is a true step-in telemark binding that is both easy to use and adjust. The forward hinge makes

Linken tour easily, and the torsional rigidity paired with the ability to crank up the spring make the Linken descend well. With the Linken's many small parts, it might be necessary to track down a local dealer for spares.

Mickey: The Linken is surprisingly light for being a plate binding. The platform is very solid and felt good landing and skiing aggressively. The plate really transferred power well to the ski, especially for alpine turns. But in a deep tele position, I felt like the hinge was so far forward and the plate so stiff that the boot was unable to flex, making the rear ski unstable and hard to control.

Rottefella R8

weight: 3lbs.

Buy Now From:

Rottefella: The Cobra R8 is Rottefella's high-end, hard-charging binding. The R8 has 30 millimeters of rise, sturdy toe box, rigid steel connecting rods and the largest underfoot platform of any binding available. (Also available: the R6, with softer springs for a more neutral feeling; and the R4, with a slightly forward mounting point, and soft cables lending it an even more sensitive and neutral feel.)

Hardy: The R8 is an industry leader for good reason. The flex point is in a more active position and the bails are easy to adjust or swap. And with the stiff springs, the R8 really holds the ball of the foot down for powerful turning. The stiff aluminum toe box and the wide riser create a stable platform that feels solid and natural under the foot.

Mickey: The R8 has a great platform and the hinge is felt at the ball of the foot, which flexes the boot enough to make aggressive turns anywhere; quite a downhiller. For such a powerful binding, the R8 feels very light and nimble on the foot while transferring turn to turn. This binding, with its easy adjustments, would make a great rental program binding. Durable and responsive.

Twentytwo Designs

Hammerhead

weight: 3lbs. 1oz.

TwentyTwo Designs: The HammerHead, produced and distributed by TwentyTwo Designs, is the most adjustable binding in the test. With a five-point hinge adjustment that covers three inches, this binding ranges from very neutral to extremely powerful

and active.

Hardy: In the fifth setting, the HammerHead is so powerful that it can muscle any plank on the hill into a turn. Yet in the number one position, backcountry travel is effortless. The only downfalls of the HammerHead are that the six-hole mounting system does not work with the new four-bolt pattern that has become so popular, and that it takes some practice to master the flex adjustment.

Mickey: With five settings, the HammerHead is an adaptable binding for any type of skier or skiing. The number five setting really flexes the center and front of the ski for great turn initiation and aggressive skiing. The number one setting is good for touring. It's a very versatile binding that will not only suit any tele skier's needs but the variety of conditions from West to East. In powder, the higher leverage settings can create a bit of tip dive, so stay in

the neutral numbers there.

Voile Hardwire /

Hardwire 3-Pin

weight:

2lbs. 13oz. / 3lbs. 13oz.

Buy Now From:

Voilé: The Hardwire is the most basic binding in the test. With the one-piece riser, alloy toe box, hardwire connection system and the decent price, you cannot go wrong with the Hardwire. The three-pin version has been the workhorse of the telemark world for many years and joins the rest of Voilé's newly overhauled and improved bindings like the CRB releasable.

Hardy: Since the Voilé Hardwire has so few parts and a nice neutral flex, it is an easy option for those that want reliability for the backcountry. The Hardwire also shines in and around the resort due to the sturdy, tempered aluminum toe box and the stainless hardware. While other bindings use a plastic anti-ice plate, Voilé does not; instead, they sell a plastic sticker (that can sometimes peel up) to keep the underfoot area from icing. This allows for the use of any three-bolt binding on their riser plate—kind of cool for people with lots of pieces and parts laying around.

Mickey: For a relatively light binding, it was very responsive on resort terrain as well as off piste. Simple and very easy to adjust to boot-sole lengths, the Hardwire had a very neutral feel and still was able to handle the torsional movements needed to edge and carve the ski.

Silvretta

Touring Adapter

weight:

2lbs. 10oz. (w/o bindings)

Silvretta: The Tour Adapter is the easy way to get the climbing efficiency of an AT binding and still be able to enjoy use of G3, Rottefella or Voile tele bindings on the way down. The Silvretta adapter is a two-piece unit. The front consists of a hinge block that mounts to the ski right near the pin line. The block is fixed to a carbon step frame that travels back under the foot to the heel block and locking mechanism. The locking mechanism secures the step frame so only the flex of the telemark binding is engaged. When the mechanism is unlocked the step frame is freed allowing the hinge to activate for efficient climbing. When unlocked, there are two ascender settings.

Hardy: As a full-on tele-head, I have never used AT gear. So when I stepped into the Tour Adapter, it blew my mind. I was able to have that much efficiency and about a 30% longer stride was so liberating. For someone who does most of their touring on one set of skis the Silvretta adapter is a great, well-built, easy-to-use option. For the first few turns, the dead spot under the foot—created by the carbon step frame—was noticeable, but soon after it was forgotten. You will never want to tour any other way.

Editor's note: Mickey was in prison for this portion of the test.

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