2007 AT Bindings

Contributed by Jeffrey Bergeron & Adam Howard
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For the record, Jeffrey Bergeron has lived 31 of his 51 years in a ski resort. (Though of the first 10, he has little recollection.) After 20 years of free-heel skiing, he came to the conclusion that he sucked and wasn’t getting any better.

Alpine Touring

Bindings 2007

He skis from early November to late June, much of it off piste. He is 5’ 11’’ and weighs 165lbs (flaccid). An occasional Nordic racer and regular cross dresser, Bergeron usually will opt for the equipment that climbs better and gives him a reasonable rational for choosing less gnarly descents.

Depending on the season and how dehydrated he is from chasing skinny people through the mountains, Backcoun Editor Adam Howard is a stout 195 pounds and always just under 5’ 10” tall. He’s still known to run gates with heels locked, and usually skis AT when lapping out of bounds on big sticks. For longer tours he prefers telemark, though he admits it’s becoming harder and harder to resist the dark side.

Dynafit

Tourlite Classic

weight: 1lb. 4oz./pair

DIN 5-10

Dynafit: “Old Style.” “Ultra Light.” “Expedition.” It’s been called m different things in its 14 years in service. Tried, true, proven and now a classic.

Howie: With the increase of Dynafit-compatible boots, the TLT continues to win over skeptics of its minimalist des I’m one of them for several reasons. First, the touring stride is the most efficient of any binding, allowing for long comfortable days. Second, even for large breeds like me, the TLT is tough. I haven’t ever pre-released and I can drive a surprisingly big ski with power. Third, of all the touring bindings, the TLT offers the most sensitivity allowing me to really feel the ski and snow.

Jeffrey: After almost 10 years of using these bindings regularly, the only malfunctions have come from pilot error. puppies are light and quiet, with absolutely no touring friction. It’s no wonder the rando racers favor them. That said, they can make you nuts with frustration. There is definitely a learning curve that one must endure before clicking in on steep terrain or soft snow pain free. Also, most of us need to release the toe before switching from ski to tour mode. It has been my experience that the brake hastens the need for replacement of the bushings in the heelpiece. I’ve been stacking a rental plate beneath the binding for more lift on wider skis, so, naturally, I was delighted to learn this year that they’ve introduced a $33 carving plate.

Dynafit

TLT Comfort

weight:

1lb. 11oz./pair (w/90mm brakes)

DIN 5-10

Buy Now From:

Dynafit: Proven on the world’s toughest descents and enjoyed by the thousands of followers who will never back to heavier options. If you take a few minutes to master getting in and out, you’ll drop a few million pounds of binding off your feet over the course of a season.

Howie: Everything comes at a cost. With the TLT Comfort, I gain six half sizes to work with and easier adjustability heel. The catch? They’re four ounces heavier than the TLT. When you’re a big kid, you don’t count in ounces. Like Howlin’ Wolf, “I’m built for comfort. I ain’t built for speed.” So is this binding.

Jeffrey: I didn’t notice the extra weight and the adjustability factor is an added bonus. But, I still prefer the T classic, used with rental plates—for no other reason than I have three pairs that have never let me down.

Editor’s note: Dynafit introduced a new titanium binding this season, the TLT Titan Race. At a hair over a p these things must really fly. But at $625, you can understand why Dynafit was reluctant to loan out the goods when they found

out Jeffrey was a convicted felon.

Naxo NX01

weight: 4lbs. 11oz.

(w/ 94mm brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 4-12

Naxo: The Swiss-made Naxo Mountain Binding provides a true alpine-style toe-piece that releases just like a dow binding. And its triple pivot makes touring feel like it always should—completely natural. The Virtual Rotation System creates a natural rolling stride. It’s DIN 12 at the toe and heel and compatible with all AT and downhill boots.

Jeffery: I loved these guys when I skied them on fatter skis on terrain adjacent to the ski resort. I didn’t not lack of edging control, either climbing or at high speeds on hard-pack, but I did feel like a hog on ice when I tried my first few kick-turns. I have these bindings mounted on my ski area boards and so far, I love them.

Howie: I prefer the nx01’s unique triple-pivot touring stride most with alpine boots, and any adjustments in technique needed to perform kick turns are a quick learn. The triple-pivot action allows the ski to flex more freely underfoot than the Fritschi, but in turn, it doesn’t offer as much edging grip. This slop allowed the skis to wander on hardpack at high speeds. But overall, it’s a contender.

Naxo NX21

weight: 5lbs.

(w/ 94mm brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 5-13

Buy Now From:

Naxo: The nx21 is a stiffer, more burly of a setup than its cousin, the nx01. It comes with a maximum release valu DIN 13. It’s wider, solid Virtual Rotation arms and closed rails provide increased torsional rigidity and even cleaner downhill performance. A new downhill lock ensures that you stay in downhill mode under all circumstances—like when you stomp the landing.

Editor’s note: Though we ran out of winter before we could get our hands on the nx21, we’re comp Being burly was never a question with the nx01, but a little added torsional rigidity could make for a dreamy ride. We’ll report on this binder in a later issue.

Fritschi

Freeride

weight: 4lbs. 9oz.

(w/ brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 4-12

Buy Now From:

Fritschi: Considered by many as the ultimate ski binding, the Freeride thrives on any ski terrain, on and off piste, a durable and easy to use. With a max DIN setting of 12, the Freeride is compatible with alpine and AT boots, offers a four-position heel lift and optimal pivot point for uphills. The Teflon anti-friction plate in the toe offers a consistent, predictable release.

Howie: The Freeride is still the most proven all-around binding on the market. With steady refinements for 10 year it’s still the most popular, too. And for me, it’s still the go-to binding for running big skis. Though I’m not as fond of the pivot point for touring, it’s absolutely suitable for even the longest day tours. While it allows a lot of torque to power the ski, it doesn’t provide me with the best edge and snow feel.

Jeffrey: When I skied these, I thought it would be overkill for a cautious skier like myself. But on a pair of Fat-ytus (140mm under the foot), I appreciated the power. I used that same setup on a hut trip in Colorado during a storm cycle. I did notice the added weight—as well as the added performance.

Fritschi

Explore / Express

weight: 3lbs. 13oz.

(w/o brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 3-10

Buy Now From:

Fritschi: Secure touring and light weight are the hallmarks of the Fritschi Explore and Express bindings. Adjustable height fits all boots on the market, and the four-position heel lift allows comfort on the climbs. Like the Freeride, the Diamir allows the skier to switch between walk and ski mode without stepping out of the binding. With a maximum DIN setting of 10, the Explore and Express are ideal bindings for backcountry touring.

Jeffrey: If you were going to have one binding for all your skiing—inbounds and out—this could be it. I’ve h their predecessor, the Diamirs, for almost ten years and they still work well. I demoed the new incarnation for this test and found some added features that I wished my old pair came with (one being the lower price). The bindings are convenient, bomber and easy to adjust. They are a little loud when touring and considerably heavier than the Dynafits, though.

Howie: Essentially the same binding, this pair is a lighter Freeride. The difference? First, it’s a lot lighter. It return spring that allows for better touring action (honestly, it was hard to tell). It only DINs out at 10. And it doesn’t come with a brake. Factor a $63 brake into the equation, and the weight and dollar savings become trivial in a hurry.

Silvretta

Pure

weight: 2lbs. 11oz.

(w/ 90mm brakes/med. pair)

DIN 3-10

Buy Now From:

Silvretta: The ultra-light Pure uses lightweight components such as hollow carbon rails, Titanal-reinforced fiberglas UV-stabilized plastics to keep its weight at 2lbs. 11oz. per pair. Like the others in the Pure family, this one features Silvretta’s Optimum Pivot Point—30mm behind boot toe—for the most efficient power transfer available in any ski mountaineering binding. This pivot position saves energy with every stride.

Howie: The Pure is my choice if I could only choose one binding. It allows the boot to sit closer to the ski, so there’s less torque on the knees. It’s also the lightest of the non-Dynafit bindings. It’s pivot point, 30mm behind the toe, allows for effortless climbing. But what I liked most was the way it skied—the carbon rails seem to allow for a better snow feel. But of all the carriage-built touring bindings, the Pure allowed for the greatest edge grip and snow feel. While it’s surprisingly stout for a minimalist binding, I had trouble with DIN and size adjustment screw reliability—something I’ve been told has been solved for this season.

Jeffrey: In a nutshell, you could say these bindings are the best of both worlds—almost as light as the Dynafit TLT (when you include the latter’s ski brakes and plate) with the performance equal to any step-in binding. They ski as well as any I’ve tested here, but they are not quite as easy to step into as the Fritschis and Naxos. When you consider the convenience, performance and weight, this binding is a winner.

Silvretta

Pure X-Mtn.

weight: 3lbs. 11oz.

(w/ 100mm brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 4-10

Silvretta: The Pure X-Mountain offers the Pure’s easy-touring, anatomical pivot point and step-in ease of us solid aluminum rails for the highest-value package. Its DIN range is Z3 to 10. Complete with 90mm brakes.

Editor’s note: Though we didn’t get the Freeride or the X-Mountain on the snow, it will be interesting how the oversized carbon rails of the Freeride and the aluminum rails of the X-Mountain affect downhill performance. As with the nx21, we’ll get back to you soon.

Pure

Freeride

weight: 3lbs. 15oz.

(w/ 100mm brakes/ med. pair)

DIN 4-12

Buy Now From:

Silvretta: The Pure Freeride tours with the same ease as the original Pure, but also boasts the beefiness of a freer binding. It’s the only freeride binding on the market whose touring function hasn’t been compromised. The higher DIN ranges from 4 to 12, and the binding has solid carbon rails and a reinforced toe for a more rigid structure that handles the biggest freeride skis and burly boots.

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