

Gear Test Day One: Early Buzz

Contributed by Monica Prella

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2011 GEAR TEST

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"Today was a perfect day—it just snowed and we had fresh tracks all day," beamed Jay Prentiss, a veteran ski tester from Crested Butte, Colorado. "We were all smiling from ear to ear."

Testers rallied at 7 a.m. for breakfast and then hit the road for Hidden Lake Lodge (8,900 ft.), testing headquarters at the summit of Powder Mountain. After spending the previous day shuffling gear from the Red Moose Lodge in Eden to the summit shack, everyone was ready hit the snow hard. And they did just that.

All day long, testers returned to the summit, swapping skis, tweaking bindings, taking notes and buzzing about early favorites. The ambitious headed for James Peak by snowcat while others hit the craggy steeps of Paradise for the afternoon, swapping skis with one another as they went.

The test, held for the fourth time at Powder Mountain, grows exponentially each year. Throughout the day, testers commented in awe of the sheer volume of gear, some wondering how to get through it all.

"This is North America's biggest ski test," BCM editor and taskmaster Drew Pogge told everyone in his morning announcement. Testing everything won't be an easy task, but the hard-charging crew will surely get it done.

As the last chair signs crested the summit for the Hidden Lake lift, testers boarded the bus with sunburned cheeks and beers in hand for the return down the canyon to the Red Moose Lodge. After dinner and recording test results, it was early to bed for most—we have a big week of testing ahead and more snow on the way.

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