



# Seward Nordic News

The quarterly newsletter of the Seward Nordic  
Ski Club

2008-2009 FALL

## Announcements

This will be the last newsletter mailed to the '07-'08 membership list. To continue receiving newsletters, be sure to renew your membership! A membership application is included with this newsletter and will also be available at our upcoming events. Thanks for your continued support of the Seward Nordic Ski Club.

## Upcoming Events

- **Membership Social at Yoly's Bistro ~ Saturday, November 1 6-9pm**  
Come join us for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Yoly's Membership Social! There will be live music, a raffle of great items, and Yoly will once again give members a free dessert on November 1. This is a great place to renew your membership for the year, and catch up with other Ski Club members.
- **Ski Swap & Warren Miller Movie ~ Saturday, November 15 ~ Seward High School**  
Drop off skis and outdoor gear/clothing in the morning, with swap taking place at 11 – 2 pm. Barney's Sport Chalet will sell new gear at a discount. Junior ski rentals will also be available for \$40 for the whole year! There will be baked goods and chili for sale, too. Warren Miller movie will be shown that evening. Be sure to check the next newsletter for final details!

## Calendar

**3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month** - *Seward Winter Film Series*, AVTEC auditorium 7pm-9pm

**November 29** - Ski Wax 101 Clinic, High School

**December 14 & 15** - Statewide Nordic Ski Grooming Conference, Homer

**December 16** - Seward Nordic Ski Club General Membership Meeting

**January 3-8** – USSA Senior Nationals, Anchorage

**February 1** - Ski for Women 4K, Anchorage

**February 28** - Ski for Kids, Anchorage

**March 5-8** - National Master's Cup Series, Anchorage

**March 8** - Tour of Anchorage 25K/40K/50K

**March 14** - Kachemak Bay Ski Marathon 25K/40K, Homer

**March 15** - Oosik Classic ski race 25K/50K classic, Talkeetna

**March 21** - Ski Train to Curry

**March 29** - Ski to Sea Triathlon 5K Run/7K Bike/5K Ski, Homer

## News

**Membership Renewal & Newsletter:** It's that time of year to renew your Ski Club membership. The membership year begins October 1 and runs through September 30. This year, members will have the option to choose to receive this newsletter via email, regular mail, or both.

**Grooming:** Last year saw some big advances in the Club's grooming capabilities, and this year looks to only expand on that success. The Club has already purchased another snowmachine, and work is underway tuning up the Pisten Bully, which is the power horse that pulls our Ginzu Groomer. Jason Aigeldinger plans to once again groom the Trail River Campground, making both the skate and classic skiing enthusiasts happy.

**Trail Map:** Mark Luttrell has volunteered to create a trail map for the Seward skiing area. Darin Bell is now assisting him with the project, and they are hoping to have it completed in time to unveil at the General Membership meeting Tuesday, December 16. A huge thanks to Mark and Darin!

**Pasta Feed Fundraising Report:** The annual Pasta Feed, held before the July 4 Mount Marathon Race, raised \$2311 this year for the Seward Nordic Ski Club. A big thanks to all who helped with this big fundraising event, especially Heather Shank, Deborah Dixon and Susan St. Amand.

**Grants:** The Ski Club has received several grants already this year. The Alaska Ski Educational Foundation will provide \$3000 in matching funds to purchase ski equipment for our rental program. The Seward Seahawk's Athletic Booster Club has generously donated \$1000 towards this equipment, and the City of Seward has agreed to donate the remaining \$2000. This gives the club a total of \$6000 to spend on new ski equipment, to be made available not only for our rental program, but also to students on a need basis. The City of Seward also donated \$1000 again this year for trail maintenance. Thanks to all our donors, and also to Madelyn Walker for diligently getting all of the applications submitted.

## Nordic Ski Gear Buyer's Guide

by Ray Robinson

### *Part One: Skis and Poles*

As the days grow shorter and the trails become soggy, skiers begin to daydream in white. Knowing this, gear shops start making room for the latest ski equipment. With each season, the variety of gear options seems to expand as equipment becomes more specialized for different snow conditions and terrain features. Here are some general suggestions for novice skiers to guide you in your next purchase. If you are buying skis this year, consider coming to our **Ski Swap** on November 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be used skis for sale, and Barney's Sports Chalet from Anchorage will be selling new skis at a discount.

### **Skis**

**Classic or Skate?** Most people make this decision without the need for advice from other skiers.

Beginners typically start with classic skis because it is easier to stay balanced. Keep in mind that the right kind of snow as well as good grooming or packing is necessary for skate skis, which may reduce the potential number of possible ski days in our area depending on weather. That having been said, in our last two snowy winters the author found places to skate ski just about every day of the season. See the "Seward Skate Skiing Secrets" article in the Winter 07-08 Second Edition newsletter for details.

**Wax or waxless skis?** This terminology applies only to classic skis, as all skate skis require wax to help them glide better. To make this decision, one must understand what happens in a classic ski stride. In the *kick* phase, the weight of the skier is pushing off from the middle of the ski, with the middle of the ski gripping the snow. In the *glide* phase, the skier is up on the toes, and only the slippery ends of the skis touch the snow as they slide forward. Therefore, the middle part of the ski must have a surface that will get traction on snow. **Waxed classic skis** require the application of kick wax, a special kind of wax that is designed to grip the snow in the middle part of the ski. **Waxless classic skis** have the "fish scale" appearance in the middle part of the ski. The scales are essentially designed to slide forward but not

backward.

Waxed classic skis are faster, quieter, and more efficient when the kick zone has proper wax applied. They are the ideal ski for groomed trails with groomer-set classic tracks like the ones found in Anchorage's Kincaid Park. If you are serious about improving your ski technique or are interested in ski races, a waxed ski is worth consideration. However, the very rapidly changing snow conditions on the Kenai Peninsula create constantly changing wax requirements, which can be challenging and frustrating. The twigs, leaves, and dust that litter the snow surface in the backcountry will also wreak havoc on your wax performance. For this reason, a waxless classic ski is the best all-around ski for this area.

Now, if it all makes sense so far, it's time to try and confuse you. Is a waxless classic ski actually waxless? No! "Waxless" only refers to the middle "kick zone" of the ski. For the best performance and protection of the base, the remainder of the ski still needs the occasional application of slippery glide wax just like other cross country skis. Watch for our waxing article in the next newsletter edition for details.

***Classic skis- metal edges?*** Metal edges are only found on some models of "touring skis" (classic skis designed to travel outside of groomed areas). Metal edges provide more stability on varied or steeper terrain. They make the skis a bit heavier and require some extra attention to keep them maintained. At one time, metal edges were only found on downhill or backcountry / telemark skis. In the last several years they have become a more common feature of skinny touring skis. If your skiing will be limited to roads, groomed areas, and frozen lakes, metal edges are not necessary and will only slow you down. If you are considering trails like the Lost Lake, Grayling Lake, Resurrection River, or upper Iditarod trails, metal edges will give you a big stability advantage. In my opinion, waxless touring skis with metal edges give the Seward skier access to the biggest range of skiing possibilities.

***Ski length?*** Determining the proper length of both skate skis and classic skis requires some professional assistance. This isn't a problem when buying new skis in a shop, but if you are buying used skis you may want to have someone familiar with measuring your kick zone to help you in the decision. When it comes to good classic technique, skis that are too short won't glide properly, and stiff skis that are too long won't touch the snow enough to grip in the "kick" phase. There are similar problems with skate skis that are too long or short. When in doubt, as a novice skier it is best to err on the side of shorter skis because they are easier to maneuver and the only risk is sacrificing a little speed.

## **Poles**

***Pole length?*** Cross country ski poles are longer than other ski poles because they are used to push the skier at the end of the stride. The optimal ski pole length is dictated by the type of skiing technique and the length of the skier's stride. A general guide is a pole length to the chin for groomed classic skiing and to the nose or eyes for skate skiing. A shorter length could be considered if you are planning to exclusively tour on more rustic trails, because shorter poles are more helpful for keeping your balance (although less useful for pushing off). Personal preferences can vary based on technique, and experimenting with different sizes of borrowed poles can be helpful.

***How light (spendy) should I go?*** In general, the more you pay, the lighter and stiffer the pole will be. Elite skiers claim that this is where spending more is most likely to improve your performance. This makes sense because the upper body muscles are the weakest and tire more quickly after thousands of pole plants. If you are not concerned with speed or endurance, there is no reason whatsoever to spend more. Poles are the piece of equipment that are most likely to break, but more expensive poles do not necessarily last longer.

***Basic straps or contour straps?*** Contour ski straps (also referred to as performance ski straps) are the straps that wrap around the palm and thumb like a fingerless glove. They are designed to snap the ski pole handle back into your hand after you push off, allowing for a faster and more powerful push off. Their purpose is speed and efficiency, and they make a big difference. They take time to tighten and remove, and they do not loosen or come off if you fall. They are therefore not the ideal strap for the beginner. They are also ill-advised for backcountry touring, crust skiing, and ski-joring.

Basic ski straps end up dangling on your wrists when you fall, allowing you to use your hands. They also make grabbing snacks, water, kids, etc. much easier and are better for all-purpose use.

**Next issue: Part Two: Boots and Bindings**

## Member Spotlight, In Memorium: Bonny Sosa

by Catherine Bodry

For this issue, we'd like to remember Bonny Sosa.

A lifelong Alaskan, Bonny grew up in Anchorage and began downhill skiing as a young adult. Her husband, Sam Young (one of the founding members of the Seward Nordic Ski Club), introduced her to cross-country skiing about ten years ago. Although Bonnie sampled both classic and skate skiing, she preferred classic. "I think she enjoyed exploring the most," recalls Sam. Together they spent most of their ski time gliding through areas with few tracks. Favorite spots include the west side of Kenai Lake on calm days, and Primrose Creek on windy days. For longer trips, Bonny loved the Eagle River area and looked forward to overnight cabin trips.

Though Sam doesn't recall any particular trail food that Bonny preferred, he does note that she was a big fan of s'mores on those overnight trips. She also liked to treat herself with an after-ski Coors Lite. Always a bit calorie-conscious, Bonny viewed the beer as a reward for hard work. "I'm not sure if she let herself have the Coors Lite because she skied, or if she skied so she could have a Coors Lite," Sam jokes.

Sam notes that Bonny was always willing to let him drag her along on adventures. One vivid memory is of an afternoon snowshoe up the Lost Lake summer trail with only one pair of snowshoes between the two of them, which Bonny wore. Sam, who found himself postholing in thigh-deep snow, says that "Bonny always considered herself a back-of-the-packer. But that day she was able to run circles around me." She was delighted.

It was that afternoon trip that inspired Sam to muse to Bonny, "May you be the one with snowshoes when walking in life's deepest snow storms."



## Tech Tips

by Ray Robinson

### *Tips for ski preparation in early season*

**This article is reprinted from early winter 2007-2008.** Whether dragging skis out of the garage or dragging a shiny new pair from the city, a few more steps in your first wax of the season will optimize your skis' lifetime and performance. For those of you interested in basic waxing technique, SNSC will offer a waxing clinic to members on November 29, 2009. If you are an experienced ski waxer, consider contributing to this column! Contact us at [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com) if you would like to write a waxing article.

All of the techniques described here use Swix products because the author is familiar with them. However, several other brands work just as well, and techniques vary. If you follow a few basic principles, the results will be about the same: 1) Clean the skis early and often; 2) Always progress from warmer to colder wax, brushing and polishing as you go; and 3) When in doubt, wax some more, because skis become faster over time the more they are waxed.

### **New skis**

Most new skis have a base that is ready for waxing without any further base preparation. Check with your ski manufacturer for brand-specific base instructions. Begin with a “cleaning wax” to remove debris trapped in the microfibers from shipping and storage. Apply 1-2 coats of a warm basewax such as Swix yellow CH10 and scrape away immediately while the wax is warm.

Multiple coats of wax should be applied to new skis, with at least 6-8 coats recommended. Begin by applying 3 heavy coats of basewax without any scraping between each layer. Brush with a brass brush with 5-10 long, linear, front to back strokes. Then apply a cooler wax such as Swix blue CH6, allow the wax to cool, scrape away, and brass brush again. At this point brush with a brillo such as Swix grey fibertex 20-25 times, back and forth. This whole process aligns the microfibers in the direction of travel while protecting them with the wax you have applied. The skis are now ready to accept your “travel wax”.

To apply travel wax, begin with a layer of basewax and progress with subsequent layers of colder wax, scraping after each application. Stop after applying and scraping 1-2 coats of the desired wax for current conditions.

### **Used skis**

Where to start depends on what you did last year. The optimal waxing technique throughout the season is removal of the upper layer by scraping and brushing, which removes debris before re-application of new wax. The optimal summer ski storage technique is a heavy coat of wax without any scraping, which protects the base from scratches and debris during storage. If these techniques were employed in the previous year and the bases are in good condition, the skis may simply be scraped in preparation. Apply one or two layers of warm wax and scrape completely to clean the skis. Then, multiple layers of wax can be applied and scraped, progressing from warm to cold.

If the above techniques were not employed, complete wax removal and re-application is the optimal strategy because old wax is often dirty and cobbled from multiple applications and the surface is oxidized, which will interfere with bonding of new wax. Scrape the skis clean with a metal scraper. Apply wax remover, scrape with a plastic scraper and wipe away, and allow 24 hours for the remover to evaporate completely before applying new wax. Apply and scrape 2-3 coats of warm wax to thoroughly remove debris from the base. Next, apply wax with the same strategy as for new skis.

If the bases have scratches, burrs, or nicks, the glide performance will be impaired. To repair, begin by removing all wax. Heavily scratched skis should be stoneground at a reputable shop. Make sure they use a grinder specific for nordic skis. Nicks and gouges should be repaired with P-tex. Wax may then be re-applied as for new skis.

If a surprise snowfall demands immediate results, remove the oxidized layer with the appropriate brillo pad (if Swix, the purple one), then apply and scrape 1-2 layers of new wax, with at least one heavy layer of the desired wax for the current conditions. After you get the skiing out of your system, be sure to go back and prepare your skis the right way!

**Next issue: Waxing 101**

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Any businesses interested in sponsoring the Ski Club, contact [sewardnordicski@gmail.com](mailto:sewardnordicski@gmail.com). Thank you for your interest!

## Mission Statement

The Seward Nordic Ski Club is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting Nordic skiing for all ages, developing and maintaining a network of groomed trails, and sponsoring community ski activities and educational opportunities.

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