

Carriage - Go with the Force

by Cookie Hale and P.J. Jones

How do you carry your body while you ski? Stance and balance, dynamic stance and balance, is the first and foremost attribute of good skiing. Skiing is all about gravity and friction and how you carry your body! Skiing is all about moving, feeling the forces and going with them, in them.

Stance:

1. (n.) The arrangement of parts of one's body.
2. (n.) The way in which one holds or carries one's body.

Balance:

1. (n.) A condition of stability created by the opposition of equal forces.



Stacking the bones to the turn forces will result in a balanced stance - ALWAYS! This is proper “carriage” of the body. Maintaining balance via stacking is also something that you are already very good at. Since you first started crawling and then walking, your brain has learned and become the expert in such stacking. In skiing, we need to simply allow ourselves to feel the forces and stay stacked.

One of the most enjoyable sensations in skiing is when you feel “one with the force”, you are flowing and moving “in” the force. You can do anything, move anywhere. Fabulous skiing!

In order to move, staying in balance with the forces, you need to “feel” the forces. For the skiing adult, especially the more senior adult, one of the major blocks to being able to feel and move with the forces is your head (and sometimes your emotions). You are often thinking too much, trying to assume some “position” or “posture” that someone told you was “good” in skiing. So, if your head is getting in the way, understanding the reality that staying stacked will result in good balance and better skiing, will help; such understanding will allow your head to make it “legal” for you to feel instead of think... Your head will allow you to stay loose so you can indeed feel.

I have recently listened to discussions as well as read articles about balancing against the outside ski and what we must do to achieve such



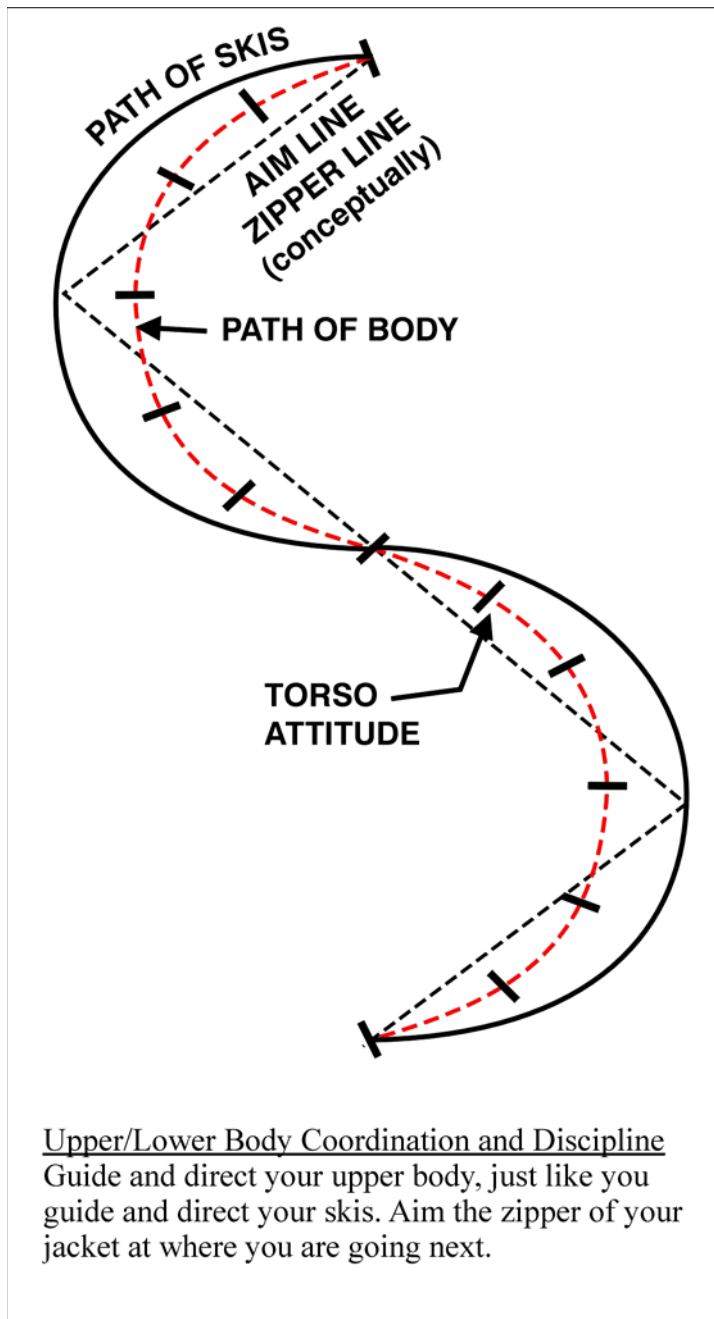
balance - tighten this, move this way, move that way, stabilize this or that, with all sorts of complicated verbiage. I watch those trying to diligently practice those magnificent techniques and what do I see? Stiff, constipated skiers who cannot possibly be feeling and moving with any forces!

At the recent Interski in Austria, the French were great in their use of words to help teach good skiing - “loose” and “around” were two of their best words. In turns you are going “around”. You are working with the forces powered by gravity and friction as you go “around”, so go “around”. In order to feel those forces and arrange your body parts (stack your bones) to “create a condition of stability by the opposition of equal forces” (stack your bones to the forces), you need to be loose, using only the minimum functional muscular tension needed. So, stay loose and go around.

However, if you are trying, with either all your might, or, with all your mind, to rotate your femurs in your hip sockets while stabilizing your pelvis, you will never be able to feel the forces and move with them. This whole recent disease of “counter” and “femurs in hip sockets” is one of the most detrimental “teachings” currently circulating in the PSIA world. In our clinics, we come across more people being twisted and contorted trying their best to establish the appropriate “counter”, ski into said “counter”, stabilizing their pelvis to allow their femurs to rotate in their hip sockets.... (By the way: The hip socket is a ball joint and there is no other way that the femur can move, except to rotate in the hip socket...)

In order to keep your bones stacked as you go around a turn, you indeed need to move your thighs around the arc of the turn with the skis. Your thighs happen to be hooked to your hips, so if you do not allow your hips to come around as your skis arc around, you will get twisted up, unable to stay stacked and balanced against your outside ski. You will also be very limited in how much you can edge your skis to maintain the arc.

Your hips/pelvis function like the “joystick” for your thighs. How you line your hips up with your thighs will determine how you can use your thighs, your shins and also your feet and skis. So,



advice in balancing against the outside ski as you come around, is to simply allow your legs, hip and torso to stay lined up with your skis while they arc. Why would you want to twist up like a pretzel and try to keep your hips not going with your thighs?

The objective is to simply keep your bones stacked and balanced with the forces that are being generated by gravity and friction during the turn. Centripetal, to the inside, is the force that you need to line up with to maintain the arc of a turn.

You might say: “But what about counter? Don’t you want a countered relationship, I mean to ski into a countered relationship so you can turn? I mean how can you possibly turn without the countering force?” Answer: Gravity, momentum, muscles and friction all make it possible to turn without having to twist your body in some countered relationship.

Advice: Either stop worrying about “counter” or if you insist that you have to have ‘counter’ in your skiing life, then reform your understanding of “modern counter”. Redefine your understanding of “counter” as to be that which is created by the body taking a different line than the skis.

The upper body is taking a shorter,

inside, line or arc, than the skis. The timing of moving along these arcs is also different. The body starts to move towards the new turn shortly after the apex of the arc while the skis are still finishing the old arc. There is a turntable near your belly button that separates the direction and timing of the movement of the upper body from the lower body. (The hips go with the thighs, the lower body.) Think of this as a coordinated upper and lower body rather than a separated upper and lower body. Although the timing and direction of the movements differ, they work together to keep your whole body stacked and moving in the turn forces. Coordinated upper and lower, differing lines, differing times, whole body moving in the forces.

In shorter turns, in more edging turns, the same dynamic still governs. The upper body aims where it is going next, the apex of the next turn, while the skis scribe a different line or arc. This axiom for upper/lower coordination will allow all your bones to be stacked to the turn forces and move in them at all times. This will also, always result, in the appropriate amount of “counter”. Thus, when the upper body starts to aim “foreagonally” (forward and diagonally) at the apex of the next arc, the skis are still aiming across or even up the hill. Upper body facing one way, lower body another, hips with the lower body. So why worry about counter. It’ll happen when the upper and the lower body are moving with the forces. Work on feeling and moving with the turn forces instead!

The point is to move ALL your body with the forces. In order to move with the forces, you need to feel the forces. In order to feel the forces, you need to be loose enough to be able to be sensitive to them.

Advice: Stay stacked to the forces. Line up your bones as you go “around” the arc. “Lean” on the forces as the Swedes say. Start moving your upper body along the inside line into the turn while your skis are finishing the old turn. Your upper and lower body are coordinated to move with the forces. After the apex, when you feel the forces build as you make a round lower arc, allow your legs to bend so your body can start to move with the forces, reducing the pressure at that lower part of the turn. After the apex, start to soften that outside leg, start flowing more to what is becoming your new outside leg. Your body will start to move with the forces and begin to move to the new turn, while your skis are still finishing the old turn.. Feel it. Feel the pressure of the turn flowing from one leg more to the other. Feel your body moving with the forces. Stay loose, allowing your skis to move with any terrain variations with your legs moving as shock absorbers. Stay loose so you do not transmit the terrain variations directly to the upper body, but rather allow your upper body to stay smooth as it flows in the turn forces from one turn to the other.

The recent Interski motto was great: DO IT, FEEL IT, BE IT. That indeed is what makes skiing so great, and so addicting! So, stay loose, go with the forces, go around. Feel it and be it! Have fun.

