

INTERSKI 2011 - Report from Cookie and P.J. Jones



PJ had previously participated in four Interskis when he was on the National Alpine Demo Team and this was his first as a spectator. This was my first and I'm hooked. The next Interski will be in September 2015 in Argentina and we'll be there!



When ski instructors from all over the world get together, they share the *heart*, the *spirit* of skiing - what skiing is all about! Of all the demonstrations, lectures and on-snow workshops, the workshops, along with the opportunities to meet and talk with skiers from all over the world, were the highlight of Interski.

It was exciting to “talk shop” with so many different people! Most of the skiers from all the countries skied very similarly. The main differences were based on who had been on the world cup circuit and who had not. However, in spite of the similarity in the skiing, there was quite a diversity in how different countries understood and explained their ski techniques. The focus of their teaching tactics was also varied. Nevertheless, the love of skiing is universal!

During the workshops and discussions, old friendships were renewed and many new ones were formed with people from all over the world.



These dialogues will now continue until the next Interski in 2015. That indeed is the wonderful spirit of Interski!

Between the two of us, we were able to attend workshops by Germany, Argentina, Canada, France and Sweden. The Germans have 8 basic concepts of “good” skiing. Argentina was not as complicated. The Canadian workshop was more about attitude and having fun with some great

off piste chutes and fresh snow. The French presented an excellent workshop on snow safety and off piste tactics and techniques, also with some fun off piste chutes and snow. The Swedish workshop was a “senior” workshop, with an emphasis on respecting and cherishing people. The Swedes also have a great teaching model of “Will”, “Hill” and “Skill”! (In other articles, we will share what we learned from the other countries.)



Kalle - Swedish "Senior" Clinic

Regarding the senior front, several countries offered on-snow workshops for the 50+ gang. Austria's workshop mainly emphasized some of the more discouraging aspects of aging, such as eyesight, hearing and strength advising ski instructors to be aware of them, but not offering any senior techniques for skiing.

Informal conversations with quite a few other countries uncovered that most were either in line with the Austrians or said that they only teach skiers until they reach 45 years old.

The Swedes however, are developing a senior program with senior ski techniques. I was delighted to see that they emphasized the respect and value of the "senior" individuals as well as having fun and enjoying the sport! Their techniques were very clear and simple encouraging seniors to utilize the design of our shaped skis to make skiing easy. Great attention was paid to "feeling" and being aware of the sensations.

Basically, the Swedes began with their feet and worked up the body: feel the inside of the outside foot; feel the outside of the inside foot; feel the inside knee move to the inside; keep the hips more square, not countered (leaning on the bar stool the inside, not sitting on it); feeling functional tension in the torso; lowering and moving forward the outside shoulder/hand at the bottom of the turn. All those were very similar to what we have been doing in our senior program except the last one of dropping the outside shoulder/hand. Of course, I let the Swedes know that... (I told them that when I moved my shoulder/hand forward and down, I found that I could not edge as well because it caused me to have more tension in my outside hip which then rotated, making it harder to tip my shins and edge the skis.)

So, on the senior front, the senior program that PJ and I have been working on the for past five years, and the program that Ted Pitcher, Rusty Crook and the gang have developed for the Western Division, are more "mature" and comprehensive than anything we found at Interski.

Americans are indeed leading the way on senior snow sports education. That innovation and leadership is coming from the divisions, not PSIA national. This is as it should be. The programs should originate and develop in the divisions, in the trenches where instruction occurs, where the "need" lies.

The senior population is one that the ski instruction industry has not actively marketed and pursued. It indeed is large, has time and has money. Helping seniors ski easier not only can be profitable, but, most importantly, benefits the seniors who will ski longer and have more fun!

More than ever, we are emphatic that senior programs ought to be developed and staffed by trained and competent instructors at every ski school. This indeed would require at least accreditation programs for teaching senior skiers.



After the encouragement at Interski, it would be great if ALL the divisions in this country could come together and work on sharing and developing senior programs - along with other countries. It would indeed be great if national could facilitate this!