

MT. MANSFIELD SKI CLUB BULLETIN

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DOWNHILL RACING

The prophecy often is heard to the effect that in a few years American skiers will be able to hold their own in downhill competition with Europeans. This of course is not outside the realm of possibility. But it can be accomplished only by diligent training to build up technique to the point where our skiers can run it straight, cut corners and seemingly take suicidal chances to achieve the really high speed standards set by European skiers.

Lately there has been a great deal of talk about controlled and no-fall races as a means to reduce accidents in downhill competition. The prevention of accidents in itself is a worthy object. There is no doubt but that intelligently controlled races will promote safer skiing among the average competitors in any class. Methods of reducing speeds, however, should not be allowed to eliminate straight running altogether, for such a course would defeat the very purpose for which we apparently are striving.

The answer to the problem of developing speed and at the same time giving decent consideration to the safety angle would seem to lie in a more rigid selection of competitors permitted to enter any race. Our major downhill competitions - national and divisional - should be limited to a class of skier only in the extreme upper bracket of the present A group. The qualifications for such a super or AA classification might well be as follows: In any sanctioned race limited to Class A or A and B skiers, a runner finishing within a time limit of ten per cent of the winning time would, after he had repeated this performance on another trail in the same season, be qualified as a Class AA skier. Only the four official time-trial trails should be open to such a rating, and if in the opinion of the classification committee the winner's time was too slow an AA rating would be denied. Thus for first class events only proven first class men, who had demonstrated their ability to ski at high speed, would be eligible.

A similar careful selection of competitors in lesser races should be observed. Since the accident rate increases as the general proficiency of the field is lowered, trails other than those of major status should be utilized, or controls introduced by authorized officials. Certainly time trials on the major runs should not be open to skiers who have not obtained a class C rating. By providing more opportunities for lesser bracket skiers to improve their technique, without subjecting them to speeds beyond their abilities, will gradually raise the standard of those who may become eligible for the more important competitions. And concentrating the artificial safety measures where they are needed will not penalize the top-notch runner

who must ski fast in order to achieve any success outside of this country.

In those localities where downhill races must of necessity be held on wooded trails, it becomes obligatory of course to eliminate as much as possible the natural hazards of the trail itself. This does not mean opening up every corner, butting all the trees on the mountain, or changing in anyway the alignment of a well-designed trail, for that certainly would not accomplish its purpose. However, such things as grading the surface to a degree of smoothness bearing some relation to the maximum speed possible on it, and the screening of dangerous corners with brush mats or live evergreen plantings would decrease the potentiality of serious accident so far as trail is concerned.

If, then, it is our sincere desire to see American skiers meeting the world's best runners on an even footing, we must encourage high speed skiing. With a rigid selection of competitors, and the exercise of judgment in trail design, the changes of accident would be no greater than the normal expectancy in a sport where the law of averages will be at work regardless of artificial precautions.

C. D. Lord

CANNON MOUNTAIN

However you may feel about downhill-only skiing, you owe yourself one trip a season to Cannon Mountain in New Hampshire. For my part I should not wish to abandon permanently the pleasure and the discipline of climbing on skis for the squirrel-like rotation of riding and sliding, but the opportunity of telescoping a month of week-ends into a fairly active day, especially when accompanied by an instructor, is a definite advantage from a training standpoint.

What struck me most forcibly about the development was its efficient administration. The entire area consisting of both State and National forest lands is controlled absolutely by a special commission, and the authorities have had the foresight to appoint as managing director Roland Peabody who has been the active pioneer in Franconia skiing and more than anyone else is responsible for the success of the enterprise.

At present, besides cleared practice areas at the summit, there are two trails - the Taft and the Cannon Mountain. The former is well known as the first expert ski trail in the East. The Cannon Mountain is an ideal example of an intermediate type run, and it was designed on the basis that it would be suitable for skiers who had mastered the snowplow turn. Contrary to what might be expected, the trails never are overcrowded because each carload of skiers has time to disperse before the next batch arrives at the top. On week-ends and holidays, however, the base station becomes rather packed, and some waiting is

necessary before a ride can be obtained. For this reason the best time to visit the tramway is in the middle of the week. A comfortable restaurant is located at the summit where one may relax, while a professional ski patrol sees that you do not get into trouble on the trails and slopes.

A. W. C.

THE FIELD DAY

The Club's informal field day was held on April 2nd at Ranch Camp under weather conditions so bad that only the more hardy skiers attended. A short but challenging slalom was set by Ab Coleman who thereby expected to win easily, and most certainly would have done so if getting tangled up with all the flags was the object of the race. As it turned out the three Northfield flashes - Goodrich, Wells and Dickinson - divided all the prizes among themselves. The ladies present refused to have anything to do with the races, and as a matter of fact a few of them after watching the competitors gorge on Mrs. Conkling's dinner were so unnerved that they did not go near the course. Gad, what a day!

A.T.P

(A bare faced lie about tangling with all those flags. I distinctly remember missing several pairs completely. - Ed.)

NOMINATIONS

The president has appointed Miss Elizabeth Shepard, (9 Baldwin St., Montpelier, Vt.) as chairman of the nominating committee to prepare a list of officers and directors to be presented for election at the annual meeting which will be held during the first week in May. It is hoped that a really active group can be secured for next season, so if you know of anyone who will be willing to work for the best interests of Club please send his name to the committee.

The present officers and directors are as follows!

President	W.V. Mason, Waterbury
Vice-president	C.D. Lord, Waterbury
Treasurer	D.F. Ryder, Waterbury
Secretary	A.W. Coleman, Montpelier
Directors-at-large	O. Abbiati, Barre
	L.S. Booth, Montpelier
	C.O. Burt, Stowe
	C.B. Chase, Stowe
	A.W. Gottlieb, Stowe
	P.T. Olton, New York
	H.H. Prestwich, Burlington

NOTES

Today we are having the first warm spring rain of the season. So far there has been no real cessation of winter weather at Mt. Mansfield, and powder snow has been the general condition up to last Sunday. Judging from past years there should be good skiing on the mountain for another month at least.