



Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing

POWDER TECHNIQUES AND TIPS

Our 42nd heli ski season is under way in Blue River. We have seen record early season snowfalls this year with a lot of profile pits in the 3 meter range.

To get this much snow means that it snows often and a lot. This generally means that we spend most of our time tree skiing. You should be smiling now, thinking fondly of perfectly spaced Eglemann Spruce, giant Cedars and Subalpine fir, deep cold powder and runs like Finn Trees, Ski World Trees, White River Trees and Great Escape.

Everyone should get a chance to ski these runs. Yes, everyone. Being comfortable tree skiing should be the goal of all powder skiers. In the trees, the snow lasts longer (less wind and sun), we can ski a little steeper (better anchors with the trees) and the terrain offers natural features and challenges you just can't find in more open terrain.

The problem is a lot of skiers find tree skiing intimidating. Being forced to turn (tree avoidance is a good idea) can be daunting. The increased gradient and added obstacles can cause good skiers to lose their composure.

To increase your tree skiing comfort level there are a few tips that will help you along the way.

1. Practice short radius turns. This will enhance speed and direction control and allow for athletic, dynamic skiing.
2. Think of an aggressive down hill pole plant, pinching at the waist on your down hill side while stretching on your up hill side to create good angulation. This will help produce force on your down hill ski and augment pressure and edge control.
3. Practice ski hops. Starting on lower angle groomed runs, try hopping as you traverse the slope. Don't worry about how high you hop just that you maintain good stance and balance, returning to this position between hops. As you improve increase slope steepness.
4. Relax between turns. Control your centre of mass to maintain balance and keep your skis in contact with the snow. Create un-weighting by retracting and extending your feet not moving your arms and upper body.
5. Get in the trees. Practice makes perfect so venture into some safe, easy tree skiing and give it a shot. Always tree ski with a partner and don't forget a helmet and goggles to protect your head and eyes.

Try to make incredible powder tree skiing your goal. With some experience and practice you will learn to love the challenges and incredible snow tree skiing has to offer. Come to Blue River and we will prove it.

See you in the mountains.

Tim McLean - Senior Lead Guide

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