

Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing

Ski Tips & Techniques

JANUARY 2011 - BOARDING POW : TIPS FROM BLUE RIVER EXPERTS

I'm not a snowboarder. It isn't that I don't like snowboarding or never wanted to learn, I just never got around to it. Unfortunate I guess but I spent my early 20's learning the craft of guiding, my 30's trying to perfect those skills, and the last couple of years....okay my early 40's....focused on my clients ski enjoyment.

The few times a year I get to Sun Peaks, I spend trying to keep up with my kids just enjoying skis on snow.

I did try snowboarding in Blue River many years ago. I remember standing at the top of the run, my feet "locked" in place on the board, and the run, a deep open powder run, suddenly looked terrifying.

The only instructions I got were "Just point it down hill" and a rather unconvincing " You will be fine". I wasn't fine and I struggled for the next hour wallowing and crashing on the way to the bottom of my first and only snowboard run.

Snowboarding is a big part of our business in Blue River. I have guided a lot of snowboarders over the years. My brief snowboard experience helped as have my clients "No flats...no traversing" mantra in the back of my head.

I thought this month I would offer some tips for snowboarders but as you read I needed to call on some advice:

Bob Sayer- Senior Lead Guide, Operations Manager

Bob has been guiding with us for 24 years. 18 years ago he took his first turns on a snowboard. "Unweighting is as important in snowboarding as it is in skiing. In order to make proficient powder turns, you need to push into each turn then release the pressure and allow the board to rise up at the end of the turn. This is very similar in feel to skiing. If you are having trouble with a good powder toe side turn, try pointing where you want to go with your front arm. This brings your body across the fall line and allows you to move onto your toe side edge."

Dustin Dueling- Sport Shop Manager

Dustin grew up in Blue River and learned to snowboard in the kid's camp on Saddle Mountain. He now runs our ski shop. "Trust the advice of the shop staff. The powder specific board improves everyone's heli riding experience. Think about your stance and how this will affect your board in powder. We like a tail heavy set up that will increase

maneuverability in the trees and also helps to keep the nose of the board from diving. It is really important to look ahead and use speed to build energy in the board”

Sadie Silcock-Fitness Specialist and Snowboard Instructor

“It is common for riders to see powder and shift all their weight onto their back foot. It is the fear of submarining (I know). But riding with all of your weight on your back leg will tire you out quickly and is often unnecessary. There are several factors that determine where your weight should be. First, the size of your ride: the longer your snowboard is the more centered you can ride. Another factor is the type of snow. If you are riding on heavy, wet powder you will have to ride with more weight on your back foot. If the snow is light and airy, your stance can be a bit more centered. Even if you have a tendency to shift all of your weight to your back leg or if the factors call for it, remember stance should always be more centered in your transition phase (going from one turn into another) and can shift back from centre during the rest of the turn”

Hopefully these tips will help inspire you to improve or even try snowboarding in powder. Heck, you might even see me out there giving it a shot. I’ll be the one covered in snow!

Tim McLean - Senior Lead Guide
CSIA Level 3, CSGA Level 3