

TESTED AT MIKE WIEGELE'S: **19 POWDER SKIS!**

ski canada



**19 favourite
home hills...
Says who?**

**Why so red at
Big White?**

**OFF THE BEATEN
TRACK IN AUSTRIA**

**GUEST PHOTO EDITOR
KEVIN HJERTAAS**

**THE BEST
OF VAIL**

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FUN ON FATS

Ski Canada asked the guides at **Mike Wiegele's** to put 19 powder skis to the test. **BY RON BETTS, TEST EDITOR**

One of my earliest, and fondest, childhood memories is of powder, and it has absolutely nothing to do with skiing. It had more to do with school being called off, which meant a day of playing outside, diving off fences, building forts and having fun with friends. Cape Breton Island wasn't much of a powder-skiing mecca and at six or seven years of age I hadn't yet figured out what skiing was, or the simple joy a few centimetres of the fresh stuff could bring when sliding down a hill. But I certainly remember snowfalls; I remember being transfixed by the sight of snowflakes in the streetlight outside our house. Of standing for what seemed like hours watching it get deeper outside the window.

Little did I know that this sight would dictate the rest of my life. It all began innocently enough, sneaking off the side of a groomed run for a few turns in the untracked snow. Pretty soon it was exploratory missions into the trees to duck the crowd and score a few freshies. One day a hike from the top of a lift gets you first tracks and the hook is set. And helicopter or snowcat skiing? Well, it's off the chart, a whole mountain for just you and your friends. Crazy.

Ever wonder if you really are a hardcore skier? Answer these questions honestly and truthfully:

Have you ever risked life and limb in a late-model car with bald tires to get to the

mountain during a snowstorm?

Have you ever risen in the middle of the night to check the snow depth outside, or better yet, been too excited to sleep at all?

Have you ever pushed past an elderly person or a child in your rush to get to the head of the lift line or the top of a run on a powder day?

If you answered yes to any or all of these questions, not only are you hardcore in my books, you also suffer from the same addiction that I do, and, happily, there's no cure. My best advice is to grab a pair of the powder skis we are profiling this month and try to save your sick days for when it matters most—or hope you have an employer who understands what “powder rules” are.

Luckily my employer has powder fever worse than anyone. I guide for Mike Wiegele Helicopter Skiing and the boss has more than 75 million vertical feet to his name in the majestic Cariboo and Monashee Mountains.

Once again, with Blue River, B.C., as the venue and the guides at Mike Wiegele's as able and willing test pilots, we put the latest and greatest powder skis through their paces. We tried to test these skis in a variety of conditions and speeds, but my advice remains, as always: use the test as a guideline but do yourself a favour and demo lots of skis. The cream, like a great powder ski, always rises to the top.

NEXT ISSUE:
20 EASY CRUISING
SKIS TESTED AT
SILVER STAR



ARMADA

ARG

\$980

LENGTHS AVAILABLE
185†

125/135/133/134/120

n/a



ATOMIC

BLOG

\$749

LENGTHS AVAILABLE
175†, 185†

134 110 126

19 @ 185



BLIZZARD

THE ANSWER

\$1,449*

LENGTHS AVAILABLE
177, 184†, 191

135 110 125

28 @ 184



DYNASTAR

LEGEND BIG DUMP

\$799

LENGTHS AVAILABLE
192†

142 120 132

38 @ 192



WATEA

\$1,049

176, 186†

146 114 128

27 @ 186

The ARG was designed with one thing in mind, to rip and slash anywhere on the mountain the grooming machine doesn't go. Its geometry is comprised of a rockered tip and tail with reverse camber and sidecut. This means the tip and tail are narrower than the sweet spot under the foot. Tester Crosby Johnston called it a great all-rounder that worked well in all conditions. The general consensus was that this ski might not be for heavier, power skiers, but more for a light- to moderate-weight skier.

This ski from Atomic is what most of us have come to expect from the Austrian powerhouse: a well-built, wood-core ski that has plenty of sidecut to get the job done. It has moderate rocker for getting it to the surface, and a healthy 110 mm underfoot to give you all the float you'll need. It's a well-rounded ski that's better suited to someone who rips down the mountain, rather than a skier who wants to ski switch or jib. Testers called it a fun, responsive ski in the steeps and thought it had no speed limit.

The Answer is... what was the question again? Oh yeah, the question was: Name a ski that gives you the ability to be playful in any terrain, carves like a dream and is easy enough to handle a heavier aggressive rider? Blizzard has produced a ski that is at home in the air as well as ripping up the powder, and is big in the playful department but still has the heart of an all-round carving machine. Bill Mark thought this ski needed an active pilot to keep the tips from diving, but liked how it felt at speed.

With 120 mm of ski underfoot, it's no wonder testers found this ski to be a solid platform with plenty of float. The Big Dump is ready to go—fast. It's stiff, stable and not for the faint of heart. Elias Ortner said that this ski was awesome for big-mountain lines, but less forgiving in the trees. Chris Simm thought it was a great powder ski for the ex-racer. Testers felt it would be more suited to open spaces and aggressive riders.

Really good powder skis are much more than just wide planks designed to float in the snow; they should also be lively and responsive. That is how the testers felt about this ski. Mike Hainault said it had a tip that never sinks, and called the rocker-style tip an awesome addition to an already great ski—big praise that was mimicked by most of the test team. The Watea would be best for a light- to medium-weight finesse skier rather than a burly power skier, who might end up overpowering it.

*Suggested retail (with bindings). † Lengths tested.



**GOODE
SCOOP**

\$1,295

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
173, 183, 193†

125 142 113

95 † 193

The Scoop was a little too lightweight to handle the rigours of a day of heli-guiding since most guides carry packs that add 20-30 pounds to the load. But if you're looking for a powder ski that's easy to manoeuvre and you rely more on finesse and less on muscle, give the Scoop a try—not every skier has tree trunks for legs. At the end of a day of deep powder runs, you'll appreciate the lightweight materials that give Goode one of the best strength-to-weight ratios of any ski on the market.



**HEAD
JERRY**

\$950

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
171, 181†, 191

130 104 120

26 † 181

A traditional camber ski with rocker in the tip and tail, the Jerry is built for riders with a polished technique who want big-mountain capabilities with the technical aspects of a great carving ski. The ski is 104 mm underfoot, which gives it a very respectable 26m radius. One tester said it was built like a team GS ski for the big mountain. It's best suited for a powerful skier with a race background who is looking to light a fire on the mountain or wants to keep on truckin'.



**HEAD
JIMI**

\$1,000

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
171, 181†, 191

130 110 120

32 † 181

How can a ski named after a dead rock star have so much life? One thing is for certain, the Jimi is a rocker in its own right. Tip and tail rocker, that is. The Jimi is a bit wider underfoot than the Jerry, with 110 mm of powder-busting flotation. Our testers said that the more active the rider is, the more the ski responds, and felt that mid-weight skiers would get the most out of it. If I had to pick one Jimi Hendrix song that best describes this ski? The obvious choice has to be You Got Me Floatin'.



**K2
COOMBACK**

\$730

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
167, 174, 181†, 188

135 102 121

22 † 174

I've extolled the virtues of the K2 line before: lightweight, which makes a great touring ski; pre-drilled skin attachment points in the tips; pre-measured skins available; notched tails for solid skin attachment; and best of all, they perform even better going downhill. The Coomback, according to tester Mike Hainault, was light and lively. Though less stable at big speed, it was otherwise capable of almost anything. (And the stability at speed could be seen as a trade-off for its great touring capabilities.) If you like to work for your turns, the K2 is well worth a look.



**K2
GOTBACK**

\$730

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
146, 153, 160†, 167, 174

135 102 121

18 † 160

The Gotback is a women's-specific ski designed to be as functional going downhill as it is going up. Like all of K2's Adventure Line, it features attachment points for skins and is lightweight. The Gotback has 102 mm underfoot, enough to float on the deepest of days. Tester Heidi Stammberger liked the ease of initiation that came with a soft ski, but found that with her 40-pound pack she overpowered the Gotback. She agreed that this would be an ideal touring ski and lighter skiers will get the most out of it.



KÄSTLE

MX128

\$1,159

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
190"

146 128 134

40 @ 190

The MX128, favoured by celebrated Canadian freeskiier Hugo Harrison whose name the ski bears, is the first time Kastle has used a rocker in its lineup. This ski features an early-rise tip for flotation, as well as a hollowtech tip for reduced swing weight and a beech/poplar wood core for strength and weight. Mike Hainault said it best, "I've always been a fan of Hugo and his aggressive, yet technically solid style. He has put his name to a ski that suits that exact type of skiing." Fast, aggressive skiers will like this ski most. Elias Ortner called it his top pick of the test.



LIBERTY

GENOME

\$825

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
181, 187", 194

170 141 156

27 @ 187

The Genome will certainly turn heads in the lift line—at 141 mm underfoot it's one of the widest skis we tested. Its features include solid construction, with bamboo in the core, for strength and rebound. It also has an elongated tip and tail rocker for easy turn initiation and a centred stance for skiing or landing switch. This is a burly ski that you'll be happy to have on the deepest of days. Our testers appreciated the wide platform and stability, and all agreed that this was a ski for goin' fast or goin' big.



MOMENT

NIGHT TRAIN

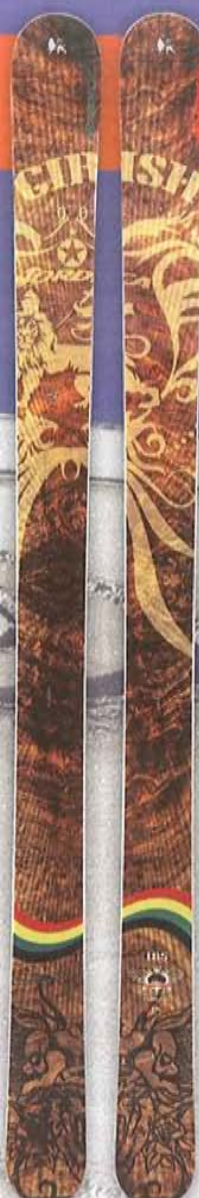
\$750

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
168, 178, 186"

140 123 135

27.5 @ 186

With one of the most experimental shapes, progressive designs and raddest graphics, the Night Train is definitely not your dad's ski—unless your dad is Bob Bibby, father of Moment team rider Josh Bibby. Tester Bill Mark thought the ski looked funny with the tips cut off, but had fun in the trees or in the open at faster speeds. This is a ski for someone looking to enjoy the powder without a rule book. Carve or smear, forward or switch, in the air or on the ground, the Night Train will do it all.



NORDICA

GIRISH

\$929

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
185", 193

139 110 129

26 @ 185

The Girish is one of the few skis in our test lineup that's directional, or not a twintip. This will appeal to those who go by the "tips go first" rule. In any event, our testers really liked this ski; they found it responsive and playful, but at the same time it was damp and solid in all conditions. Tester Bill Mark said it was a good all-rounder and felt it would also work well in the Big Mountain category or even in a resort setting. The weight of the ski made it feel solid in a variety of snow conditions.



PRIOR

DOUGHBOY

\$999

LENGTHS AVAILABLE:
159, 167, 175", 183"

145 105 120

18 @ 175

What people seem to like about Whistler-made Prior is the fact that it builds high-quality skis that, to put it simply, work well. They also work for a wide range of skiers. Erin Heintzman summed up the versatility of the Doughboy by saying, "This ski is great for someone getting into powder skiing and will take an aggressive skier on a fun trip through the mountains." Our female testers were unanimous in saying this ski would work for anyone.

MIKE WIEGELE HELISKIING TEST TEAM

MIKE HAINAULT

Ht, Wt, Age: 6', 165 lbs, 34
Skiing style: Technical, All-Mt
Grew up skiing: Camp Fortune, Que.
Certification: CSIA IV, CSCF II,
CSGA III, CAA II

CHRIS SIMM

Ht, Wt, Age: 6', 185 lbs, 32
Skiing style: Finesse, Fluid
Grew up skiing: Mt Norquay
Certification: CSIA IV, CSCF II,
CSGA III, CAA II

JUSTIN THOMPSON

Ht, Wt, Age: 0'0", 165 lbs, 28
Skiing style: Technical, Aggressive
Grew up skiing: Collingwood
Certification: CSIA III, CSCF I,
CSGA II, CAA II

ELIAS ORTNER

Ht, Wt, Age: 6'3", 200 lbs, 31
Skiing style: Austrian, Sporty
Grew up skiing: Saalbach-
Hinterglemm, Kaprun
Certification: OSSV Diplom Ski Lehrer,
Ski Fuhrer

TIM McLEAN

Ht, Wt, Age: 6'3", 250 lbs, 41
Skiing style: Aggressive powder
schwein
Grew up skiing: Raven Mt, Ont.
Certification: CSIA III, CSGA III, CAA II

BILL MARK

Ht, Wt, Age: 6'2", 175 lbs, 47
Skiing style: Low-energy, Finesse
Grew up skiing: New Zealand
Certification: NZ SIA full cert,
CSGA III, CAA II

CROSBY JOHNSTON

Ht, Wt, Age: 6'3", 190 lbs, 30
Skiing style: Aggressive, Power
Grew up skiing: Big White/ Silver Star
Certification: CSIA II, CSGA III, CAA II

IAN TIERNEY

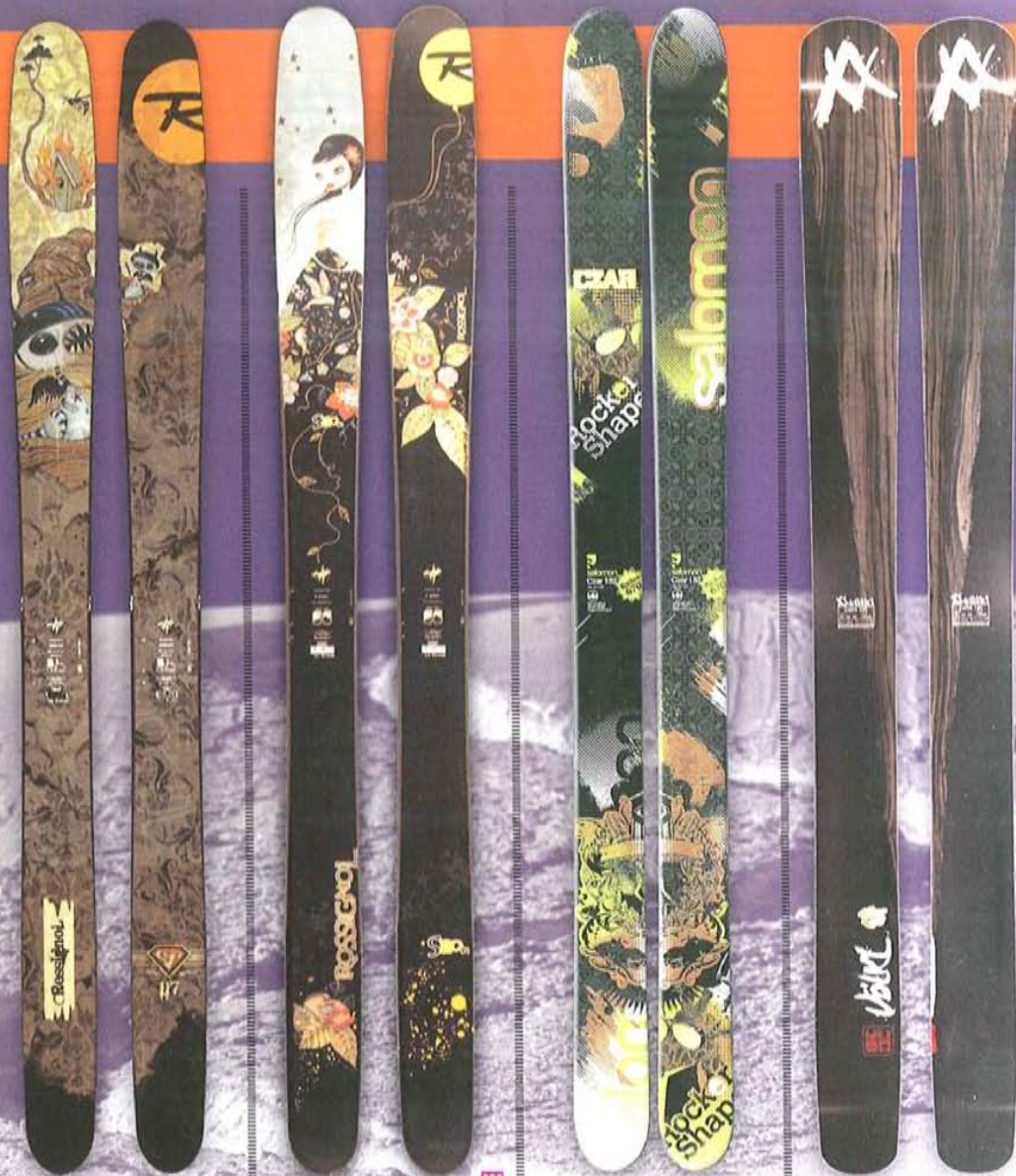
Ht, Wt, Age: 5'8", 165 lbs, 36
Skiing style: Aggressive
Grew up skiing: Calabogie Peaks, Ont.
Certification: CSIA III, CSGA III, CAA II

ERIN HEINTZMAN

Ht, Wt, Age: 5'8", 140 lbs, 35
Skiing style: Aggressive but playful
Grew up skiing: Collingwood
Certification: CSIA III, CSCF II,
CSGA III, CAA II

HEIDI STAMMBERGER

Ht, Wt, Age: 5'6", 135 lbs, 39
Skiing style: Ready for anything
Grew up skiing: Meadow Creek, B.C.
Certification: CSGA III, CAA II



The S7 uses Amptek, which is Rossignol's way of saying the tip and tail have rocker, with a traditional camber underfoot and a spatula tip and pintail. All of this combines to create a ski that's at home in any off-piste situation. Tester Mike Hainault found this ski to be playful in soft snow, but also able to handle windslab and crust. Most skiers would like the big sweet spot, but the soft tip would best suit mid-weight finesse skiers.



Like its brother, the S7, the S110W is a go-anywhere, do-anything weapon. It features the same basic geometry as the S7, but has 110 mm underfoot for excellent agility. This ski got big props from tester Heidi Stammberger, who skied it in some crud and said her new ACL felt the best it had all season. She thought that this was a perfect ski for the all-round athlete or an up-and-comer.



The Czar has been in the Salomon lineup for a couple of years now and belongs in the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" category. Salomon embraced rocker technology early and the Czar has benefited. This ski has been one of the best received of the new shapes because of its ease of turning, great float and versatility in all conditions. For larger skiers, the Czar is available up to 190 cm. This is a versatile and playful powder ski that doesn't sacrifice performance.



The Kuro is one of those rare skis in a test that everyone agrees on. Everyone has a personal style, speed preference and differences in what they want in a ski. However, the Kuro brought our testers into agreement, and they all thought that this ski was a stable, playful platform that did it all—long turns, short turns, glaciers or trees. Ian Tierney asked, "Can I keep it? My favourite in the test!"