

Inside Stevens

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Our new rental gear really does make it easier than ever to learn to ski and snowboard. That is not marketing hype, it is what our students are telling us! If you are thinking about trying a new snow sport or have a friend who is ready to get started, then do yourself a favor and keep reading.

Historically, rental gear was designed to fit the needs and demands of the rental shop. It needed to be extra durable, economical and fast in the set-up process. The beginner who would be using the equipment to support their learning process was far down the list of considerations. A few manufacturers have done a full reversal on that outdated thinking and our students are the delighted beneficiaries.

Last spring a group of seasoned testers from Stevens Pass made the commitment to select the best rental skis and snowboards. Our selection criteria focused on finding the optimum gear that makes learning to ski or ride much easier for the beginner and more fun. The great news is we found that gear! Our testing team unanimously selected Burton Snowboards and Elan skis. Those companies really put a lot of thought into design characteristics that would support learning. They worked closely with highly successful instructors with decades of teaching experience to develop the best products.

Burton started right at the snow. They created a “contoured” base that helps a beginner learn to sideslip the board and develop a balanced stance quickly. The contour also helps to eliminate some of the caught edges that produce the dreaded “mousetrap” fall. The overall flex of the board is softer so learning your first turns is a breeze. Burton also made boards of varying width to comfortably accommodate larger feet. The bindings are simple to use while wearing gloves or mittens.

Elan Skis was one of the first companies to bring us “shaped” skis. They quickly looked for ways for the emerging technology could benefit beginners. The designers started with shorter lengths for easier maneuverability and to be less tiring. The skis were given a new sidecut profile (the hourglass shape) and then mounted the bindings a bit forward of conventional placement. All those elements mean learning to turn, control speed and avoiding objects are a snap. Pretty important elements to the beginner.

What does all this mean for our beginners? Our students are progressing faster and with less effort. It takes less time for our instructors to develop the necessary skills for the students to make their first chairlift ride and begin their exploration of the mountain. Most of all, people are more enthusiastic to take up skiing and riding as a sport for lifelong enjoyment.

Please share this information with a friend who does not ski or ride. Have them try our new rental gear while they participate in our January, “Ski Three, Ride Free” promotion. They will be your winter sport friend for life. I hope to see you on the slopes.

Shawn Smith

Director of Resort Services

28 year veteran of PSIA National Demo Team