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FRONTSIDE ADVANCED

NUMBER OF SKIS TESTED: 12
FINALISTS REVIEWED HERE: 9

1 ATOMIC NOMAD HIGHNOON

119/76/105; \$875 (with binding)

Crank short turns or open it up—the Nomad delivers. Testers applauded its high-speed cruising prowess. **GRIPES:** Could be livelier. **PROPS:** Relax and rip, knowing the edges will hold. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "Experts would enjoy this ski. It's almost cheating." —Alex Shaffer. **LENGTHS:** 150, 157, 164, 171, 178

2 BLIZZARD CMX 11 IQ

119/70/98; \$825 (with binding)

Testers were wowed by how much edge hold the CMX delivered. It has pop, too: Bend it into a turn and wait for a big energy release through the tail. **GRIPES:** Needs more beef for crud. **PROPS:** Liveliest energy transfer in the category. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "Roll it, bend it, and let it go." —Bill McSherry **LENGTHS:** 152, 159, 166, 173

3 DYNASTAR CONTACT 10

122/72/102; \$1,049 (with binding)

Possibly the most forgiving ski here, the Contact 10 tips into medium to short turns with nary a buck. **GRIPES:** Could be damper; lacked energy. **PROPS:** Feathers through crud and rails turns on hardpack. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "They give back as much as you put into them." —Mike Taché **LENGTHS:** 158, 165, 172, 178

4 FISCHER RX FIRE 8 FTI

116/65/98; \$995 (with binding)

BEST IN TEST The RX Fire's shovel dives into turns effortlessly. Load the tail for a big pop across the fall line or take it easy and feather the release. **GRIPES:** Not a one. **PROPS:** Arcs short or long turns without chattering. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "This fire has a nice, even burn." —Alex Shaffer. **LENGTHS:** 155, 160, 165, 170, 175

5 K2 APACHE RANGER

119/72/103; \$675 (with binding)

HILLER DEAL The carving fanatics at K2 (OK, one designer from Minsk) have done it again. Said one tester: "The tip pulls you into a sweet turn. **GRIPES:** Possibly too soft. A bit chattery if not on a good radius. **PROPS:** There's no learning curve. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "The Ranger is easy to ski but it can charge, too." —Alex Shaffer **LENGTHS:** 153, 160, 167, 174

6 NORDICA SPEEDMACHINE MACH 2

XBI166/70/102; \$1,045 (with binding)

These Nordicas like speed. Lay them over into a big arc and instead of the pop of a carving ski you get the smooth release of a cruiser. **GRIPES:** A little sluggish at low speeds. **PROPS:** They hug the contours of the hill. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "Precise and accurate, but surprisingly forgiving." —Bill McSherry **LENGTHS:** 154, 162, 170, 178

7 PALMER P02

128/70/115; \$1,200 (with binding)

Palmer is a snowboard company that's now making skis. The P02s lock into a powerful turn at low speeds, and the squarish tails carry the carve across the hill. **GRIPES:** They don't want to run straight. **PROPS:** A blast linking fall-line whippers. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "Way quick and responsive." —Kevin Kaneda **LENGTHS:** 155, 163, 172

8 ROSSIGNOL ZENITH Z5 OVERSIZE

121/72/100; \$900 (with binding)

An easy turner, the Z5 is no wimp: Bring it up to speed and it's as stable as an expert ski. **GRIPES:** More energy out of turns, please. **PROPS:** Hugs the terrain, boosting hold and confidence. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "A nice and comfortable platform that lets you dive into turns." —Peter Nestor **LENGTHS:** 154, 162, 170, 176

9 VÖLKL TIGER TEN

114/68/99; \$910 (with binding)

A high-energy fall-line ski, the Tiger turns as quickly as your muscles can fire. Expect race-ski hold without the need for race-ski muscling. **GRIPES:** Slightly inconsistent on hard snow. **PROPS:** Super-playful and easy, but you can push it hard. **TESTER'S TAKE:** "The Tiger has tons of untapped power." —Mike Taché **LENGTHS:** 154, 161, 168, 175