



The Future, Now

By Tom Winter, 2006-12-03 00:19:01

OK, we know, it's only the first week in December and the season really is just getting going. So what the hell are we doing testing skis that won't even be in stores until the fall of 2007? Good question, but when a wicked winter storm blew into the Rockies, "ski testing" seemed like a good euphemism for "skiing powder."

Over the past few days, we've checked out the latest from Volkl, Scott, Fischer and, may the good Lord have mercy on us, Palmer Snowboards.

Palmer Snowboards?

You heard right, Palmer Snowboards.

You know that Armageddon is near when a snowboard company starts making skis. Well, at least that's what most snowboarders would think. But as strange as it may seem, Palmer is now making skis. The company is going to be introducing two models for 2007/2008. The first is a carving ski, which is truly Euro and for the Austrian ski instructor hidden deep within. Needless to say, we avoided that ski like the plague (although we did watch Freeskier account executive Luke Blazer flail around in the powder for a couple of runs on the things, while laughing at him). The second model is a very worthy all-mountain twin tip. This ski features a sandwich construction, beefy wood core and two choices of graphics. It's a lively and fun ski, with a relatively stiff flex pattern that rips up groomers, but fat enough underfoot for pow turns. We liked this ski a lot, and would highly recommend it for skiers who spend 80% of their time in-bounds. Eastern skiers should definitely check this one out, although the thought of supporting a snowboarding company may rankle the hardcore among us.

One day prior to checking out the latest from Palmer, we hooked up with Volkl's Geoff Curtis. Volkl is bringing out a sweet quiver for next year, but they want to be rather secretive about their new graphics and technology. Needless to say, the skis didn't disappoint, despite the fact that each pair was swathed in white, thus hiding Volkl's 2007 graphics. Equally tight-lipped was Curtis, who only would hint at the line's greatness. Testing proved that he didn't have much to hide, as the company has a stellar line-up for 2007/2008. Competitors will be hard pressed to keep up.

Also in the mix were Scott and Fischer. Scott is introducing a great new all-mountain/park ski, called the Punisher, for 2007. Also in the mix is a P4 with a new graphic. Sweet.

Fischer, somewhat surprisingly, hauled a bunch of all-mountain carvers up onto the hill. Since they were there, we had to try them. Despite our skepticism, this category - at least in Fischer's line-up - deserves a hard look from anyone looking for a directional all-mountain ski. These skis (which you will read about in Freeskier's 2008 Buyer's Guide) are relatively fat underfoot, making them surprisingly versatile. Fischer is also working on some other top-secret big-mountain freeride projects that they really didn't want to talk about. And when Fischer's Tim Dyer started to spill the beans, one of the Austrians from the corporate headquarters who had joined us for the afternoon tackled him and stomped his face into the snow. It was a brutal sight, what with all the blood, and after that we decided it would be best not to ask any more questions. Needless to say, we will keep you apprised of developments with these and other companies as they happen, and once the Austrians go home, we'll start to ply Dyer with beer to see if we can get more info. Until then, stay tuned. . .

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