

# Dartmouth, Canucks and Ultimate Skiing

## Passion for Skiing

By Stephen L. Waterhouse

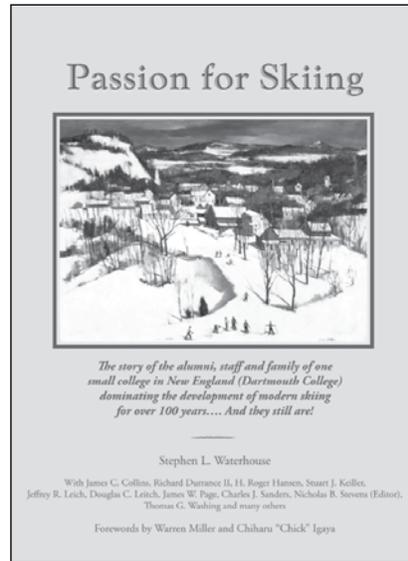
This book is the result of the Dartmouth Ski History Project, headed by Steve Waterhouse. His considerable fundraising skills led to enough donations from fellow Dartmouth alumni and friends to allow him to conduct serious research on skiing through Dartmouth College history—and to cajole a large number of writers to contribute articles *gratis*. The book turns a magnifying glass on the college's major influence on skiing in America; much of the information is new.

The author himself wrote Chapter 1, in which he notes that in the late 1880s through the 1890s, a handful of students began crossing the campus on skis—one who came from Maine had purchased his skis from a Swede in his hometown. By 1900, skis could be made to order at the College Carpentry Shop. Six juniors founded Dartmouth's first ski club that year, but it did not last. It took a while longer before a gifted freshman founded a permanent club: Fred Harris, a skier who matriculated in the winter of 1909–10 and shortly thereafter founded the Dartmouth Outing Club—still the headquarters of Dartmouth skiing today.

The club, in its first winters of existence, bred skiers galore. In only its second year, 1911, the club organized the nation's first college winter carnival with an array of entertainment, including “a ski dash,” cross-country ski races and a ski jump, along with snowshoe events and an evening dance.

From then on, under the leadership and influence of the Dartmouth Outing Club, the sport spread around the eastern U.S.. In 1915, McGill University sent its best skiers from Montreal to compete at the Carnival—and intercollegiate ski competition was born. Other forceful Dartmouth innovations included ski classes for novices and professional coaches for ski teams. And the nation's first enduring overhead cable lift was built on Oak Hill at Dartmouth in 1934. Dartmouth dominated the first U.S. alpine combined Olympic trials run on Mt. Rainier in 1936, with three of the top four winners.

*Passion for Skiing* arranges its material by subject: Chapters II and III give a complete history of the DOC by a number of qualified writers. Chapter IV is all about Dartmouth ski competition. One of the essays in this chapter is *The Dartmouth Alpine Ski*



*Team 1950 to 1960*, by Tom Corcoran, class of 1965—he placed 4th in the downhill at the 1960 Squaw Valley Games. Like many of the book's essays, Corcoran's piece is not intended as journalistic coverage but throws light on the role of Dartmouth skiers and their accomplishments with personal observations not on the record elsewhere.

The book has 16 chapters; of these, three document the spread of skiing directly through Dartmouth graduates from New England to the Wasatch (where Dick Durrance helped establish Alta). And one of the foremost early Dartmouth racers, Charlie

Proctor, class of 1928 and winner of the first-ever regulation U.S. slalom held there in 1925, surveyed most of the CCC ski trails cut in New England—a vital step in galvanizing the Eastern sport.

The book ends with a set of appendices that supply further detail on Dartmouth's contribution to American skiing; one carries the names of the 38 Dartmouth members of the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame—the largest elected contingent outside the national team. The appendix of Dartmouth national champions lists nearly 30 skiers. Also listed are the six national championship Dartmouth ski teams, the latest in 2007. —Morten Lund

*Passion for Skiing* by Stephen Waterhouse (*Dartmouth Ski History Project*, 2010); 414 pages, large format paperback, black and white illustrations, \$60; available at [passionforskiing.com](http://passionforskiing.com).

## The Crazy Canucks: Canada's Legendary Ski Team

By Janet Love Morrison

The air was raw. A snowplow roared by. The men began to unload the sixty pairs of skis from atop the van's roof...It was December 1974, and Canada's national ski team had just arrived in Val D'Isere. Their objective: to take on the European ski establishment of downhill racing—and win."

People thought it was the beginning of a new era. These fresh-faced kids from Canada were fun. They were bold. And it was obvious to everyone how much they loved ski racing. Indeed, these so-called Crazy Canucks—Ken Read, Steve Podborski,

Dave Murray and Dave Irwin—were carving out a surprisingly successful niche in the Euro-dominated World Cup circuit. And they were doing it by the seat of their pants. Under-funded and under-coached, always on the edge of disaster (both physically and financially), the young Canadians nevertheless took it to their rivals with the unmitigated flair of the truly innocent.

By 1983, after a string of four straight victories at the incomparable Hahnenkamm (and after Podborski's overall World Cup downhill title in 1982), their reputation as giant-killers was established. The Crazy Canucks would go down in skiing history as a unique group of outsiders who succeeded at one of the most complex sports in the world by doing it "their way."

In retrospect, we now know that the Crazy Canuck years marked the end of an era rather than the beginning of a new one. By the time Podborski quit racing in the mid 1980s, he was more interested in snowboarding than skiing. And ski racing would never quite regain the same prestige it had when folks like Franz Klammer, Bernhard Russi and Peter Mueller would vie with young outsiders for downhill supremacy.

And maybe that's the best reason to read this book. *The Crazy Canucks* harkens back to a time when ski racing was still about courage and determination rather than about marketing and systems research. It's obvious that the author holds the Crazy Canucks in high esteem. Yet though her research is extensive, she fails to penetrate the mythic veil of the boys' rise to prominence. Her story—more a hagiography than a biography—flits over the real details of the racers' lives to concentrate on a blow-by-blow description of their decade-long quest for downhill respectability.

Curious about the bevy of beauties that used to line up outside Dave Murray's hotel room? You won't find anything about that here. Intrigued by the complicated dynamics among the team members? Or the nasty coach/athlete battles that would scuttle Canada's ski racing program for the next 20 years? Morrison isn't very forthcoming on that either. But if you like old race details, this is the book for you. Love Morrison's literary jaunt through a simpler ski racing time offers vintage photos, a pleasant read and a nostalgia-filled afternoon. Full disclosure: I raced and/or coached with most of the book's protagonists. —*Michel Beaudry*

The Crazy Canucks: Canada's Legendary Ski Team by Janet Love Morrison (*Harbour*); hardcover, 224 pages; color photos, black and white photos, illustrations; \$34.96 from [www.harbourpublishing.com](http://www.harbourpublishing.com).

## Crazy Canucks: The Uphill Battle of Canada's Downhill Team

By Eric Zweig

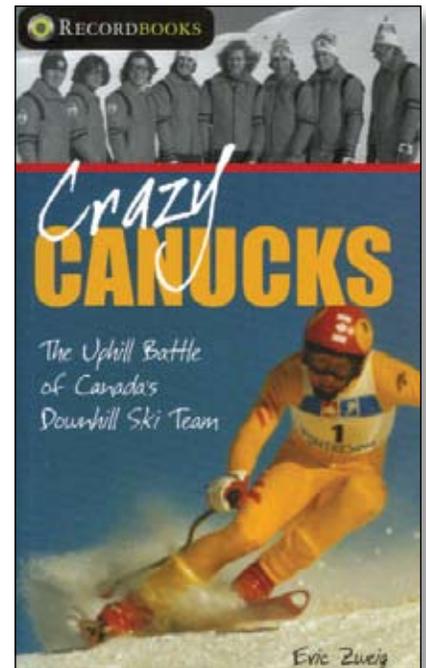
If you don't know anything about ski racing, and if you're casually interested in a mid-1970's phenomenon called The Crazy Canucks, then perhaps this modest little paperback could come in handy. Otherwise, don't bother. Zweig brings little new to the oft-told story of the four young athletes who dared to challenge European supremacy in the heady world of downhill racing. He also trots out a number of inaccuracies. In his "history of ski racing" segment, for example, he erroneously attributes the birth of *Skiing Heritage*/June 2010/[www.skiinghistory.org](http://www.skiinghistory.org)

racing to the Alps (Sondre Norheim would certainly have a word to say about that). He also stretches the Crazy Canuck mantle to cover such latecomers as Rob Boyd, who wouldn't come into his own until four years after the last Canuck retired.

Still, this book may find some adherents. It's straightforward and devoted to the myth of four squeaky-clean boys who somehow found a way to beat the Euros at their own game.

—*Michel Beaudry*

Crazy Canucks: The Uphill Battle of Canada's Downhill Team by Eric Zweig (*Record-Books*); softcover, 142 pages; black and white photos; available for \$16.95 from [www.recordbooks.com](http://www.recordbooks.com).



## Ultimate Skiing

By Ron LeMaster

ISHA member Ron LeMaster's new book is not a ski history.

Rather, it's a book about ski technique, written and illustrated in the historical tradition of Joubert, Kruckenhauer and Allais a half-century and more ago. The premise of such instruction literature is that our own techniques of recreational skiing should be rooted in the fundamental body mechanics and lines of the world's best alpine racers and a few top teachers.

This is not a book cluttered with contemporary images of madmen hucking cliffs. LeMaster, happily, has given us a work filled with carefully sequenced alpine ski-turn pictures, many of them overlaid with diagrams and varied artwork that, with his text, clearly explicate the *why* of high-performance skiing. Few readers of *Skiing Heritage* are likely to disagree with LeMaster's premise that your skiing should be modeled on champions arcing turns through the gates. The book, a sequel to his *Skier's Edge* of 1998, is dedicated to Curt Chase. —*John Fry* ✱

Ultimate Skiing: Master the Techniques of Great Skiing, by Ron LeMaster (*Human Kinetics*, 2010); 212 pages, \$23.95, softcover; signed and discounted copies are available from [www.ronlemaster.com](http://www.ronlemaster.com).

