

wooded hills and the steep slopes of the Alps is that whereas here we like to keep as much speed as possible with the ability to step aside and let the trees go by, there the chief point is to lose as much height as possible without gaining too much speed. Thus, even in a race, a slope, which appears to be just the slope to be taken straight, *i.e.*, a clear open field with no obstacles, high above the tree line, with good snow conditions, is taken in a series of high speed turns because of the knowledge that before the end of the runout, where speed naturally dies down, is an even steeper slope, where full control is essential.

During my stay, I was fortunate in being able to attend the European Ski Championship Meeting at Cortina d'Ampezzio, Italy, where I can safely say I saw most of the great skiers of Europe competing. It was a team race, and six nations were represented by a selected team of men, and also one of women. The Swiss carried off the combined result, when Otto Furrer, who came third in the Downhill race, won the Slalom. The

British women did exceedingly well in the Slalom, but were beaten in the Downhill, and only got third place in the combined result. The men were even less fortunate, not being able to secure any of the honours.

In the fifth meeting of that famous race, the Arlberg-Kandahar, held this year at St. Anton, Otto Furrer again won the combined result, having won the Downhill and tying for first place in the Slalom. This was a record, only to be equalled by Miss Hadi Lantschner, an Austrian, who had the same result in the ladies section of this race. The British were unfortunate in not being able to send a very representative team to either of these events on account of the depression and fall of the pound. It is interesting to note, however, how much the British influence on ski-racing is felt all over Europe, their rules and regulations being accepted generally. We cannot pay too high a tribute to Mr. Arnold Lunn for his excellent work all through, and especially for the instigation of that now Open European Championship Race, The Arlberg-Kandahar.

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF DOWNHILL AND SLALOM RACING

By STIRLING MAXWELL

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A GLANCE at the summary of Ski Events in the Laurentians, north of Montreal, last winter will show that slalom and downhill racing has at last come into its own, and that our conception of ski-racing is changing and we are beginning to realize that great sport can be had by running downhill as well as on the level.

The Intercollegiate Winter Sports Union, an outcome of the annual ski-ing competitions between McGill University and Dartmouth College, was the first to realize the value of downhill ski-ing and adopted the slalom race several years ago. I recall a slalom I took part in seven years ago at Dartmouth—rather a crude affair when one considers the courses laid out now with corridors, flushes, stem-glades and all the various traps and pitfalls designed to spell disaster for the unwary. That course on Balch Hill consisted of a series of sweeping telemark turns about single poles, spaced in a symmetrical pattern down the hill, and was considered then quite formidable. The slalom was a qualifying test for the second part of the contest which consisted of connected downhill telemarks, christies and jump turns. We were judged on style, but

as the rules of figure skating were not found satisfactory when applied to ski-ing, the proficiency test was changed in 1928 to a double slalom as we know it now.

Gradually the slalom was taken up by other organizations and was run as an added feature during Provincial and Dominion Championships, often late in the afternoon in a hurried manner. Finally, it became a regularly scheduled race. Even now it does not count in the scoring in the all-round championship, but this it is hoped will be the next development.

Our ski country, whilst not comparable with the mountains of Switzerland, offers frequent opportunities for good downhill ski-ing and I believe it will not be very long before we will approach the high standard of proficiency which prevails in Europe today. Cross-country running will continue to be an important event, but along with jumping it will not dominate the field in the future but will rank equally with the newer forms of racing.

The great advantage of the slalom is that it offers to the average skier (the pleasure skier who does not care to go into training) a chance to compete without the rigorous

conditioning required for cross-country running. At the same time it shows up his ability as a skier and encourages him to become more proficient. Again, cross-country races have often been won by good harriers who had only an elementary knowledge of ski-ing. Only skiers can win slalom races.

I have said that the man who prefers to sip his beer in the evening can compete with fair success in downhill racing providing he is a good skier, but if he really wishes to go after championships he must train. Downhill ski-ing might be compared to tennis. The average individual gets a great deal of pleasure from it and may be very successful, but to win championships he must watch his diet. Last winter in the competitions I noticed that half a dozen of the best men would be about equal in the first part of a race, but almost invariably the man with his legs and lungs in proper condition became the ultimate winner.

I have often heard competitors at the top of a slalom asking their team-mates advice on how they should negotiate the course, whether to take it "full out" or run it cautiously. A few years ago, when the standard was considerably lower and falls were more frequent, I used to consider the cautious runner had the better chance, for obviously one fall will offset many yards of speedy running. Today, I believe it is a matter of knowing your limitations and ski-ing as hard or even a little harder than you think you should. One example of this stands out very clearly in my mind. It was during the Intercollegiate Championships in 1928. Snow was conspicuous by its absence and the best slalom course that could be found had barely an inch on top of the frozen grass. Pederson, the New Hampshire captain, went down in faultless form first of the twenty odd competitors and took most of the snow off the corners as he made his turns. I ran in ninth position and found the frozen grass not at all to my liking but at the end of the first half when the times were added up found myself in second position, trailing Pederson by a little over a second. We elected our starting positions for the second run. Pederson chose No. 1 and I took No. 2. It was then that the burning question cropped up—how to run that second course? I knew that I had taken the first run as fast as I dared and any attempt to increase speed on the second would probably end in disaster. The team needed points badly and I had just about decided that it was better to stay in the scoring column than take a chance on falling. The course was being changed to fresh snow, and on studying it I noticed some

new flags had been added three-quarters of the way down the hill calling for three sharp continuous Christies. Here was my chance. I had practiced that manoeuvre all morning at Shawbridge just a week ago and had it down to a fine point. My mind was made up. Pederson went over the edge and held the course without a mistake. I came next and skied at a reasonable rate until my old friends, the closely bunched flags, were reached. Instead of stemming I let everything go and as luck would have it held the turns. That short burst of speed was enough to place my total time three-fifths of a second below the New Hampshire man's and to give the team five points and myself a senior award.

The rules by which our slalom races are held are quite often an unknown quantity to the majority of the runners participating, and I believe in the past some officials have even been open to this charge. There seems to be a certain amount of confusion, and I think we should have a complete set of slalom and downhill rules applicable to Canadian conditions. Intercollegiate rules have been used in the past in our Red Birds meets, and they differ somewhat from those laid down by the International Ski Federation, which again are different from those adopted by the Ski Club of Great Britain. Personally, I do not like the English system of awarding penalties, as expert flag keepers are required and they have not yet been developed in Canada. Again slalom racing is supposed to train the runner to move at fair speed amongst obstacles such as boulders, trees, etc. Now the penalty in the English system for straddling a flag is the loss of a few seconds time, but the penalty for straddling a fair size natural object, such as a tree, is usually a broken leg. For our conditions, where wood running is common, I believe it is much saner to force a runner to go fairly between the flags and if he misses a pair to require him to come back and retract his error. Those of us who competed for the Quebec-Kandahar Cup at Mont Tremblant last March will concede the logic of this argument. The ground chosen for the slalom was thickly covered with small hardwood trees. The logical thing was to define a path through the brush using trees as markers. This was done and the result was very satisfactory. A more practical slalom course could not have been laid out.

To my mind the first part of the Quebec-Kandahar competition was the finest race which has ever been run in the Laurentians. The cream of the downhill men turned out, and I think the experiences that were crammed into that 2,400-foot descent

through thick forest and on winding trails will live long in the memory of all who took part. It has been said that the course was much too hazardous and that it would be impossible for even a super ski-man to go down without falling. I believe Mr. Johannsen can refute this last statement, but I agree that the present course is more productive of acrobatic than ski-ing tactics in places, and that it should be cleared so that a man could at least crouch without being knocked over by low branches. At one point near the top, on a slope as steep as a jumping hill, I found the only thing to do was to lie back and toboggan, keeping the ski points in contact to obviate the possibility of going both sides of a tree. Tremblant is essentially a wooded course and I would like to see it remain as such. It could be tremendously improved, however, by clearing out the trails near the bottom so that it would be possible to run at a sustained speed.

It is a peculiar fact that the only accident involving an injury of any consequence occurred in the Slalom Race when Durley broke a rib. The course down the mountain was strewn with the wreckage of skis and poles, but produced no more serious bodily harm than a couple of twisted ankles.

The Mont Tremblant race and the Mount Baldy run, to a lesser degree, bring up very forcibly the much discussed question of pole riding. We all agree that this practice in the open, except under exceptional circumstances, is to be discouraged. In Switzerland, where wood running is not common, pole riding has rightly fallen into disrepute and Arnold Lunn in his book, "The Complete Ski Runner," devotes half a chapter to telling why you should not ride your "sticks" and in the remaining half he instructs you how to ride them.

Even in Switzerland it is admitted that under certain conditions stick riding is permissible. There are places in Canada where pole riding is the one and only solution. The Toronto skiers who competed in the Mont Tremblant run were severely handicapped from lack of experience with this technique and if we can believe their publication, "The Ski Runner," they are now taking correspondence courses on this subject.

Downhill racing has come to stay, and, judging from its popularity last winter, we may expect to see an increased interest in this branch of ski-ing from year to year. This is indeed a healthy sign and should go a long way towards improving the standard of ski-ing in Canada.

"CANADIAN CLIMBER"

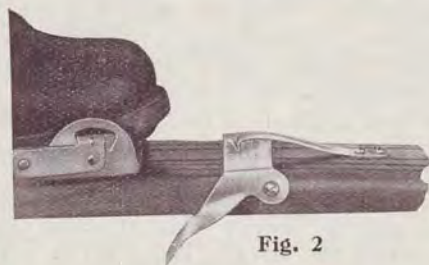


Fig. 2



Fig. 1

THIS ingenious device, Canadian in origin, does away with that "bug-bear" of ski-ing, back slipping when climbing up a hill. This simple, small attachment is screwed to the ski just in front of the foot and when not in use is held level with the top of the ski not interfering with the sliding surface. When required for climbing a latch spring is released, the climber drops and acts in

the same capacity as the old-fashioned creeper allowing the ski to move freely forward but retarding the backward slip. If the climber is as efficient and practical as the distributors claim, it should be a necessary addition to present ski equipment. The Climber may be purchased at any of the sporting goods stores.