

# The Slalom

By

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**PROBLEMS** in slaloming or downhill ski running along a difficult trail may be reproduced in your own back yard, Mr. Stephens observes in this article on laying out a course, copyright by The Sportsman Magazine, Boston. At the left and right are sketches of types of slalom problems, separate and combined, wherein every form of turn and control are required.



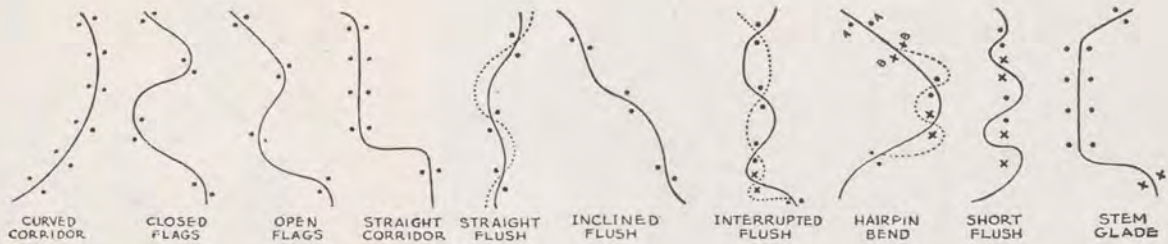
**T**HE SLALOM brings, even to mild foothill skiing, thrills and pleasures otherwise available only in spectacular skiing terrain. In the slalom you have the basic fascination of all downhill skiing, the eternal struggle between desire for speed and the necessity of staying in control. The expert may run straight where the less able must travel in a series of traverses, across, rather than straight down a slope.

In the slalom competitors are required to pass between pairs of flags placed to test their ability to make high-speed turns with accuracy. For first-class contests, a vertical drop of four hundred to six hundred feet with slopes of from fifteen to thirty degrees steepness is desirable, but a hillside with even two hundred yards of run and with a slope of five to fifteen degrees offers excellent sport.

In laying out a slalom course, begin at the finish and work uphill. Flags should be of bright colors, easily distinguishable against the background of snow, trees, and spectators, and two colors are preferred. One may well be light blue, the other orange. Their poles should be at least two feet high, with six feet between the two flags of each pair. Finish flags should be larger and stand six feet above the snow.

In setting the flags, place them to require every type of skiing turn, and eliminate insofar as possible any opportunity for a competitor to profit by a deliberate fall. Place the flag so that the line the runner's feet must cross is parallel to the shortest line from the preceding pair of flags instead of at right angles to it. Do not place the flags where it is most convenient or natural for a contestant to turn.

There are many possible flag combinations, each calling for a different type of manoeuvre. A single long continuous turn can be forced by setting a curved corridor while a series of such turns is called for by flags as in the second and third diagrams. A straight corridor requires a sharp check turn at high speed. Accurate turning at high speed is also demanded by the straight flush and the inclined flush. In the former, the fast runner will take the shortest line, turning only slightly while the slower competitor will be forced to swing wide as indicated by



the dotted line. An interrupted flush calls for both judgment and skill, as does the hairpin bend. Both offer the choice of a fast and a slow but safer line. A short flush, placed on a steep slope or approached at speed, requires a series of short, sharp turns very accurately placed. Flag colors should be alternated to avoid confusion, as in the case of both the interrupted flush and the hairpin bend. Ability to stem, or brake, at high speed is tested by the stem glade. Both the stem glade and the corridor, however, may become so badly worn at the bottom as to make snow conditions more difficult for late starters.

A slalom is often held in two parts, one over a soft snow course, the other on hard snow. If soft snow is not available the hard snow course may be made longer and run twice. Each competitor completes the course before another starts, and starting order is determined by lot. When a slalom is run twice the second run is often limited to those who

have finished the first run in the top half or third of the field. As time alone counts accurate timing is essential, for slaloms are won or lost by fractions of a second. The starter must be able to see both start and finish from his post, and the timers, of whom there should be three for important events, should watch the starter closely to avoid letting a runner get a false or untimed start.

A flag keeper is assigned to each pair of flags, or to several flags if all can be seen clearly. He must judge whether each runner's feet pass between the flags he is instructed to watch. He is authorized to call three types of penalty. A runner incurs a single penalty when only one foot passes across the line between the flags. A double penalty is called when neither foot goes between the flags, but when part of one or both skis crosses the line. Complete disqualification occurs when no part of either ski passes between the flags. A good flag keeper will never allow a runner to be disqualified, for he will call "Back" the instant the runner has missed. In the case of a single or double penalty he will call "Right" to eliminate any doubt the runner may have about the possible penalty incurred. The call should be loud and clear, for a runner who is concentrating on the course will not hear a half-hearted one. Knocking down a flag does not incur a penalty. The flag keeper, however, should replace it immediately exactly in its original position.

Penalties are assessed by adding to the offending runner's time. The amount of a penalty is determined by a percentage of the winner's time.

Good judgment and perfect control of the skis are essential in the art of running a slalom. The runner whose haste to get through the finish flags leads him to take the course in a series of wild dashes will seldom defeat the competitor who studies the course carefully and runs it at a more even, steady pace. The latter will select, before starting, a line that will bring him through each pair of flags in the most favourable position to approach the next pair. He will always plan for the next pair ahead. Nor will he allow his speed to get so out of control that he becomes simply a passenger on runaway skis.



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