

SR #2 Backshop
Dave Peszek

The Chief's Eye View...

For some perspective on extreme dedication to preparing skis to be their absolute finest, we will take a look at the intricate and extensive work of Jeff Wagner, a Rossignol technician for Lindsey Kildow & Stacey Cook of the USST.

“The Chief” as he is affectionately known, has haunted the dungeon-like tuning rooms of the women’s tour for many seasons now, 1st starting out at the lower levels and moving up with Kildow as she has progressed to become the #3 ranked SG skier & #4 ranked DH skier in the world. Working at this level takes an enormous amount of time commitment, and The Chief is one of the leaders in hours clocked in search of creating the fastest ride possible for Lindsey & Stacey. He is also loved by the athletes for his unending dedication to them.

The Chief has had his eye and his preparation on Torino since mid winter last season. At that time, he began the work with Rossignol to create a group of speed skis that would be optimized for Lindsey’s powerful turning style and the pitch of the San Sicaro track.

After World Cup Finals last season, The Chief returned to the US with a new group of 15 speed skis to begin working on. Let’s look at his process:

1. Prepare skis (sidewalls, base & edge angles, base cleaning, hot waxing, mounting)
2. 5 free runs on each pair during US Nationals @ Mammoth Mtn, CA
3. Hand sanded bases to perfectly flat (1 week’s work), applied basic fine linear grind to all skis (May)
4. 5 complete hot wax cycles, with full scraping and brushing between each cycle to remove any hairs.
5. Skis were on snow in Chile, during which time he was able to isolate 1 dh & 2sg skis from the group that were not performing exactly he wanted.
6. Upon returning home, re-sanded bases to perfectly flat (“the skis continue to change for some time when they are new – the wood changes, the base shifts slightly, the epoxy and resins cure finally” according to The Chief)
7. 5 complete hot wax cycles, scraping, brushing, to remove any hairs
8. Application of final grinds for the season (September)
9. extensive hot waxing in that ski’s temp range (cold, mid, warm) with hydrocarbon wax to build up base wax penetration.

The Chief has several grinds that he uses and lots of advice about grinds for the general ski racing public. While his grinds are home spun copies of what the Rossignol Race Department uses, The Chief has named all of his grinds, and even taken the time to get them programmed into the WinterSteiger RS machine that he

uses to make them. After the grinds are placed on the ski, he “knocks them down” quite a bit to soften them thru the continual brushing, waxing, and scraping that occurs.

WMD = weapon of mass destruction: general cold snow grind

KA = kick ass : general mid snow grind

GD2 = game day #2: for wet snow

NBK = natural born killer: for high speed cold snow on a wet base

SKM = some kinda monster: for high speed cold snow on a cold base

Fine linear: for low speed cold snow

The Chief has some general, but very poignant advice that he would like to pass on to the readers of Ski Racing:

- “no one gets handed fast skis...you’ve got to make fast skis”
- “use the correct base & grind for the right condition”
- “no one does what I do to skis”
- “don’t worry about re-grinding, as long as the grind is clean and done by someone who really knows what they are doing”
- “there is no such thing as a magic grind”
- “just because a ski worked in 1 place in 1 condition does not mean it will work somewhere else”
- “it’s not hard to make fast skis”
- “you can never brush enough”
- “deep grinds + poor brushing are a major reason for poor performance”
- “use nylon brushes only after scraping your race wax” – The Chief says he witnesses many people using very stiff steel or brass brushes on their race wax, which draws hairs up, effectively slowing the skis down. The Chief uses only nylon (a range of different bristle diameters and stiffness) after scraping his race wax.

The Chief would like to thank Edgewise in Stowe, VT for the continual use of their grinder.