

NEW BOOT-FITTING TECHNIQUES HIT THE BOW VALLEY

BANFF IS NOW HOME TO THE ONLY CUSTOM BUILT, SKI-BOOT SOLE PLANER IN ALBERTA

HOW TO FIND A GOOD BOOT-FITTER

BY BEC JOHNSON

We all know how important a properly fitting boot is for skiing performance and comfort. Custom boot-fitting and the making of custom foot-beds is now standard in the ski world but the story doesn't end there.

BOOT-FITTING 101

Every skier is different and is composed of a complex set of factors and variables.

Feet can be wide, heels narrow. Skiers can have bunions, collapsed arches, large calves, skinny legs, long toes, heel spurs, and high insteps. Then there are other physical factors such as leg length, muscle strength, weight and fitness. Add to the mix skier style such as freestyle, carving, big mountain, racing, recreational or back country, and you will see that no two properly fitted boots will ever be exactly the same.

Finding a professional custom boot-fitter who will not only put you in the right boot but modify it to your specific requirements is not always an easy task.

There is no governing body for boot-fitters therefore unfortunately it can be a little hit and miss to find the right one. Below we have listed some points that we believe are essential to a basic boot-fit. Anything less than this and you are not getting the service you deserve.

When hunting for a good fitter take a good pair of ski socks with you, wear pants that you can roll up and make sure you have plenty of time. Above all, take this list; it could save you a lot of money, time and discomfort.

Your boot-fitter should...

- * Chat to you about your skiing style, goals and any discomfort that you currently experience in your boots.
- * Do a complete analysis of your feet looking at your arches, tarsus (ankle) alignment, ligament flexibility and placement of your metatarsals.
- * After placing your foot in the shell of the boot (without the liner) your fitter should examine how your foot shape matches the boot, including how the calf and heel sit at the back and the space around and above the foot. Custom moulding may be required for bunions, collapsed feet, heel spurs, enlarged ankle bones and protruding naviculars.
- * Get you to try the boot on with a foot-bed in place.
- * Check how much you flex the boot.
- * Fit the liner to your foot.
- * Never ask you to walk around, it's pointless.
- * Measure you on an angle alignment device to determine your stance.
- * Discuss your custom foot-bed options and inform you at what angle your boot should be planed on the base to achieve optimum stance alignment.

BEC JOHNSON, owner of the new Banff Springs Ski & Mountain Sports, has been fitting boots for 10 years and has several boot-fitting, ski-instructing, ski technician and kinesiology qualifications, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree.

A NEW APPROACH

For many years the reigning philosophy in boot-fitting was to artificially support the foot into a position where it was locked in 'neutral'. For example, flat feet were forced to roll back into the center by building up the arch until this unnatural alignment was achieved.

This not only often caused pain, it also prevented the foot from making the small muscles movements it needs to, to remain balanced when hitting variations in the snow.

It is vital essential that the foot is not blocked and is free to move, otherwise essential adjustments just move up the chain, often to the hips, and what should have been micro-adjustments become larger movements to maintain balance and strength in the turn.

We make foot-beds that interface with the sole of the foot and allow the foot to be in its strongest position with access to its largest range of movements.

We then make sure that the ski sits flat on the snow by modifying the boot, not you! We can safely change the angle at which the base of the boot sits against the ski by grinding or planing the sole to the desired angle.

Our boot sole planer has been custom made to work specifically with ski boots and can dial in precise angles of ½ degree increments. This is the only machine of its kind in Alberta, news that has the race circles already abuzz.

If you have any questions about any of this please feel free to drop by or give us a call. We are here to make more people's skiing experience more enjoyable and successful

HERE'S TO HAPPY FEET!



Located in the Conference Centre at The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel

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