



MODELS ARE FOR SHELVES

GREAT SKIING IS BUILT ON A PLATFORM OF SKILLS



When I was a kid I built a couple of plastic car models. Hey, I was a boy, and that's what boys were suppose to do, right? Well, call me odd, but when my little models were finished I didn't feel the rush of excitement and fulfilment normal little boys were suppose to feel. I mean, what could I do with the dang thing? I couldn't start it... it wouldn't run... I

couldn't listen to its monster motor roar, or take it for a spin. It just sat on the shelf, and to be honest, as far as looking real it left much to be desired. It was boringly obvious that it was just a useless plastic shell. A poor replication of the real thing. What a let down.

I share that little story with you because learning to ski can be looked at in a similar way. Some teachers of the sport use the model building approach. They look at great skiers, then try, via a straight line approach, to build the skiing of their students into an



exact replication, moulded piece by moulded piece. At first glance it might seem like a good idea. I mean, these are the best skiers in the world, shouldn't we strive to look like them as we descend the slope?



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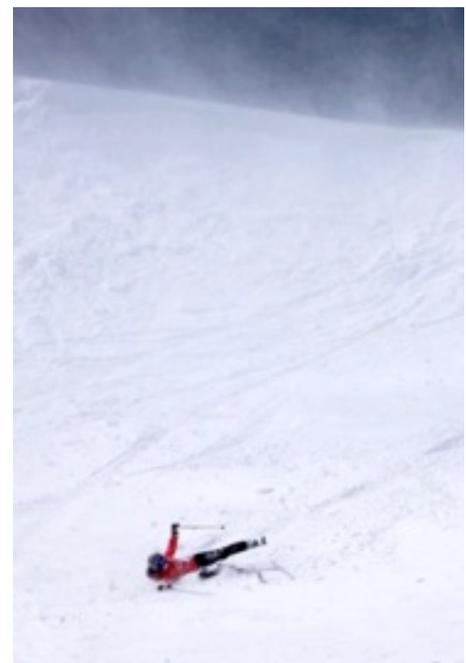
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Well, yes and no. More than trying to look like them, we should be trying to ski like them. Let me explain the distinction. These people we are trying to emulate are skiers of superior and multiple skills. Like the actual cars I was trying to imitate with my plastic models, they have real engines inside them. Those engines come in

the form of skills, and they allow these great skiers to ski anywhere on the mountain they desire, in any manner they choose, with total confidence and control. And they don't have singular models they stay within while they ski. They have all the skills required to employ any model they desire to suit whatever their current need or fancy happens to be.

Trying to mimic an exact model of what is considered 'proper' skiing, either of on our own initiative or through the guidance of an instructor, can turn out to be a dead-end proposition. If we haven't first developed the skills needed to function within that model, we can easily end up being nothing more than a duplicate of that empty little plastic shell of a car I had sitting on my bedroom shelf. We may be able to present a rough rendition on easy terrain of the model we're striving to emulate, but when terrain gets more challenging the fake plastic model shatters and lets us down.





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A better course is to direct your focus on the basic skills of the sport. Build the engine first, then you can cover it with any exterior shell you like and perform equally well. Focus on developing and expanding your balance skills. Balance is the cornerstone of the foundation upon which all great



skiing is built. Refine your edging skills. Solid edging skills allow you to ski any line down the mountain you desire, at any speed you choose, on any type of terrain. Learn how to use angulation and flexion/extension to manage your balance, and facilitate many types and shapes of turns. Expand the variety of transitions you have at your disposal for connecting your turns. It will allow you to instantly change your tactics, when a challenge the mountain throws at you suddenly calls for



a different approach and/or a different type of turn.



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When all those skills are in your pocket, skiing models will not be something you try to imitate, they will be functional entities you'll actually be able to put to use in their full capacity. And you won't be pigeon holed into only one, you'll be free to employ any model you choose. Perhaps you'll even venture to build new ones to suit your individual needs or preferences. Only with a focused effort to develop the base level skills of the sport will that level of expertise ever be approached and enjoyed.



As for hollow plastic models? Best to leave them where they belong - up on a shelf.