

Still Skiing/Coaching Seniors Clinic Outline

The Boomers are coming! The Ranks of Senior skiers are growing and the new equipment and contemporary technique will help them ski years longer. Here are some ideas on how to teach seniors, what to teach technically and tactically, advice on skis and boots and some ideas on conditioning for seniors.

Adapting the Teaching Model to seniors:

After introduction, take a warm up on easy terrain, stop several times. Ask about pace and terrain.

Ask questions each stop:

1. Many older skiers have fascinating ski histories. This kind of interaction will really establish the group dynamic and add to the fun.
2. Ask about strengths-what they love about the sport.
3. Ask about what's bugging them about their skiing, needs.
4. Ask about injuries, aches and pains, vision, endurance, etc.
5. Set goals. Suggest new technique driven by new equipment can add years to your skiing!
6. Easy stretch after warm up.
7. With high speed lifts it's easy to ski a leisurely pace with lots of stops. Keep asking about pace and terrain.

What to teach /technique for Old Guys and Girls!

1. Talked stacked stance, strength in length. Much easier on knees and back.
2. Track both skis. Less fatigue than the old "foot to foot".
3. Forward pressure/stance (kind of like skiing in the 50's and 60's), hooks up the tips of shaped skis and keeps loads off the quads.
4. Less rotary with shaped skis. Less counter needed, easier on the back and adductors/abductors.
5. Less need to unweight with shorter shaped skis, less fatigue.
6. Less knee. More hip. Stacked stance with hip angulation makes life easier on the knees!
7. Work on "scarving", a slightly skidded soft carve. You can control speed with less loading of muscles and joints than with a hard carve.
8. Total Body Inclination. Banking above the fall line. Stacked!

Many of these technical elements are visible in men's and women's world cup skiing. Racers use these elements because they are pulling upwards of 3 "g's" in a typical gs turn. Older skiers use them because they keep us stacked, balanced and stronger!

Tactics for those Oldies but Goodies

Many older skiers just don't want to ski bumps or steeps any more. If they do:

1. Coach a round line on the steeps. No "hits" or hard edge sets.
2. Coach "old man's line" in small to moderate bumps, round line over the shoulder of the bump. Stay out of the troughs.

Skis-go short!

Many older skiers have come down from the old “210 for men” but to only 185’s or so. That’s approximately the length Bode Miller uses to ski 45mph in g.s.! He’s 6’2” and 220lbs. If you’re a senior, go way shorter!

1. The new all mountain skis are amazing. Length should be no longer than 170cm for men and 150/160cm for women.
2. For Sierra snow, try a mid fat, 76/78mm under foot with a 16/17 meter radius.
3. Experiment with softer flex and softer torsion for easy carve, less hook up and loading.
4. Try before you buy! Demo skis to be sure the flex and torsion match your strength, weight and speed.
5. Tune is critical on a 15meter ski. Keep em tuned up! (Like your Porsche!)

Boots

Many older expert/advanced skiers still ski stiffer boots. Stiff boots kill knees! Short carving skis don’t require stiff boots to perform.

1. Soften your boots by cutting them or removing hinge locking rivets. Any good shop can do this. You don’t need to buy new ones
2. Generally older skiers need more upright cuff and lower ramp angle to help maintain a taller stacked stance.
3. Lateral canting needs are critical with the new skis. Setup cants at 0° to -1° negative. If you are over canted, the new gear will be very hard on your knees. Make friends with your boot fitter!

Contemporary Equipment and the older skier

Although most aspects of contemporary equipment and technique help seniors ski better and longer, not everything about new equipment/technique is helpful to seniors. Here are some things to watch out for.

1. 12 meter radius slalom skis are very “hooky” and may not be a good choice for seniors.
2. Stiff competition boots can be very unforgiving on knees and balance.
3. Positive boot canting used by many competitive skiers in slalom can be extremely hard on knees and back.
4. Extreme high edge angles at turn apex create “snap”/rebound/tremendous energy from the ski requiring great strength and balance.
5. Retraction moves, very evident in modern slalom and giant slalom technique can fatigue muscles and cause balance problems for seniors.

Conditioning for older skiers

1. Conditioning must be low impact and should be fun.
2. Spinning on a bike is great for general fitness. A stationary bike will work but the road is more fun!
3. Don’t over train! Alternate training days with active rest, walking, stretching, easy bike, etc.
4. Weight training is still one of the best types of training for any skier.
5. Weight training with low weight, high reps is the best training for older skiers. (Rehab facilities have 90 year olds on weight programs!)
6. Check with your doctor before starting any physical training.
7. Consulting a physical trainer may be a good idea.

8. Stay away from plyometric exercises (box jumps, etc.). Keep it low impact.
9. Start with very light weights or just body weight and work up.
10. The classic skier exercises are:
 - ½ squats (not too low)
 - drive ups
 - lunges
 - leg curls
 - crunches (for core strength)
11. Start easy and gradually build up.
12. This stuff is always more fun and easier with a training partner.
13. Don't forget to stretch!

With the right equipment, technique, conditioning, coaching and a little luck, we can keep sliding for a long, long time!