

Equipment tips for neophytes

Pre-season conditioning essential for skiers

By G. HUGH EMPEY

The nip of fall in the air and the falling of leaves can usually turn thoughts away from books to anticipation of that first run of the new ski season.

In advance of the upcoming season certain preparations are necessary if you are to begin or continue in the sport of skiing.

Pre-season training is essential for skiing no matter how good or poor your overall condition is now or then. Skiing demands that specific muscles perform movements they are not normally called upon to do. This is why specific conditioning is so important in pre-season training.

One exercise that helps greatly is the wall-sit. This exercise provides thigh strength and the endurance necessary to complete the longer runs. Using a wall or tree, place yourself in a sitting position for thirty seconds, initially working toward a longer time. If you wish, a volleyball can be placed between your knees and squeezed at the same time to increase the effectiveness of the exercise.

Since the greatest demands are made upon the leg muscles concentration on this and any of the more common leg exercises will improve both your ability to ski over longer periods of time as well as resist injury.

Naturally, your equipment will (or should) also receive a great amount of your attention. Starting the season on less than adequate hardware is not only discouraging, it can be dangerous too.

To get the most out of what you buy it is important to analyze your own needs well before you buy. Think of spending your money on the important pieces of equipment. Too often a beginning skier will be smooth talked into a top line of equipment that will actually impede his progress.

BINDINGS: The number one priority. This is the season to throw away those beartraps or give those cable things to the archives.

When buying bindings, spend a little more money to get either a new or current two piece binding. Bindings, more than any other piece of equipment need initial adjustment or accurate installation. If you lack the tools or the know-how, take your bindings to a service department rather than a well meaning friend.

Start the season with a lighter binding setting until you get your ski legs back. It is also a good idea to cover your bindings while transporting your skis to and from the slopes. Doing this can prevent them from failing to release due to road deposits that clog the mechanisms.

Some names to think of are Marker, Look and Salomon.

BOOTS: Your boots may not prevent a broken leg but they most certainly will break your spirit if they fit like some hideous torture device.

When trying on boots feel for distinct pressure points. The

overall fit may be good but a small tight spot will cause a great deal of discomfort after eight hours of use.

Look for boots that have a hinged ankle or those that are soft enough to allow movement in the ankle when the knee is flexed forward. Some names to look for are Lange, Caber and Koflach.

SKIIS: Beginners and recreational skiers should look for skiis that are as long as their height or shorter. They are more manoeuvrable than the longer racing ski, making them easier to handle for the neophyte.

Someone in this category might also want to look for a pair of used skiis. A good pair of used skiis could ease some of the strain on a beginner's pocketbook while still providing him with good equipment.

For the more advanced skier a ski with a foam core and a fibreglass top can increase ski response and cut down on swing weight. Some names to think of are Fischer, Lange and Rossignol.

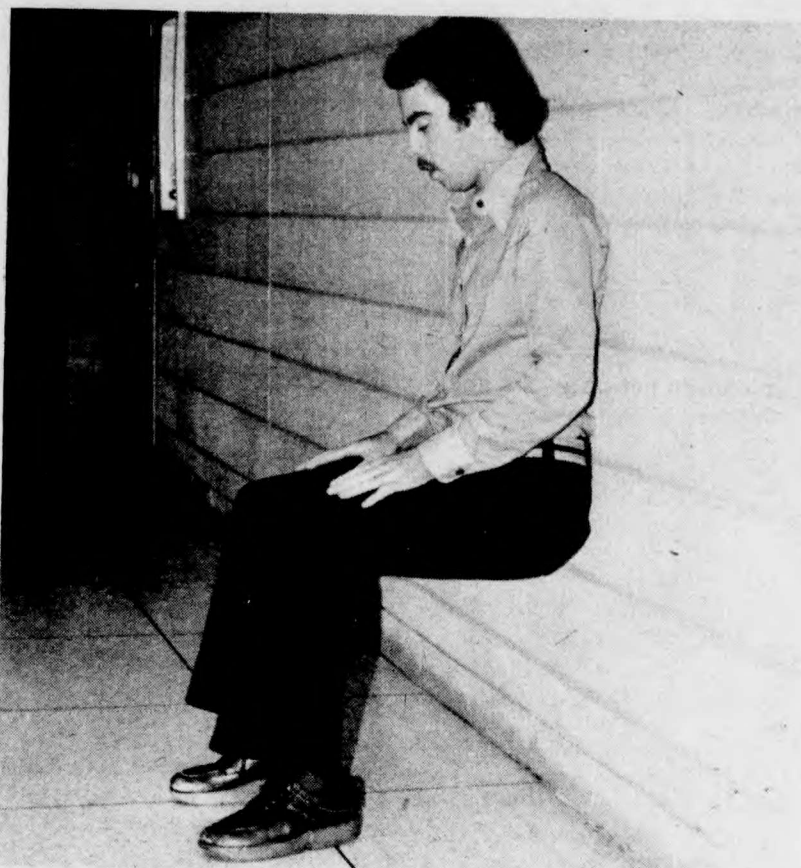
POLES: Any straight ski pole will do the job and the length can be

determined as follows, when your upper arm is at your side and the lower arm is bent ninety degrees at the elbow, the height from your hand to the floor is the length of your pole.

CLOTHING: A snug fitting pair of long-johns and a pair of ski pants will serve you best. It is important that you have the overall protection of a second skin. Ski pants, not jeans, will keep you dry for the long ride home.

Mitts are the best remedy for cold hands as gloves tend to waste body heat. After this, anything goes as indicated by the large amount of money spent on ski fashions each season.

Anyone wishing to sell their used equipment would do well to look in on Toronto Ski World '76 to be held this weekend at the International Centre on Airport Road. This show should afford the expert or beginner and excellent opportunity to get first hand information from equipment manufacturers and area operators. Show times are Friday 4 p.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday 10 to 11, Sunday 11 to 11 and Monday 10 until 7 p.m.



Danny Lam photo

Wall sit exercise strengthens thigh muscles and builds endurance for the longer runs down the slope. Volleyball between knees tones unused muscles.

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