INDEPENDENT SKI TEST

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05 SKI GROUP

ALL-MOUNTAIN

Words: Tomasz Kurdziel

Have you heard the Swiss saying about a dairy cow that lays eggs? Probably not. Never mind. The point is that combining fire and water without sacrificing the defining qualities of one or the other is extremely difficult. For many seasons, ski designers have tried in vain to create a single ski that can do everything. One trait always ends up dominating. All-mountain skis were supposed to be that egg-laying cow: equally capable of carving on piste, skiing off piste and even handling deep snow. In reality, what emerged was a category that largely duplicates all-round skis, only slightly wider underfoot and somewhat better suited to very occasional ventures just beyond the piste – genuine freeriding is not even part of the discussion. In truth, all-mountain skis are best suited to piste skiing in more demanding snow conditions: fresh snowfall, softened surfaces and spring corn snow. They will nevertheless find plenty of fans among intermediate and better skiers who ski only occasionally – perhaps one or two weeks per season. Their natural audience is made up of skiers who value comfort more highly than energy and the ability to ski at very high speed. Read the test results carefully and you will quickly notice that the skis presented here tend to be either very good off piste or excellent on piste. The former belong to the All-Mountain Classic subgroup; the latter are usually wider designs with a sporty character commonly referred to as All-Mountain Performance skis. The differences in scores within this category are also particularly pronounced, so careful reading is essential before making a choice.

ALL-MOUNTAIN

How to read this group's results

Each score from 1 to 6 describes a separate characteristic. The labels at either end explain the scale. We do not add the scores together. A higher value does not always mean a better match for you.

The ten-segment bars show the skis' profile, not another numerical score. Darker segments indicate a greater concentration of testers' responses.

Short turns on steeps

POOR — EFFECTIVE

How effectively the skis make short, controlled turns using traditional technique on steep slopes, including in difficult conditions.

Comfort

LOW — HIGH

How well the skis absorb small bumps and cope with piles of pushed-up snow, and how easy they are to manoeuvre when running flat.

Turn behaviour

NERVOUS — SMOOTH

Whether the skis follow a carved arc smoothly and consistently, or feel nervous and respond unevenly to pressure.

Rebound

LOW — HIGH

The energy returned between turns. In all-mountain skiing, too much can disrupt the flow of the run, so stronger rebound will not always be the better choice.

Edge grip

POOR — GOOD

How securely the edges hold on hard snow, both in carved turns at high edge angles and in linked short turns on steep slopes.

Character

OFF-PISTE — PERFORMANCE

From more flexible designs that lend themselves to trying off-piste skiing to stronger skis for groomed slopes in a range of conditions.

Turn length

SHORT — LONG

The length of turns in which the skis work most effectively. A broad spread of responses indicates greater freedom to choose your turn length.

ALL-MOUNTAIN

FISCHER
THE CURV NOIZE GT 85



TESTED LENGTH	RADIUS	SIDECUT
175 cm	15 m	133-85-118 mm

Short turns on steeps **4.6**

Comfort **5.0**

Turn behaviour **5.1**

Rebound **4.6**

Edge grip **4.9**

Best-fit ranges

Character

Off-piste Performance

Turn length

Short Long

On snow

New Noize construction wrapped in familiar geometry: these skis have gained a great deal, winning our testers' hearts. A very high score, and you will search in vain for negative comments. Typical performance all-mountain skis.

Comments: "Oh, what skis! Excellent! An explosive model! Energetic, fast and enjoyable when skiing energetically on any piste in any conditions. Top skis in the All-Mountain group. Decent in linked short turns and medium carved turns too. In long arcs they are absolute fireworks. Exceptional skis both for those beginning to explore all-mountain and for enthusiasts of the category."

And: "These skis are made to turn. Excellent turn initiation. Quite lively, and when you pressure them they tighten arcs phenomenally. A little uncertain at high speed in hard conditions. I would like to try them in a longer length."

Also: "They lacked a little lightness in closely linked turns on steep terrain. Everything happened efficiently, but with a slight sense of resistance. The situation reversed when I moved into fuller carved arcs. Here they were unexpectedly good! Complete control even in faster, longer turns. Efficient direction changes for the width underfoot, and a very comfortable ride, soaking up small bumps. A thought crossed my mind: OK, this could be a real mountain conqueror! Just the powder to check, and if they are good there we have the group's star pupil. And they were good in that powder too. Not spectacular, but sufficient for skis intended to be versatile."

And: "Very enjoyable skis. On hard, frozen corduroy they cope very well for this width. They are not ponderous when changing edges. They hold arcs very smoothly and let you move smoothly from a carved turn into a skidded one. A very short familiarisation period: from the first turns you know what to expect. A nice all-day ski for someone not looking for the thrills of sporty skiing."

Tester's take

"Completely effortless skiing. Agile, go-anywhere skis. They track beautifully through long carved turns with your legs extended well out to the side. Without the slightest delay, they easily shorten the radius to whatever you choose, then return to a long turn a moment later. Throughout, they hold every turn confidently on edge. They do it calmly and silkily, without excessive rebound. They cross bumps like a comfortable SUV on air suspension. They simply work very well with the skier."

Robert Wnuk

TK **Tomasz's Favourites**
Personal choice · Tomasz Kurdziel

MY FAVOURITES – TOMASZ KURDZIEL'S PERSONAL SELECTION

Words: Tomasz Kurdziel



Photography: Michał Szypliński

Tomasz Kurdziel's personal selection – not an overall Independent Ski Test ranking.

This season, some bad luck came with a silver lining. The bad luck was the first serious skiing injury of my life. In early January I suffered a fairly serious wrist fracture and did not get back on skis until March, and even then with a measure of caution. The good luck was the late date of the Independent Ski Test – always scheduled around the changing dates of Easter – and our new venture, the Amazing Ski Test. Held immediately after the magazine test, that event attracted more than 50 recreational skiers from Poland and, as it turned out, from further afield too. It gave me two weeks to test skis. In that time I managed to put 59 different models properly through their paces.

I skied some of the more interesting ones several times. The timing worked out well, since for obvious reasons I had to miss the industry event in Switzerland. I was hungry for skiing, and two weeks on the Kaunertal glacier made me even happier by delivering almost perfect weather. It was quite cold for the time of year, the pistes held up well, and visibility was poor on only three of our 12 skiing days. Wonderful. As last season, a large proportion of my favourites are what we call hybrids, or cross-turn skis if you prefer: skis with a sporty construction and a turn radius of around 15 m. Neither slalom skis nor GS skis, yet I have a wonderful time on them. Last year, that choice drew criticism from a few viewers who voiced their displeasure in the comments beneath the video on the NTN Snow & More YouTube channel. Let me explain. These are my ten favourite models, and as long as I can still ski with a fair amount of energy, these are precisely the sorts of skis I really enjoy. Of course, there are gems in other categories too, and those also make it into "My favourites". Let me stress that again: my favourites.

Remember, too, that the descriptions of my favourite skis in NTN Snow & More magazine differ a little from the immediate reactions you can watch on our YouTube channel. That is because the text you read here is written after I have had some time to reflect. I always manage to add something I forgot to mention on camera. The spoken opinions recorded during testing are entirely spontaneous. Neither the models nor their order changes, however. These ten are the skis that made the biggest impression on me out of the 59 pairs I tested.

TOMASZ'S FAVOURITES

9TH PLACE

SALOMON

S/MAX 12

175 cm



To my eye, these skis are not particularly good-looking. They are grey and rather anonymous. Given that Salomon's designers can do a terrific job – just look at the QST range – they have not excelled themselves here. Fortunately, good looks do not make a ski perform, and these prove the point. They ski wonderfully! They belong to that group of beautifully balanced skis on which you can make virtually any kind of turn.

You can safely slide around at low speed on blue runs with absolutely no effort. Or you can press them harder and ski beautiful, smooth carved turns. The S/MAX 12 prefers medium- and longer-radius arcs, but with a little force you can persuade it to carve short turns too. On steep, hard pistes the skis perform superbly, providing solid support. Their edges hold brilliantly, and their rebound matches that of some sporty skis. They also flex beautifully and absorb all sorts of piste irregularities very well. I would compare them with the Salomon S/Max Blast, which I raved about a few years ago and still keep in my ski cellar. The new Salomon S/MAX 12 is an extraordinarily versatile ski and an excellent choice as an only pair for a very broad range of skiers who stay on prepared pistes. It also allows those first tentative steps into racing: it will be stable enough in easy giant slalom courses set on blue runs, the sort commonly used by adult training groups. Lovely skis, but a little more colour, please!

GIANT SLALOM

STÖCKLI
LASER GS



TESTED LENGTH	RADIUS	SIDECUT
182 cm	18.7 m	118-68-97 mm

Turn initiation	5.0
Turn behaviour	5.5
Edge grip	5.3
Varying turn radius	4.8
Edge changes	5.0
Rebound	5.0
Performance in gates	4.7

On snow

Successive versions of Stöckli's retail GS skis have always attracted our testers' attention. This year was no different. Right at the top of the group on points, with almost universally positive comments.

Comments: "Outstanding energy; among the best skis in gates. Free skiing, you feel confident in their tracking while keeping your legs relaxed. No need to tense up; you could ski like this all day" and "A very high level of performance. They clearly stand out for precision and quality of tracking. From the first turns, they give a sense of complete control and immediate response to the skier's input. Turn initiation is very active: they engage the edge quickly and confidently, immediately establishing stability. Tracking is exceptionally smooth, fluid and clean, without nervousness even at higher speeds. Edge grip is of a very high standard, allowing you to hold your line with great precision and confidence in all conditions. Energy is high, but not aggressively tiring; rather springy and well balanced. In gates, these skis reveal their full potential."

Also: "Wonderful GS skis that track superbly and grip hard snow very confidently. They encourage you to attack the turn and bring the hip inside, while behaving impeccably and predictably. Neither nervous nor excessively responsive, they offer fluid, balanced skiing and plenty of confidence in longer turns."

And: "Superb skis! Now to the point: very energetic; stable tracking through every turn; immensely fierce with the right pressure, which you feel on exit; skis for accomplished skiers; some strength is needed to extract 100% of their power."

Expert view

Katarzyna Ostrowska

"Outstanding skis! Superb for GS and free skiing. Easy to steer. They do everything you want them to. They tighten and lengthen turns without the slightest effort. Lots of energy and very stable through turns. These skis gave me enormous skiing pleasure. I would happily have a pair in my cellar. They have remained among my firm favourites since last year."

Two-time bronze medallist at the 2026 FIS World Criterium Masters (slalom and giant slalom, women 30–34)

Tester's take

"Probably my favourite skis in this category. Incredibly responsive! Instant turn initiation. Fantastic edge changes, giving loads of fun and pleasure. You can tighten the turn however you like, even into very, very short arcs. Pure skiing pleasure, particularly in long turns. Immensely stable at high speed. Superb on a frozen piste. To me, the perfect skis."

Kamil Wolny

TK

Tomasz's Favourites
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