

Expect the unexpected

During this particular photo shoot at Lake Louise, we were constantly interrupted by snow squalls and flat light. Unexpectedly, the demonstrator gave a rare glimpse of what is possible at the highest level of expertise. Because his balance was perfect, he was able to hit an unseen bump and make it look as if he planned it. Staying loose and focused on balance is the hardest thing to do in intimidating conditions, but can make the difference between landing on the ski tip page here—or the blooper page at the back of the magazine.



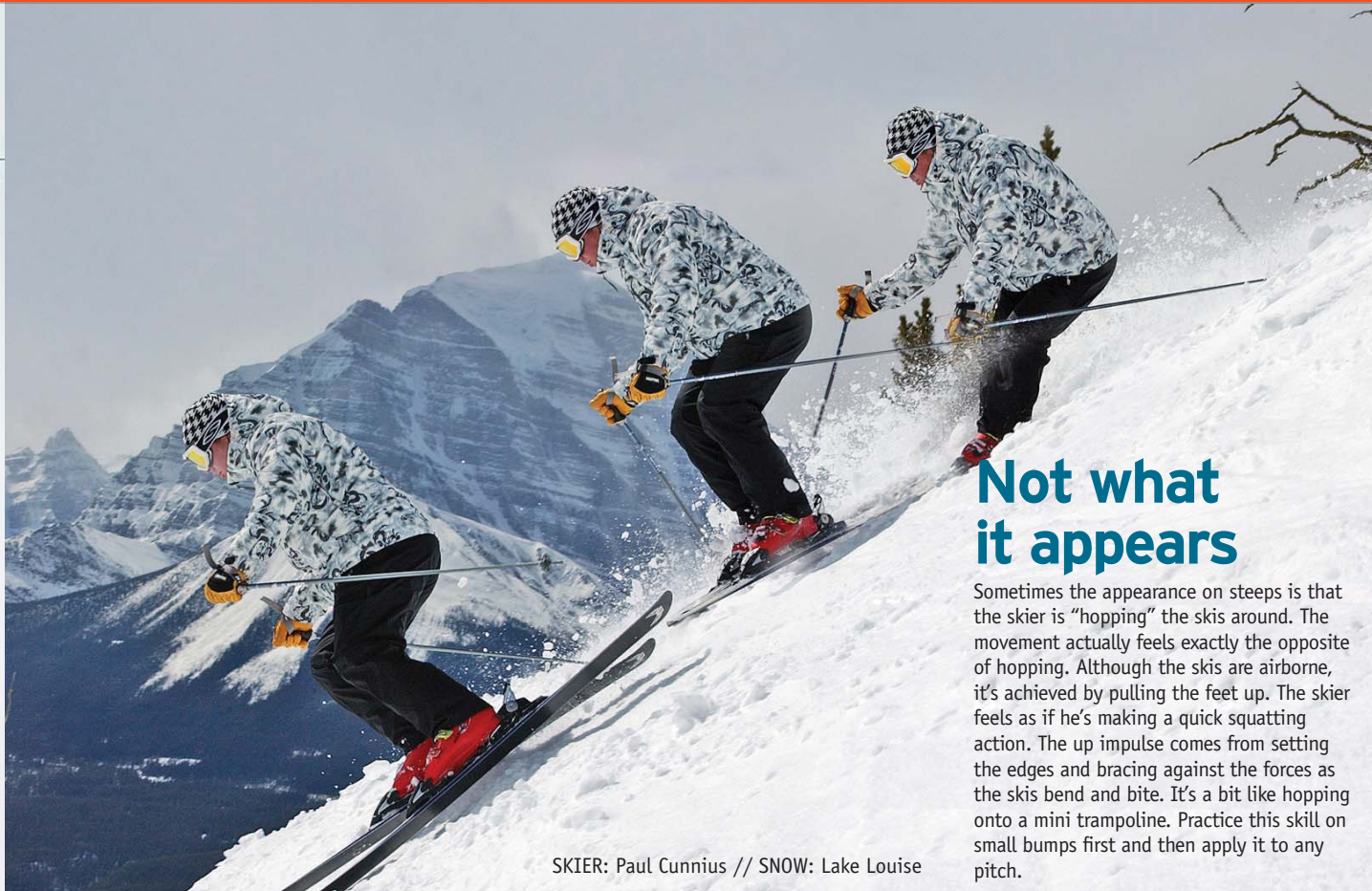
SKIERS: Jeff Marks // SNOW: Lake Louise

Big wave skiing

Modern skis have created a modern skiing style that relies as much on ski shape as biomechanics to make a good turn. That's okay on groomed blues and greens, but big-mountain skiers need versatility and one of the most useful tricks in the bag is the ability to move up and down. In challenging conditions the answer is often to increase the range of movement.



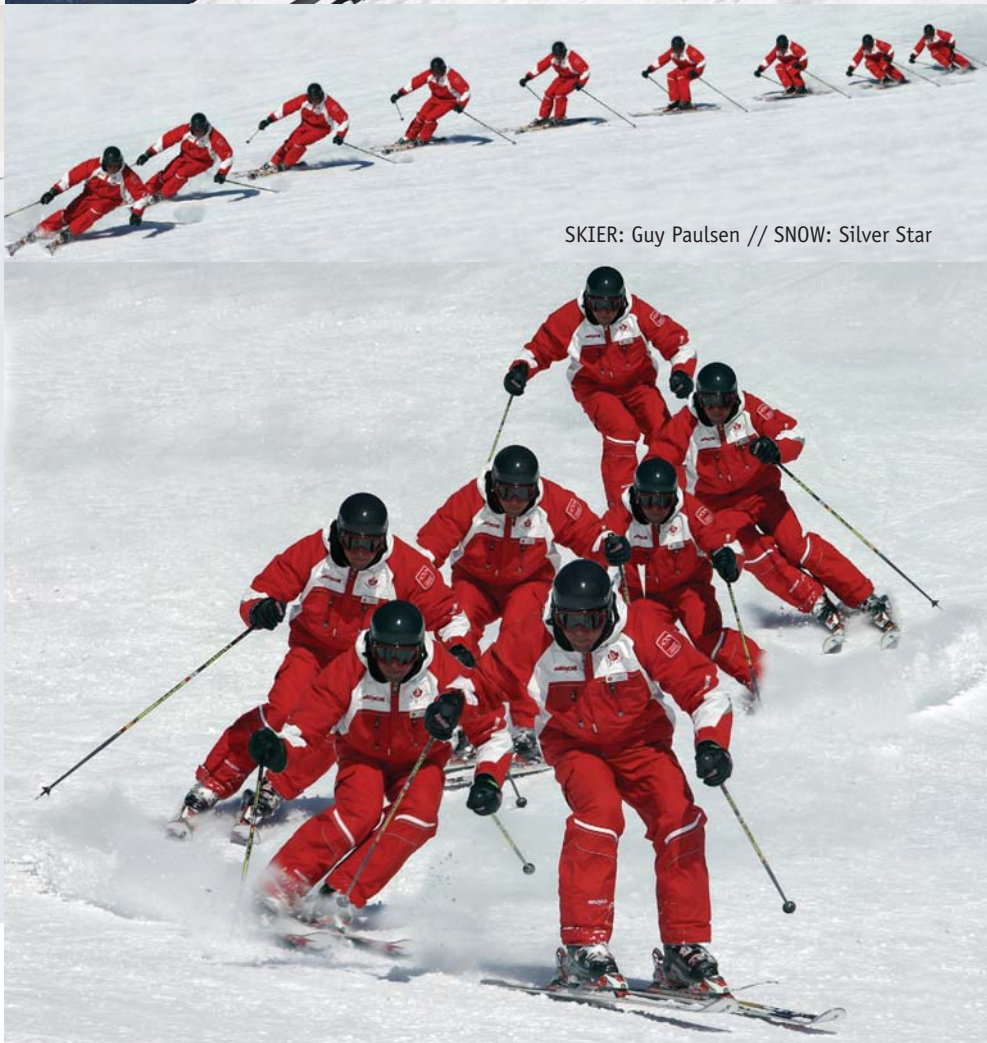
SKIERS: Martha Marpole // SNOW: Lake Louise



SKIER: Paul Cunniss // SNOW: Lake Louise

Not what it appears

Sometimes the appearance on steeps is that the skier is “hopping” the skis around. The movement actually feels exactly the opposite of hopping. Although the skis are airborne, it’s achieved by pulling the feet up. The skier feels as if he’s making a quick squatting action. The up impulse comes from setting the edges and bracing against the forces as the skis bend and bite. It’s a bit like hopping onto a mini trampoline. Practice this skill on small bumps first and then apply it to any pitch.



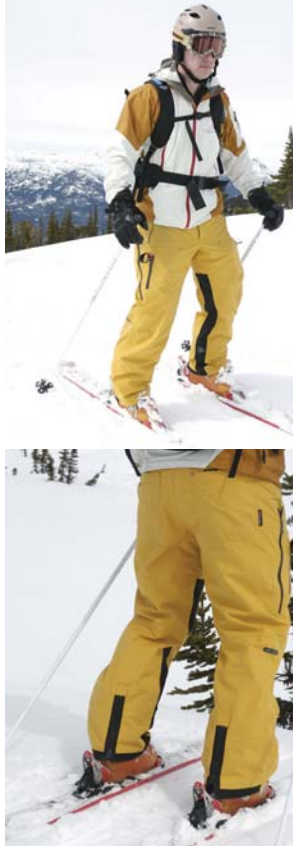
SKIER: Guy Paulsen // SNOW: Silver Star

For experts only: maximum performance

Believe it or not, bending and stretching at the right time can increase speed by adding energy similar to the way pumping the legs can make a child’s swing increase amplitude. The sequence shows that the body is lowest between turns and extended near the transition, a timing pattern that takes practice. Get the feeling by thinking of bending to absorb a large roll as you turn. Sometimes called a retraction technique, this skill is advanced pressure control that may take coaching, but the reward in efficiency is amazing.

Dump in your pants and widen your stance

I've often recommended adopting a wider stance. However, I realize that moving your feet farther apart can be a difficult task to accomplish. If you're struggling to get your feet separated, try imagining that you're a little kid who just messed his pants and doesn't want to get any on him. This will immediately force you to get your feet and knees apart. Now try to get all the way down the hill without getting any on you. Despite the crude vision, it worked wonders for me. And if it doesn't get your feet apart, it might be good preparation for your next trip to Mexico.



SKIER: Chris Lennon // SNOW: Blackcomb

Stab it

1. When you're negotiating random obstacles such as rocks, try stabbing the obstacle with your pole to help you avoid the hazard.
2. By planting your pole right on the apex of the obstacle you want to avoid, you can ensure that you will steer around or off the hazard...
3. ...and be able to keep on going without giving the obstacle any more thought.



SKIER: Chris Lennon // SNOW: Blackcomb