

# "PROFESSIONAL FREESTYLE PARK SMALLEY SKIING"

- RUSTY TAYLOR



BY CURT LAISLE AND JOHN WEBER

Freestyle skiing has been around since the early 1900s. National Ski School techniques and international racing has influenced freestyle skiing through the years. The skier must learn fundamental skills and maneuvers as building blocks to execute this type of skiing. These skills include rigorous training and skiing exercise to make the body flexible for performing stunts. Body inversion is often used as a maneuver in freestyle competition. Aggressiveness and gracefulness are necessary for good form. Aerial skills are often learned by repetitive jumping. Freestyle is a challenging task which requires much time and training.

Freestyle events have revolutionized skiing. These events bring grace and precision to skiing through ballet and gymnastics, and through the

thrill and natural communion of alpine skiing. Among skiers this formidable sport has changed the outlook of alpine skiing. Freedom and change in freestyle skiing allows creativity and artistry for the modern skier.

Freestyle is a very far reached point of skiing. There are three types or events for freestyle; moguls, ballet and aerials. Moguls are held on a steep run with bumps that have sharp drops and edged ruts. These take skill to ski. The skier must be centered over the skis ready with anticipation to negotiate upcoming moguls. Judging for mogul skiing is based on speed, air, control, style and line. Quickness and ability in executing turns are important to the judges.



The second event in freestyle is ballet. Ballet is held on a smooth gradually sloping run. It requires skill in maneuvers and the grace of dancing. Skiers work out a routine for ninety seconds up to three minutes that is often put to a musical score. The routine may be a composite of skiing backwards, aerial stunts, spins and maneuvers. Many of these performances are aided by the ski poles for balance, as well as the poles being part of the trick. Ballet is judged on artistic ability, difficulty of moves, execution and carriage.

Aerials are held on a steep hill with a large jump. There are three different types of jumps: the floater, the back flip and the flip jump. Each has different trajectories. A floater is a jump which is longer than most and is built to launch the skier out over the landing hill. A floater is mostly used upright. The back flip jump is ridden like a floater lift jump. A back kicker gives more lift to the jump the skier tries. The kicker also aids the start of the rotation. The same jump can also be used for any twisted or inverted stunt. The front flip is made on a jump which has a longer lip, thus when the skier hits this lip he/she is pushed over making forward rotation easier.

## PARK SMALLEY

Park Smalley was born May 21, 1953, in Santa Barbara, California. "I think my childhood was really a good one. I grew up in Southern California and spent a lot of time on the ocean. I spent a lot of that time surfing, and I think that's where I got a lot of my skiing ability. Basically I was involved in athletics a lot in my younger years, but I started skiing when I was 17. When I moved from California to Washington I didn't have much choice but to get into skiing. There wasn't much water on the eastern side of the state, just snow. The year we moved there it was the worst winter in like ten years, and there was



just loads of snow. That is kind of how I got into skiing."

Then we asked Park when he started skiing professionally. "For the last nine years I have skied. I started skiing professionally when I was 18 years old, being involved with ski schools and ski instructors. I taught skiing at Mt. Spokane for a year, then moved to Salt Lake City and got involved with the instruction program there. I

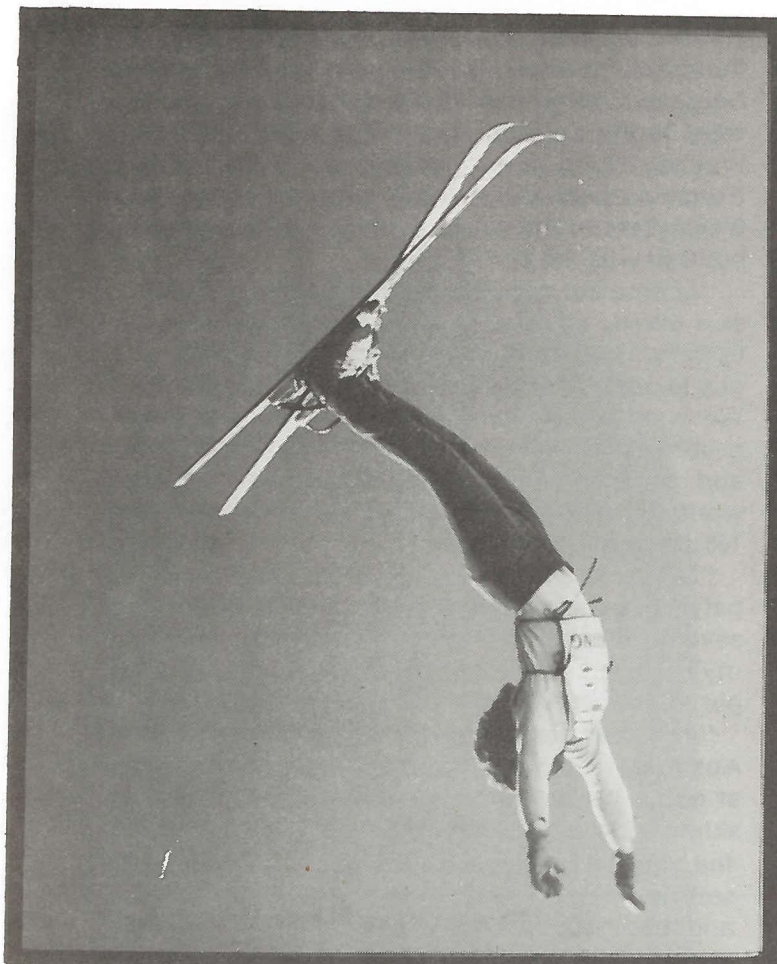
skied for two years in Salt Lake and got certified. Then in 1974, I went to my first freestyle contest. That was the first time I skied professionally in freestyle.



**"NO SNOW NEEDED"**







## "THE POINT OF NO RETURN"

"To try to expose myself more to the sport I spent two winters in Salt Lake skiing at Snowbird and Alta, then one winter in Sun Valley, Idaho. I've lived in Steamboat for three years now. I came to Steamboat in the fall of 1976."

We talked with Park about some competitive meets which he has entered the last nine years.

"When I first started competing the best I ever did was in the aerial event at Sun Valley. That was in '74, and that was the first year I competed. At that time most skiers were doing aerial acrobatics instead of gymnastics, so my flight plan was a helicopter for my first jump and a back layout for my second. I did a front delayed tuck for the third. Basically I was an overall skier, and I placed in the top 20 overall."

"Then in 1974 and 1975 I competed in the World Freestyle Tour. I started in Squaw Valley on the tour. Just after that I was chosen for the Marlboro tour which went through Europe and Asia. It was a schedule of ski shows on artificial snow and real snow, and it was all choreographed to music. We did tours in places like Tehran, Iran, where the Shah of Iran came to watch. The Marlboro tour was really fun. I got paid a salary, and all my expenses were covered while I was gone.

"Recently my best results were here in Steamboat in 1979. I won the aerials, took second

in ballet, thirteenth in moguls with a second overall.

Because of all this success and accomplishment Park is sponsored by several equipment companies. "Right now I'm sponsored by Scott boots and Spademan bindings. I'm in the process of changing sponsors and negotiating with Pedigree ski clothing. The camp sponsors have been the same for awhile, along with the Universal Trampoline sponsors!"

We also asked Park his opinion about different ski areas. "Sun Valley is the best area, but



Steamboat has some really good terrain. Most of the European areas are really built up like Aspen or Vail. The terrain is vast though. You could ski the same area for a week and never cover your tracks. At the same time some European areas don't have quite as much challenge as here. I enjoyed being there though because the peaks are more jagged, and it's a lot prettier.

"I hope one day all skiers can be classified under one group, both freestyle and racer. I hope one day we'll be able to agree on one thing, **skiing**. We all respect each other for what we do, and there is a lot of skill involved. It takes time to become a good freestyler or racer."





# RUSTY TAYLOR



"I was born in Delaware, and started skiing at the age of five. My dad was a Nordic jumper for Clarkson University for the state of New York, and he started me skiing and then died when I was seven. After that I just started skiing with friends. I started skiing in a place called Chadspeak, Pennsylvania. It's about half the size of Headwall. I got into racing when I was 12-years-old and raced until I was 17. I made my 'A' and graduated from high school in '72 and moved to Steamboat.

"I moved to Steamboat as an ex-ski racer, and the guy I moved in with was a freestyler. I was persuaded into competing in freestyle competition. Then I went to the first qualifications for IFS, International Freestyle Skiers Association, that was held on Copper Mountain. I went there with a pair of 207 cm skis, my racing skis, and skied moguls. The first day I qualified for moguls. I skied in the aerials the next day and qualified for those. Then I skied in ballet on my 207s and qualified.

"Two weeks after I qualified, I got a letter in the mail. It was an invitation to the first annual Beonta Cup with a 35,000 dollar purse. So we went to the Cup and I was just totally amazed. Wayne Wong went before me, and Eddie Ferguson behind me. They are two of the best freestylers in the world. I placed in the low 50s, but that was the start for me.

"I came out with long skis, and I needed some skis fixed, so we hitch-hiked to the Head ski factory in Boulder. When we got there, we saw a guy back slicing skis and throwing them away. We went back there and found skis that had problems in manufacturing. We talked to him, and he ended up letting us take any skis we wanted. I took some downhill, slalom, mogul and 160 cm skis for ballet.

"My best results were in a smaller competition, over in Utah. I took a first in ballet and seventh overall. As far as the World Cup goes, my best results were at the Championships. That put me seventh overall and third in the U.S.

"The best show we ever did was in Kitzbuhl, Austria. We came to do an aerial and ballet show at night. We got into town on a Friday and went skiing with a local downhiller and at the end of the day, we started building our jumps and setting up the area. We drove through town, and there were people all over. We just thought it was normal, and then we heard a comment that all these people were coming to see us. There were about 10,000 people. It was quite an experience to be the center of attention like that.

"Right now sponsors are tough. My sponsors during the years have been K2, Scott, and Solomon. I went with Spademan and Raichle for awhile.







In the fall of 78, Park Smalley had an idea. He wanted to start an amateur freestyle team. At the start of the 78 season Steamboat had its first freestyle team and it consisted of nine teenage boys ages 14 to 18. In its first year the team was very successful. The team has more than doubled in size and is still growing. The team competes in many competitions all over Colorado. All of this work is put toward qualifying for the National competition. The Rocky Mountain Ski Association chooses who goes by taking each competitors two best results and the regional competition and the best go.

"The average income for a freestyler at one competition could be 25,000 dollars. First place might take 5,000 dollars in each event, but where the big money comes from is the sponsors. Good sponsors will match the money you win. The average skier might make 10,000 dollars a year.

## FREESTYLE SKIING - THE RUSH THAT LASTS...



Since John and I (Curtis) started this story we have furthered our interest in skiing. John is presently involved in the Winter Sports Club ski program as a alpine racer, and I have been lucky enough to have Park and Rusty provide instruction in my development as a freestyle skier. Since the founding of this program I have learned more about ski techniques which have helped me in two years of skiing performance.

