

Japan report

Short turn evolution

By Chris Allen

Japan was a must-see country at Interski, with large numbers showing up to their on-snow presentations. My interest in Japan comes from the APSI running courses and exams in Japan, along with many of our membership working in Japanese ski resorts. My biggest motivation was wanting to ski with Takao Maruyama, a phenomenal skier who is somewhat of a rockstar in Japan due to his success in the Japanese technical championships.



Right from the beginning of this presentation Takao made mention of the Technical Championships in Japan run by SAJ (Ski Association Japan- the national body that runs the technical championships). He said their high-end technique has evolved over the years by competitors pushing the limits of high-end skiing at these events. Short turn evolution developed at the technical championship makes its way to the national demo team which falls under the SAJ and the SIA (ski instructor association).

There are four points Takao highlighted to get the 'high technique' of pure carving the short turn. You could draw a similarity to our belief of new mechanics that we use when building a certain type of turn. The ski performance they aspire to in this turn is pure carving or two lines with speed control.

- Ankle joint and hip position
- Rolling in the initiation
- Maximum bending of ski in apex
- Release



Takao showed how the ankle and the hip worked together to get the early rolling of the ski and pointed out that the skis should not swing or pivot, but instead the hip combined with the flexed ankle position is used to roll the ski onto the edge. It is important to point out that the pelvis is inside the turn above the fall line and the pelvis stays square to the skis and is not a rotary force.



I found this hip movement interesting, as it looked like the pelvis was rotating. Having the ankle and the pelvis move together is how they achieve the pure carved ski above the fall line. This connection is very important to achieve maximum edge angle. Takao said it was crucial for the hip to stop following the skis in the apex, and in his words "will allow you to capture

the energy from the ski”. Bending the ski through the apex, loads the ski with energy and this is achieved because of high edge angle and pressure.

The last point is the release. Takao highlighted that collapsing with the feet and legs too early through the release is not desirable as the energy will be lost. Instead they resist the energy pushing against them, so the ski stays in contact with the snow. Sending the skis across the slope helps control speed as well as giving a solid platform to move off, enabling them to roll the new outside ski early. Compared to other countries like Switzerland and Austria who use a lot of muscle to power the ski to where they want it to go, the Japanese use the energy from the ski to get the same result.

Overall, the Japanese presented a very methodical approach to high performance short turns, and it is clear that the Japanese are evolving their technique. Not that long ago it appeared to be a system that was going for a look without the emphasis on ski performance, but now is a complete package that would be a great influence on anyone looking to take their short turns to the next level.

