

Ski Lesson: Headed to Aspen

I had a lesson last weekend with a girl, age 29. She is a nanny for a girl, and the family is taking a trip to Aspen to ski. She wanted to improve her skiing so they weren't waiting for her. That's good motivation. I'm glad I drilled into her reasons and motivation. It helped shape the lesson.

We started with stance, and I have them stand in a good athletic position on skis (bending at the ankles, knees, waist, with good shin-boot connection, head up, arms out, and smiling. From there, I got down and pushed her skis back a little after first warning her that would happen. This got her into an even better athletic stance. She thought she was more of a visual learner, if I recall, so since the sun was out, I showed her my stance where my back and the back of the lower part of my legs (by the calves) matched angles.

From there, I watched her ski on a nice, wide green run, asking her to make some turns. Her turns were the result of turning her feet more than tipping. We might call this Basic Parallel. Her stance looked good/forward. Turn shape was mostly complete. Not too much upper/lower body separation.

We talked on the chair and then got to the top to do our first exercise. We first worked on edging if I recall. She mentioned how she wanted confidence, so I thought maybe not feeling the skis slip away in a skid would help. We did what I call "D" turns which is where we traverse and just focus on tipping the inside (uphill in this case since we were turning uphill) ski. If the other one tips, that's fine. The focus was also on just tipping the ski by making the foot light, lifting the arch, and rolling it to the little toe without shifting our upper body to go over the inside ski. Making that ski light would result in more pressure over the outside ski. We did these left and right and then increased the pitch by aiming more toward the fall line. This worked well.

If I recall, we also worked on some upper/lower body separation. We did this with my T-rex hands, cross the poles drill. This is modified "frame an object" drill. The T-rex hands is putting hands on the side of the chest – locking them there so we wouldn't be tempted to move them freely. We then hold our poles in an "X" where the handles of our poles have a small window where we can frame an object as we ski.

My static (in boots) was showing 2 ways to move our legs across the hill – either by jumping up, picking up the whole body, doing a 180, and going from facing one side of the hill to the other, or the second way was to have the feet across the hill, the upper body facing downhill, and shift the feet and keep the upper body more or less in place. I explained how we get some free turning out of it and how we feel some tension with it, which causes the free turning.

Her turns looked very, very smooth after this. I think the T-rex hands drill helped her the best, but I know feeling more stable on skis was also beneficial.

It's too bad we only had an hour. I wanted to do a bit more with her, but we made good progress. Next, I would have gone into adding counterbalance and increasing edge

angles.

The Second Lesson – The Most Content I Ever Gave

Briefly, another lesson I had was with a 45 year old man who was returning to skiing. He ate up so much content – maybe the most ever I've seen in a 1-hour lesson. We did fore/aft, pressure to the outside ski, upper/lower body separation, and counter. If I had more time with him, we would have gone over to pole swings/touches and short-radius.

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