



# BULGARIAN SKI SCHOOL

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## **A CONCEPT OF THE BULGARIAN SKI SCHOOL FOR SAFETY IN TRAINING BY A LONGER WAY TO ACHIEVE CARVING SKILLS**

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During its 35 years of existence, the Bulgarian ski school has tried to modernize its programs, having in mind all the new world tendencies. We also strive to keep the traditions we have in the teaching process and to adapt them to the new realities.

One of the first presentations of our colleagues at an international forum of ski instructors was in 1959. The first State ski-schools in Bulgaria were founded at our basic ski-centers: Vitosha, Pamporovo, and Borovetz in the beginning of the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in Bansko at the end of the 70s.

The period up to the beginning of the 90s can be characterized with State ownership and control over the activities of resorts. After the democratic changes since the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, the resorts were privatized and there was a growth in number of ski-schools, as well as of free-lance ski-instructors who worked alone.



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The numerous schools created competition between them, but sadly enough, that did not always mean better quality of the service. There appeared many negative phenomena: non-observing of methodology, equipment of low quality, unfair competition and increasing of injuries on the tracks. The vacuum created by lack of legislation in the branch during the period between state ownership and private capital was rather hard and only "Bulgarian Ski School" tried to keep the balance and to initiate generation of rules in this period of change.

In the mean time the world of snow sports was undergoing total changes. It saw the advance of snow boarding and of the carving technique. All these circumstances demanded many efforts and radical changes from our organization, so that it could abide with the times and answer the contemporary challenges. Our first task was to modernize the teaching programs and the Regulations for preparation and re-qualification of ski-instructors, as well as to create programs for teaching snow boarding and cross-country skiing. We'd like to say how grateful we are to our Austrian and Swiss colleagues, who gave us methodological help by giving us their teaching materials. Parallel to that, we initiated changes in the Tourism law, which will soon become reality. Our membership in ISIA in 2001 played a positive part for the qualification of ski-instructors in Bulgaria. The introduction of ISIA rules for the number of academic hours and for continuous control had a great influence for the results we achieved. In recent years we notice an increase in the quality of the service, as well as in the number of organized ski-instructors, who took part in national championships and demo teams.



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During our discussion with the schools and instructors about the development of the new teaching plan we talked a lot on the subject of the contents of the teaching material for first level A.

1. What level should beginners have, before being introduced to the carving technique?
2. Are the seemingly elementary carving skills so easy?
3. What is the place and importance of the classical methods for building basic motor skills for alpine technique?
4. Should we choose a longer or a shorter way to build carving skills?

These questions for discussion are what we decided to use as basis for presentation of the "Bulgarian Ski School" concept for safe teaching of the skiing technique and for building lasting skiing skills.

## **Aim No 1: Adapting to equipment**

The main task here is to teach our tourists how to use their equipment properly and how to adapt to its size and characteristics through the following exercises:

- Putting on and taking off the boots and walking in them
- Carrying of the skis and poles
- Buckling of the bindings



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- Touching parts of the skis with their hands
- Consecutive lifting of the skis on place
- Sliding of the skis on place
- Stepping to the left and right, and in circles

**Aim No 2:** The task here is to teach our students to move safely along the flat, to climb gentle slopes, as well as to fall down and get up with skis.

## **Aim No 3: Getting to know the basic skiers' stance:**

The skis are parallel, on the flat, at hip width, with the weight regularly distributed on both feet. The position of the ankle, knee, and hip joints is medium, the upper part of the body faces the direction of movement, slightly leaning forward. The hands are in front of the body, on both sides of it, at waist level, balancing with the poles. Through strait running downhill and various other exercises for transition from one type of stance into another, we train good body demeanor and build a feeling for balance. At this stage, along with motion exercises, we recommend the teaching to become more varied through the choice of different terrain, and different facilities, especially for children.

After building a good basic stance, which should be executed without tension in straight running downhill and in various other exercises, we come to **Aim No 4:** to teach our students to control their speed and to stop. The well-known classical snowplough is the basic means for accomplishing this aim. At the beginning, it is applied as a sliding snowplough along the fall line. After that we apply the snowplough stop along the fall line and then - straight running downhill,



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which through high unweighting passes from sliding snowplough into a snowplough stop.

This stage, according to us, is basic for level one A. By acquiring skills to control their speed and stop, the beginners become more confident and free on the track. They are ready to deal with new terrain and to enter the world of turns. Another reason for us to think of this stage as important and not to be rushed through, is that the motor habits for stance, body demeanor, and speed control are the fundament of the whole teaching process.

**Aim No 5.** As we have already mentioned above, this aim introduces students into the world of turns. Using the snowplough skills and the wider support, we teach snowplough turn as the first exercise for changing direction. The separate changes of direction from snowploughing along the fall line gradually evolve into snowplough turns, which further on are tied together into chain snowplough turns. After achieving this aim, our guests are ready to use lifts. The motor skills acquired at this stage, e.g. transferring of the weight, dosing the pressure, and control of the edging, are basic for their demeanor with all other types of turns. Nevertheless, the limit of the snowplough turns is usually quickly exhausted and our tourists need newer and steeper tracks, which require a new type of demeanor.

**Aim 6 is alpine demeanor.** The rational and safe technique on steeper slopes passes through learning how to slide on the edges of the skis with the weight mainly on the downhill ski, with flexing the body to the side while the ski tips are not on one level.



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Traversing, which is well known from the past and which in contemporary carving technique is very close to the uphill turn, is the basic exercise. The variation of the angle at which we cross the fall line and the speed further develops the alpine stance.

**Aim No 7 is combining the skills for snowplough turn and alpine demeanor.** Motor skills here evolve towards shortening of the connecting diagonal between the curves, lessening the width of the snowplough, and limiting its duration to the moment when the skis steer into the curve of the turn. Further on we continue with steering the skis into the turn with half-plough (by opening the uphill ski) and minimal connecting diagonal.

**Aim No 8** satisfies the natural need of the students at this stage for improving their skills to control the skis into the turn.

Skills for changing direction through snowplough, half-plough, combined with a good alpine demeanor, are a prerequisite for the improvement of the steering phase of the turn. The already acquired skills are improved through the uphill turn from different initial positions. It is perfectly natural for this exercise to transform into the basic parallel turn (with sliding). When working on this technique we vary both the radius of the turn and the speed (the terrain). The acquisition of the skill to control the speed through the radius of the curve is one of the signs for successful learning.

**Aim No 9** is dedicated to solving the basic coordination problem – the use of the pole. In the past years we witnessed many different ideas about the exact moment when the pole should be used. In contemporary ski-technique the use of



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the pole is understood as a coordination element and additional support, which gives stability in certain situations.

Another trend in coordination is the concurrence in space and time between the pressure and the edging.

**Aim No 10** presupposes dealing with various surprising motion tasks for each element in the improvement stage. Skiing in ensemble is one of the methods we use for development of situation skills. The variation in the terrain, the speed, and the structure of the snow cover helps to form situation skills.

**Aim 11.** Having in mind the material envisaged for level two B, i.e. development of the carving technique, this aim prepares the students to be more stable and to ski with a greater speed – skills without which it would be difficult for them to learn the carving technique. In order to achieve this aim, tourists improve on the performance of various techniques of turning on harder and more difficult terrain.

The presented concept for teaching level A in the “Bulgarian Ski School” teaches the students the necessary skiing skills and motor qualities like:

- ❖ Improved physical qualities
- ❖ Developed coordination and orientation
- ❖ Stability and confidence in fast skiing

All of them are a prerequisite for success in teaching level two B, where the teaching plan presupposes learning of the carving technique.



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The longer way of teaching and learning, including many exercises taken from traditional methodology and adapted to contemporary style, makes the teaching process safe and leads to the creation of lasting motor skills and good form. Also, the teaching process develops an educational character from the point of view of safe mountain demeanor, ecology, etc.