

# Slumps

Written by Chris Rossi

Photography by Marie Bolusset at Swiss Ski School

**B**y midseason, the water has warmed up, we are in peak skiing condition, and everything just seems to click. The buoy count has risen to near peak levels and we can feel that elusive personal best (PB) just around the corner. We have now had enough reps that our balance and focus are tuned in to the point that passes that felt hard in the spring seem to now be unmissable. Skiing is so fun when you are at or surpassing your previous year's PB. Your chest gets a little puffy, the sun seems to shine brighter, food seems to taste better, and then POW! A slump hits you like a blind side sucker punch! The dreaded slump seems to come at unexpected times and can feel completely debilitating. Worse, it often follows periods of near peak skiing. We go from on top of the world to down in the dumps. There is almost never one thing a skier can look back on and say, "That's what caused my slump!" It just happens seemingly out of nowhere.

Let's take a look at some of the main reasons we find ourselves in a slump and how to get out of one.

## Overtraining

Overtraining is the most common reason for slumps. It takes a lot of strength and energy to run up to your PB. When you are skiing at the brink of your ability level, it is very common to be taking slack hits. Each of these inefficient turns takes a huge toll on your body. Luckily, at this is time of the year we are in peak physical condition, so we are able to take these hits and continue on – often running the pass despite the slack hits. As skiers, we also have learned to ski with a certain level of soreness. For the most part, we become so accustomed to it that we forget its there. The taste of success overrides any minor aches and pains we feel. But at some

point, our sore bodies and those extra hits catch up to us all. It doesn't matter how strong you are, or how efficient you try to ski, we have a certain number of hits and once that threshold is past, we break down. Often times, the break down is extremely gradual. It doesn't take much of a power/energy loss to affect your hardest pass. At first, you lose just a buoy off your top end. This just makes you want to go harder to get it back so you take a few extra tries to figure out what's going on. Next thing you know, another buoy is gone. This continues and the rate of buoy loss now seems to slide faster. It can get to the point that you miss your first few passes. Everything feels hard. What just happened? I'm in a slump!

To avoid this situation, try to be in tune with your body. Listen to what your body tells you the moment you wake up in the morning. Do you feel sore, or tired? Are any muscles extra tight? These are early warning signs of overtraining and should be addressed. Take the day off even if its glass calm. Get a massage instead. Take care of your body and you will be rewarded later in the season. When I am skiing really well, I try to pace myself. I'll take one good set instead of two. I'll do tournament sets instead of taking multiple shots at my hardest pass. I'm not saying to not go for it, just be smart about it.

## Equipment Check

I can't tell you how many slumps have been caused by equipment failure. If you feel strong, have been skiing well, and are now struggling, it's time to check your equipment. Are all of your binding screws tight? Has your fin moved? Has your rubber torn on your boot? Does your hardshell have a crack? All of us have been at fault for not keeping up with our equipment. Be careful. I once



Julien Beaufilet showing the intensity of 39-1/2 off.

was sitting on a dock with a friend of mine who was frustrated with his skiing. He had been skiing pretty well, but then he felt like he was busting his hump and not running up to his potential. Our skis happened to be side-by-side and the tails hanging off the end of a table. I glanced at the two fins and his seemed considerably deeper than mine. We decided to take a look just to verify that it was an illusion and found that it was way deeper than it should have been. The fin had moved in the fin box. Keep a log of your ski set up and check it regularly. If you have a hard time keeping track of a physical journal, then join the ranks of skiers using the online skier logs at [proskicoach.com](http://proskicoach.com).

## Change It Up

Sometimes we get caught in a day-to-day grind and lose sight of how much fun skiing really is. If you tend to ski at the same time every day, with the same ski partner, at the same site, with the same boat, you might need to change it up. I like to go ski new sites as a fresh change of scenery. Your ski partner can come, too. It's more about changing up your routine than it is getting away. This is also the main reason I like to ski tournaments. We can all ski great on our home sites. It's much more fun to challenge yourself to go somewhere new and put up a great score. If both you and your partner go, then you can handicap home scores and see who does the best in the new environment.

Another thing I like to do is to free ski. Get away from the grind of the buoys and rip like 30 turns on a glass lake. Yes, it will get your heart pumping, but you can learn a lot from making more than seven turns. I am always amazed at how poorly most tournament skiers free ski. Take this challenge to go out and give it a try. Who knows, you just might have some fun.

## Remember That Skiing Is Fun

If at any point skiing becomes not fun, it's time to take a break and get some perspective. Midseason might seem like the worst time for a break, but in the end, it is what's best. It has taken me a long time to learn this. This year, I have had to take

more time away from skiing than any other non-injury season. For the week leading up to the Alizée Cup in Crozet, France, I had two practice sets. I was feeling generally tired and was nursing a few minor injuries. In the past I would have tried to ski through this and would have under performed at the tournament. Instead, I remained confident in my skiing, allowed my body to rest and heal, and skied to a second-place finish in the event. This is not my optimal way to lead into a tournament, but sometimes we just have to listen to our body and roll with it.

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