

Windup to Winning

Anja Paerson Aare, 2006, Women's SL

Ron LeMaster



Last season, Anja Paerson was a dominant force in women's slalom. In these turns, made in the slalom event of the World Cup Finals, which Paerson won in her home country of Sweden, she shows us some important technical elements of short turns on a steep slope.

The first is the torsional stability of Paerson's upper body as she completes the first turn and dives through the transition into the second. Her shoulders hardly move while her skis carve the belly of the first turn and her legs wind up under her hips. This results in the second technical element: That windup, which reaches its maximum in frame 4,

stretches muscles in her lower torso and hip girdle, putting them in an opportune position to twist her legs the other way and redirect her skis into the second turn. By synchronizing the twisting with the moment that her body passes across her feet and her skis are flat on the snow, in frame 5, Paerson can easily redirect the skis without unweighting and losing contact with the snow.

This movement pattern isn't anything new. It was first identified in print by Georges Joubert and Jean Vuarnet in their classic 1966 book, *How to Ski the New French Way*. They called it *anticipation*, and that name is still used by many today. Some call it *windup-release*. By any name, it's a fundamental technique.

Key to maintaining the torsional stability and developing the windup at the end of the first turn is the way Anja holds her inside hand in the frames 3 and 4. By keeping it up high and well in front of her, symmetric with her outside hand, she keeps her shoulders level and prevents them from turning with her skis.

Anja Paerson is one of the most aggressive racers on the women's side of the World Cup, and must often make acrobatic recoveries because of it. Her ability to pull them off without losing time is built on her sound fundamental techniques, such as the ones we see here.

[Don, as per our earlier email exchange, I would appreciate having the following, or something similar, in my by-line: Prints of the image used in this article, and others, are available from www.ronlemaster.com]