

The Cutting Edge of Slalom: Giorgio Rocca

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More and more, we see the best skiers getting their skis engaged and carving earlier and earlier in the turn. Carving in the fall line is desirable because, at this point, the skier is on the steepest grade possible and has the opportunity to pick up speed. As ski design has progressed so that the best racers can do this consistently, we see them making slalom turns that resemble miniature GS arcs.

Giorgio Rocca, the winner of the World Cup slalom title last season, is particularly good at this, as we can see in this photomontage from the team event at the World Cup finals in Aare, Sweden last March. It is a great example of him making a great turn. In frame 4, Rocca's skis are somewhere near the fall line, and already his outside ski is bent and starting to carve. The three essential components to this are high edge angle, early pressure on the outside ski, and putting that pressure on the ski's forebody.

Notice how much of the bottom of his outside ski we can see. This tells us that it is up on a high edge for this early in the turn. How does he achieve this? It starts in the completion phase of the previous turn, between frames 2 and 3. From there his upper body takes a very direct line down the hill in comparison to the path his feet take as his skis finish the

arc. This gets him a lot of inclination and edge angle in the initiation phase of the next turn without thrusting his feet to the outside. In frame 4 he's also increased the edge angle of the ski by twisting his left knee inward. He has put pressure on the forebody of the ski, as evidenced by the snow coming out from under it, by bending his left ankle and pressing his shin into the front of the boot.

In the last two frames of the sequence, Rocca moves the pressure on his skis from the tip to the tail to help release them from the turn. He does this by straightening his ankles so that he no longer pushes on the fronts of his boots, while keeping his arms and torso forward in a well-balanced, athletic posture from which he can move forward into the next turn.

Rocca applies this clean, solid style with great consistency. His economy of motion and focus on the essential elements needed to carve early in the turn make him a great model.