**Athletic Stance aka Tyler Barnes’ “AWESOME Stance”:**

**The Skills Concept** serves as the technical model of American ski instruction. The skills concept is based on three skills – rotational control, edge control and pressure control are integral to all ski turns. These skills are essential for maintaining balance. (PSIA Alpine Technical Manual, pg 15-35).

Our focus, this week, will be on **stance and balance**. Balance is our body being in a state equilibrium (PSIA ATM, pages 33-34). Skiers who are not in a state of equilibrium when forces act on their center of mass will not be able to effectively use their muscles to control the interaction of the skis with snow (balance as a SOURCE of effective movement). Balance is also an outcome of effective movement.

Balance as a source of effective movement is vital to the ability to access the three basic skills, while maintaining a balanced relationship between the center of mass (COM) and the base of support (BOS). Without it, there is usually an excessive movement to accomplish any task.

Things to look for:

* Lack of flexion from the ankles with the shins loosing contact with the tongue of the boot and the knees are flexed too much moving the hips behind the knees.
* Upper body tips to the inside of the turn.
* The skier is stiff or static and gets bounced around.
* Hands and hips are behind the feet.
* The inside ski bends more than the outside ski and the ski does not bend from the middle but more from the foot back.

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| **Athletic Stance: Page 33, PSIA Alpine Technical Manual or**  **PSIA-NW Snowsports Instructor, Spring 2013, pg 11-14** | **Body Parts/Movements** |
| * Feet hip-width apart to provide a base of support * Shins maintain forward contact w/both boot tongues; weight & balance is toward the balls of the feet * All major joints are flexed, ankles, knees, hips & spine * Shoulders are rounded forward ahead of hips * Arms are raised slightly above the waist * Elbows in front of ribs & slightly wider than the shoulders * Hands forward slightly wider & lower than the elbows. * The pelvis is neutral (with the lower back neither arched nor the tailbone tucked. * The head is up with the vision forward. | * Flexion of the ankles, knees, hips & spine * The slant of the lower leg is parallel or nearly parallel to the slant of the upper body. “back angle matches shin angle”   Goal: align & maintain your center of mass over base of support while sliding, skidding, slipping or carving down the hill. The ability to “freeze” or “pounce” like a coat at any moment. |

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| **Drills** | **Level** | **Outcome** | **Movements** |
| “Push” client sideways   * Boots or skis | Beginner  All levels | Most efficient stance for regaining &/or maintaining balance | Narrow stance + push = step, tip or fall over  Wide stance + push = stability, lack of ability to react quickly  Athletic stance + push = stability with ability to react quickly/access the three skills in skiing |
| Hop in Boots – flat terrain   * With or w/o skis * With or w/o poles | Beginners  All levels | Create sensations & discover how to find athletic stance w/o describing how to move the body. | I like to ask clients to hop 3 times & “stick” the third in their sport/activities athletic stance. Look at other participants – all sports have same athletic stance. |
| Weight shift   * fore/aft * ski tip push/pull | Beginners | To find your “awesome” stance  Skis & body move together.  Seaweed movement of body NOT moving with BOS  Smooth glide with push & pull = COM moving with BOS | * Flex ankle (pull toes up) = shift of COM forward over BOS * Extend ankle (push on toes) = shift of COM back over BOS * Pull on ski tips forward gives client sensation of which muscles to use to move with ski & maintain shin/boot cuff contact |
| Walk forward   * Step laterally * Turn feet & legs * Tip feet & legs | Beginners  All levels | Emphasize the importance of an athletic stance as a source of balance & effective movements in skiing | Walking = foot to foot weight transfer & flexing and extending introduces pressure control skills  Lateral step = foot to foot & lateral stability  Turn = feet & legs control rotation of ski  Tipping = edge control skills |
| Hop > straight glide   * 2 skis * 1 ski to other ski | Beginner  Intermediate | Dynamic balance IN MOTION. Develops rotation & edge control skills. Challenge balance & develop ability to transfer balance & pressure from ski to ski while moving | Flex all joints equally, extend all joints and hop, landing softly in a dynamic (moving) athletic stance |
| Traverses w/hops   * w/stepping feet * w/uphill ski off snow | Beginner  Intermediate | Can student maintain athletic stance while in motion & keep COM over BOS | * flexion of ankles, knees, hip & spine * lateral foot to foot movement * balance directed to the outside ski |
| Side slips | Beginner  Intermediate | Can student maintain athletic stance while in motion & keep COM over BOS | Flexing from ankles, knees, hips & spine  Hips open down the hill  Ski lead |
| Traverse > turn | Intermediate | Can student maintain athletic stance while in motion & keep COM over BOS | Traverse on downhill ski > flex downhill leg until uphill ski meets snow > begin extending the uphill leg forward in direction of new turn > turn; shins maintain forward contact with boot tongue thru dorsiflexion of ankle |
| Thousand Steps – gentle terrain | Intermediate | Can student maintain athletic stance while in forward motion & moving foot to foot | Stepping foot to foot, maintaining shin/boot contact, extending knee in direction of travel   * 1000 steps only @ finish * 1000 steps from apex-finish * 100 steps from initiation - finish |
| Buttonhook turns | Advanced | Different ways to move the COM over the BOS   * COM over BOS * BOS under COM * Combo COM over + BOS under | Complete a turn with tips pointed uphill > pull heels back (BOS) under COM (skis are flat) > pivot skis down fall line while flexing ankle & extending knees moving COM over BOS & body into perpendicularity |
| Switch Traverse w/buttonhook | Advanced | Different ways to move the COM over the BOS | Traverse backwards (switch) > pull heels uphill > ankles flex > knees extending moving skier into perpendicularity |
| Shuffle Drill   * thru transition (finish to initiation) * apex thru transition * initiation thru finish | Intermediate Advance | Keeping the COM over BOS while moving | Small fore/aft shuffle initiating in lower legs   * ankle, knee, femur * hips remain quiet |

Balance is not a stance or position, but rather a starting point for efficient movement and an outcome of efficient movement.