

The AASI National Team presents:

'06

The Annual Manual

Every fall the AASI National Team gathers with the Alpinos and the Nords in Colorado for training. It's a full week discussing how to improve all aspects of teaching snowsports and improving the lesson and lifestyle for all members of the association. Every year we try to recap some of the great stuff that arises and share it with you, the member, with a few words jotted down in this – the Annual Manual. While we would all like to ride with each one of you, we know its impossible, so for most of you, these pages are the only primary contact you have with us.

What you will discover in these pages are a few of the concepts that inspired us over the week. The ideas range from clinic skills to people skills and a few skills in between. This year starts out with a journey into the earth for perspective, then travels out to reflect on the outer crust. What makes a great clinic? What makes a bad clinic? Then after a brief introspective jaunt, we head into the new crop of AASI materials that are now available. From there we ride where no one wants to go, a first person account on the run called "Injury." And for those who want to rip into some serious terminology terrain, we wrap it all up with a little tech talk to fuel your literal fire.

There is little to no editing, and there is a good chance you find misspelled words and poor grammar. However, despite the appearance, we hope you will find something of value -- perhaps an idea or concept that will help your teaching or riding. But remember, the best thing about the Annual Manual is that it's free! Enjoy in moderation.

Exploring the Dark Sheds New Light

What would it be like if you and the rest of the staff of your snowboard school got together a few days before training and just hung out? You might ride, skate, or just plain hang out, not really talking about work. Do you think it would set the stage for the upcoming season a little differently? Would it have an effect on how you work with your employees or supervisors for the rest of the season?

A tradition that started with the '96-'00 AASI National Team and continues with '04-'08 of getting together a few days before team training to have fun has proven to be invaluable. Activities in the past were mountain boarding, hitting skate-parks, driving revved up go carts, Frisbee golf, hot springs, hiking, mountain biking and hitting the odd party here and there. A great deal of the materials that we come up with comes out of those two or three days before we are on the clock.

Everything in the past was done above ground, under the warm, comforting sunshine of late autumn. But this year, Butch suggested something different. So into a dark abyss we crawled. That's right, we went spelunking in a cave just west of Avon, Co.

Once we entered the cave, we allowed our eyes to adjust to the absolute darkness before we turned our headlamps on. Once that happened, it seemed like a race! We were scrambling

through every nook and cranny we could find! Crawling through 20' long tubes, squeezing through jagged cracks that were so tight we almost had to leave Spike behind! The most amazing experience I had was when Butch led us to the "Sacrificial Slab." room. It was a large space, with stalactites, stalagmites and all sorts of beautiful colors on the walls. There was one peculiar feature, which gave the room its name -- a very large flat topped boulder, set in the middle of a mess of off kilter scree. It had the appearance of an eerie altar of sorts, hence the name -- "Sacrificial Slab." The room had all sorts of exits and crawl spaces to which we quickly decided to explore. We went through one crack in the wall and explored a long winding channel for twenty minutes, which opened up into another great big room!

After some looking around, we suddenly realized that we had not found a new room at all. We were back in the "Sacrificial Slab" room! We decided to try another crack in the wall. This one took us on a 45-minute journey to a subterranean river. We crossed the river and scurried up through a small gap in the wall to another large room. I looked around at all the cool stalactites, but remarkably found ... the Sacrificial Slab!

We continued to explore many dark tunnels and somehow, no matter which direction we went, we returned to the Sacrificial Slab, but each time from a different angle! We always thought we had found a new room, but repeatedly, there it was. Either the "Slab" was somehow following us, or we were entering from a different viewpoint. At one point, I wondered which crack in the wall would actually take us home and not back to the Sacrificial Slab! Butch pretended to know how to get out, but sometimes I'm pretty sure we were lost!

Eventually, we made it out without incident. As we climbed out of the earth, a salmon sunset signaled the end of the day and the air no longer smelled of the dank depths below. As we breathed in the rich scent of the pine forest, was stoked about this new Pre Team Training session. As we hiked back to the car, I wondered what great lesson or theme would come out of this year's outing. I started thinking about the Sacrificial Slab. Why had we not recognized the room each time we returned? Many factors could have contributed, like lighting or lack of shadows, or different point of view. Whatever it was, we looked at the same thing from a different angle or perspective and saw something completely different.

But isn't this true for many things in life? What you see in someone whether it be their snowboarding skills or a personality trait really depends on the angle you are looking from. In respect to teaching, try changing your perspective when looking at a student. Move below them, across from them or follow them. You may see something different that you did not see before. It could be a good thing, it could be a bad thing. It could be the same thing. Even if it is the same thing, you will have something to work with!

Throughout the following week at Team Training, we managed to dig deep. We got a little introspective. Because of our experiences together other than work, we trust each other. We were able to give each other insight into our abilities without taking it personally. Your time with peers, students, and mentors getting to know each other before getting to work can have monumental effects on how you and your crew get work done.

When in front of a group, *obey the LAW!*

The job of being a team member includes many days of public speaking and delivering presentations. Part of our training this year was directed at how we handle presenting material and ourselves. We had a great opportunity to work with John Jensen, a nationally renowned author and phenomenal speaker.

One part of his presentation leads us to the LAW -- actually an acronym for Looks, Actions, and Words. The law of presentations is what your audience will use to judge you.

The way we **look** and present ourselves create our image and effects how we are perceived by those around us. Even though we may not realize that we are being watched, opinions are always being formed. John pointed out that if we are not getting the results we are after then we should look at what we are showing to others.

Actions are the next part of the equation. Most clinicians are being evaluated and judged even before their feet hit the snow. By the time we role into an area and meet the people we get to ride with, get a ticket, some coffee and put our boots on most people have already begun to form an opinion. Even though there is an agenda for the day there is no point when your actions are not being watched to some degree. The switch is always on.

Next are the **words** that we choose to use. The words that we use represent us so they should match what we are trying to present. They should also cater to what we are presenting and the people we are presenting to. Choose them carefully as they too will create your identity and image.

John Jensen had each of us go around to 4 different people and have them write on a piece of paper the best word that describes each of us individually. If you read through what people think of you and its not how you want to or even believe that you are perceived then perhaps your LAW will have to change. We should know how we want other to perceive us and strive for that. Be careful not to get sidetracked and throw in a confusing message by dressing, acting or speaking in a manner other than how you would want to be viewed. Keep it real and obey the LAW.

Was your clinic Rockin' or Rotten?

Do you like it when people talk to you, or with you? Do you prefer to be a part of the conversation or just the focus of the discussion?

We guess that most of you would rather be a part of the conversation. But often, we see classes and clinics organized with a 'talking to' kind of format. Tuesday we were subjected to three distinctive presentation methods (yes there are more... but we watched three).

First we were indoctrinated. It felt like a new hire clinic or an intro to teaching day. We received safety tips, class handling skills, where to stand, how to stand, even when to stand.

There was lots of information and it was good stuff, but, it was uncomfortable, there was no personality – no interaction.

Second we got ‘cliniced’ (we know that’s not a word, but at the end we felt that way). There were specific tasks with precise instructions and guidelines. There was individual feedback as to how well we performed. We got the good and the bad of how we followed direction. Again we were talked to and while we got lots of information and very direct feedback, it was not fun. Basically, everyone wanted to leave.

Third we were involved in clinic. This time we were able to explore; inject our opinions, and gain insight from our clinician and our peers. It seemed like the flow of the clinic was a group idea, I’m not sure if our clinician had a lesson plan or just an opening line. We talked with our leader, rather than being talked at, and it was refreshing.

Think about the last time you got together with your friends – did you have the day planned, or did you have a plan to start the day? From our experience today, a clinic that is planned and set may not really be one we are going to enjoy. That’s not to say we won’t learn something.

A clinic that flows and grows will keep the A.D.D. crowd engaged (that pretty much describes us). As the leader you get to choose, is it about you or about them? Do you think they want to be talked to or would a conversation be more enticing? Snowboarding is fun, teaching snowboarding is a great job; it is our opinion that if you constantly involve your guests by talking with them your client list will grow.

Traits of a clinic we like:

- 1) Flow, a clinic should move – not just down the hill. Don’t beat a topic to death.
- 2) Transitions should make sense, either from movement/board performance or from a comment or performance standpoint.
- 3) The energy of the clinic (read clinician) should be varied, at times, the energy needs to be high – over the top, at other times it needs to be mellow and relaxed allowing people to interact and even take the group over.
- 4) At the end, people (including the leader) should have had a great time!

Traits of a clinic we don’t like:

- 1) Slow – the pace should match our sport, creative, fun, constantly changing.
- 2) Standing – riding is not secondary!
- 3) The pulpit - When people just stand there and preach we tend to drift...

Feedback

Everybody loves getting positive feedback. Like, “Nice jump! That was sick; you should be in the Olympics!” Or, “Wow, your butt looks great in those jeans!” But what about the “not so” good feedback? Like, “Wow, your heelside turn is choppiier than the Perfect Storm!” Or, “Oh, is that your butt? Gosh, I thought Jupiter didn’t come out until late April!”

Sometimes, we as instructors feel very comfortable giving feedback, yet receiving feedback is a bitter pill to swallow (Those who have not passed a certification exam can probably relate).

Some of us try to avoid pissing off others and resort to giving only good feedback. You can ride this happy horse a while, but sooner or later someone is going to call your bluff and call you a “yes man,” thinking you are full of sweet baloney.

What it boils down to is there is a gentle art of giving and getting feedback. The most effective feedback results from a relationship of trust, and if you can create trust in your clinic or lesson, the people you ride with will probably be open to whatever you may say.

******* New AASI Product *******
Focus on Riding DVD

Sorry, there are no cliff drops, sick park hits, or first Alaskan descents. If you want that, then grab the latest Standard Films release. Instead this is an educational DVD focusing on Movement Analysis and Teaching. It is by no means a DVD to replace Community Project or the Process, just simply an aid to help instructors at any level. If you are doing some certification training or just want to improve you personal skills this is a great resource.

We took footage from a few days of shooting in Telluride, added in some film shot at Rider Rally in Jackson Hole and some other stuff to create the Focus on Riding DVD. The DVD is broken down into sections: a preview, focus on riding, movement analysis (MA), teaching, a slide show, plus some bonus features including the original AASI snowboard video from 98 and a downloadable version of Tiny Bubbles.

In the “Focus” section, there are different riding images with a voice over prompting questions. The questions direct you where to look for the answers. This is to help train the eye to focus on certain things happening and not the overall image. It’s a great way to generate conversations regarding MA.

In the section labeled “MA,” you can hear four different movement analysis segments on different riders performing a multitude of tasks. After listening to the different voices, you will realize that not everyone sees the same things. If you want to practice your MA skills, do a short M.A. segment yourself and compare what you saw to the audio. For those interested in practicing their personal movement analysis, this section is an invaluable tool.

In the “Teaching” section you get to witness a real life lesson filmed at the Rider Rally last season. This section shows examples of presentation, practice, feedback, etc... -- on a real group. You can use this section to learn a few new drills and or exercises or just see how AASI National Team’s Chad Frost works in front a group. Steal a few things and use them in your own lessons.

This DVD is long and it may not be best to watch it from start to finish. Instead, we recommend you use it as a tool. Skip around to the sections you want to work on, and don’t forget to download the Tiny Bubbles (progression development guide). And if you want to take a trip back in time, check out the hardbooters in the 98 video (action-*reaction!*).

******* New AASI Product *******
Park and Pipe Handbook

A new book is also out, the one many of you jibbers and park rats have been eagerly waiting for, it's the new Park and Pipe Handbook. It is a multiple discipline freestyle instructor's guide, focusing on park and pipe. Like all other AASI/PSIA materials, it is education based and focused on safety, fun and learning regarding our pipes and parks. In it, a new teaching model is introduced: Approach – Takeoff – Maneuver – Landing (ATML). The book also discusses the foundations of freestyle, followed up with a break down of jumps, rails and boxes, and the halfpipe. If you are an instructor that enjoys time in the park and pipe environment and plan to take students into terrain parks, this is another great resource.

The Hard Way

Everything felt wrong. It was 75 degrees and cloudy. We hadn't had a full warm up run yet. The rail was really vibing me out. But none of that seemed to matter when the camera was rolling. So I stepped up, and got served. Ten hours later, I awoke from my surgery with an eight inch titanium plate in my spiral fractured tibia (no metal needed for my fibula, they said). The next several weeks are a blur, but I remember being on the couch for days at a time, usually replaying the crash over and over in slow-mo on the TV. I was walking in 4 weeks, ditched the crutches at 8 weeks, and finally went for a real hike at 12 weeks.

I was worried about riding again. I had some boot work done to relieve the pressure from my ankle and started landscaping 5 weeks before team training to rebuild muscle mass. I was very anxious on the first chairlift ride at Copper that Sunday, but also very optimistic. Although riding felt very strange, especially when flexing my front (injured) ankle into a toe turn, I was stoked to be back. Each run felt better and better. By the third run, I was trying butters and 180's and feeling great. I had some pain, but everything was working. Watching the other fellas ride was getting me pumped though, and it wasn't long until I was pushing it a little harder; 360's and floating methods off rollers.

These actions were a direct affront to my plan. Coming off a serious injury, I needed to play it cool and take it easy. The rational part of my brain was screaming at me—"Easy cowboy, you've got the whole season to shred!" Unfortunately, the adrenaline-junky part of my brain is much more persuasive. And after watching Chad Frost's big f/s 3's, I decided I needed to test my limits.

Back on the snow early Monday morning, it took about 30 seconds to realize the rational part of my brain, as usual, was right. It had been 6 months and a major surgery since I had used the muscles in my leg that are responsible for dorsiflexion (come on, those are the muscles that lift the toes towards the shins, you knew that!), and that morning, those muscles let me know exactly how hard I had pushed the previous day. Nothing worked. My front ankle was useless. I couldn't get on my toe edge. Every variation in the terrain I rode sent shockwaves of pain up my leg. It was bad. I ended up taking three runs, sideslipping the majority of the time.

Hopefully, the pain will subside and I will learn my lesson. Hopefully, you can learn from my experience. Perhaps most important; listen to your gut. If it doesn't feel right, don't do it. Come back another day to ride. It's not worth an ambulance ride and 8 weeks of unemployment; trust me. If you are injured, realize that slow and steady is the way to make your comeback. When I was dryland rehabbing, this was easy. As soon as I hit the snow, it became extremely difficult. Had I remembered to chill on my first day out, I would have had a much better second day. Although testing my limits seemed like a good idea, it wasn't. When dealing with physical issues, it is always better to err on the side of caution. If you're like me you probably won't pay attention to this advice. But remember, they call it "learning the hard way" for a reason.

A Rose by any Other Name...

I'm what you might call a "word smart" person, or a "word dumb" person depending on who you talk to. I tend to interpret statements literally. This can cause problems in many aspects of my life since only about 10% of communication is actually verbal. On the other hand, I believe this perspective tends to make me very precise with my language when teaching snowboarding. If I want a rider to twist the snowboard, that's what I tell them to do. When teaching other word smart people, I have a great advantage. Although I don't know the actual statistics, I would guess that a small percentage of the world deciphers words like I do.

Consider these three statements:

"That was a huge cliff!"

"We got dumped on last night!"

"Use a flat board at the lip of the jump."

These statements are all very open to interpretation. How big is a huge cliff? 10 feet? 100 feet? How about a dumping of snow? For me in the East, a foot of fresh is a big dump, but the fellas make fun of me when I say that's pow! What exactly does a flat board mean? When I can feel the ball of my foot on my footbed as much as I feel my heel on my footbed, I consider myself to be riding a flat board. When I snowboard, I ride a flat board very rarely, but of course, I pass through a flat board between every turn. When I ride rails, I am on a flat board (at least, that's what I try to be on). Other than this, I find that I am rarely 100% flat. At the lip of a jump, I am on the balls of my feet or barely on my heels. My board is tilted ever so slightly so that I have a solid platform on which to push. Even on cat tracks, I find that I am only on a flat board if I am riding straight down the fall line. So, for me, a flat board is a rarity, and something that is for a very specific purpose.

Now you may be thinking that I'm splitting hairs, but that's what I do as a word conscious person. Next time you find yourself in the locker room or on the snow instructing or debating, remember weirdos like me and be sure that your audience understands exactly what you are trying to tell them. Now, about that cliff....

Thanks for reading! We hope to see you out there, and if you ever go spelunking, wear a helmet, bring a lot of light, and don't forget to wash the clothes you wore within a week, or the trunk you stashed them in will stink indefinitely.

Also, it is probably a good idea *not* to mention places like “The Sacrificial Slab” to your mom.

Hope to see you on snow!

Butch frontside3@aol.com

K.C. kdotcdot@gmail.com

Chad chadfrost@hotmail.com

Mikey mikeyf@bresnan.net

Spike meisenman@vailresorts.com

Scott scott_anfang@hotmail.com

Randy souldriver@earthlink.com