

EXPERT TIPS

Getting An Edge On Skiing And Snowboarding

(NAPSA)—Skiing and snowboarding are two of the most physically demanding winter sports. They both offer the opportunity to experience joy in movement at high speeds in beautiful surroundings.

In order to minimize your risk of injury and maximize your performance potential, Bill Hirschfield, a veteran certified personal trainer of 24 Hour Fitness, official fitness center sponsor of the 2006 U.S. Olympic Team, along with Team 24 Hour Fitness athletes—World Cup Championship downhill skier Daron Rahlves and snowboarder Gretchen Bleiler—has developed several workout techniques to give you the edge on ski/snowboarding season.

Once your foundation of strength, endurance and flexibility is laid, the primary attributes you will need to develop are balance, coordination, agility, core control and reactivity.

Flexibility, endurance and strength are key elements in success on the slopes. The majority of ski injuries occur late in the day when skiers/snowboarders are tired.

The following exercises are to be performed in two to three sets of 15-20 repetitions for each exercise after a 10-15-minute warm-up on a treadmill or elliptical trainer:

- **Ball Crunch:** Lay across a mat with your back against the ground; knees bent and heels close to your lower back. Holding an 8-lb. medicine ball in both hands, crunch up towards your knees and slowly lower down to the count of four. Do two to three sets of 15-20 reps each.

- **Bench Jump to Stabilization:** Start out with legs separated at hips width. Bend into a half-squat and spring upward, landing on



IT'S ALL DOWNHILL—In skiing, when you develop a foundation of strength, endurance and flexibility, it's all downhill from there.

the bench in front of you. Hop down and continue doing two sets of 15 reps.

Tip from Daron Rahlves:

- **Hanging Leg Raises:** Hang from a bar so that your body is fully extended without your feet touching the ground. Use a slow, controlled motion to raise your knees as close to your chest as possible. Lower slowly to avoid swinging. This twist mimics your body's motion during a ski turn. Do three sets of 15 repetitions. Continue with three sets of 15 reps.

Tip from Gretchen Bleiler:

- **Hamstring Curls on Swiss Ball:** Core strength is the key to success on a snowboard and this particular exercise is ideal for building those muscles. Start with 7.5-lb. weights in each hand. Kneel on the ball and curl both arms up simultaneously into a bicep curl. Release and repeat two sets of 12. If you are struggling to balance, keep one leg off to stabilize yourself until you feel comfortable with both legs on the ball.

Complete your workout with a five-minute cardio cool-down and stretch hamstrings and any other tight muscles afterwards. Within four weeks, you will be ready to hit the slopes with a renewed sense of confidence.