

My new carpet skis

Spring skiing always presents waxing difficulties for classic skiing, so the new skin/carpet/hairy generation of no-wax skis, marketed by all the leading ski manufacturers, have offered up a new solution.

Following Sarah and Simon's enthusiastic reports in the last YD newsletter, I thought these looked a likely solution for my loathing of klister wax. In recent years I have used a lively(ish) pair of Madshus fish scale skis which have coped well with Easter skiing, although they are noisy and don't work on ice. When club members were offered Atomic ski skis as hire skis on our club holiday in Finland, I took the opportunity to try them out.

The hire shop offered me a pair of brand new Atomic Pro SkinTec skis ready fitted with Salomon Profil bindings to fit my own boots. I took them out at -10C and although not as smooth as my racing skis, grip was good and glide quite reasonable with just a slight occasional 'grab'. Of course they are designed for warmer temperatures so I was keen to try them in Norway at Easter. I bought them for 232 euros, including bindings, and was quite happy with the deal, although they might be found cheaper on the internet. They come in different lengths and stiffness and I bought for weight 55-65 kg even though I only weigh 52kg. By adding on boots, jacket and a small day sack, I reckon it has put me into the bottom of the weight range and I think that this has given me extra glide whilst maintaining excellent grip. Length is 181cm and cut 45,45,45, slightly wider than my classic racing skis.

With two weeks skiing at the end of March/beginning of April, they really proved their worth. I didn't use my waxable skis at all as the Atomics coped well with all the conditions that you get at this time of year – old snow, melting snow, ice, fresh snow. Grip was excellent and I was quite happy with the glide. I don't think I would win any race on them, but I certainly didn't have to work hard to make them run and enjoyed good days out on the tracks on hilly terrain.

At the SSE course at Kvitavatn, Senior Tutor Alan Eason talked about the merits of the different makes of skin skis. He concluded that the Atomic Skin Tec seemed to outperform other makes at the moment and recommended the Atomic Redstar C9, which has the same skin as my Atomic ProTec. Quite a number on the course were using skin skis of various makes and I did think that mine compared very favourably for performance.

Atomic are part of the same group as Salomon, so come fitted with either Salomon Profil or Prolink bindings. For anyone buying new skis and boots, I would recommend the new Prolink binding which gives a wider choice of boots (including NNN) to use with them and looks to be the way forward. Alan recommended adding 5kg to your weight when choosing skis.

Caring for the skins

Spring skiing is always dirty skiing with old snow accumulating debris and everyone else's wax and klister. Mine did get very dirty so I bought the 'Swix Ski Cleaner' pack which contains a roll of fibrelene and a pump spray of cleaner which will not affect the glue. It appears to be aeroplane friendly. There is also a Swix Skin Conditioner to encourage you to spend even more. The skins will wear out eventually but can be renewed by warming and scraping off the old skin and replacing with a new one. (I am told.)

Meanwhile, I would highly recommend the Atomic Pro tecs as both a first time ski and as an alternative to a waxable ski in warm/difficult waxing conditions.

Helen Bell