

Invite your Skis to the BBQ this spring...

By Dave Peszek

This is the tenth in a series of technical articles that will appear this season in Ski Racing. Each issue, we'll tackle different topics that arise for skiers & riders of all types. The author will attempt to answer any tech questions that you may have – Pez@holmenkol.us.

With spring's arrival comes corn snow, sunshine, and lots of great racing. You are most likely deep into your most intense period of racing right now, with Championships and Spring Series events to attend. If you've been following along most of the season, your skis should be in good repair and it should only take you moments daily to keep them good for training, and a little longer for racing prep.

One aspect we have not discussed yet is the use of the BBQ brush. Often thought of as a spring only tool, it is often used year round. Many people approach the use of a BBQ brush as being only for the most skilled technicians, yet its proper use is within everyone's realm.

In reality, you should have at your disposal 3 options(stiffest to softest) for BBQ'ing your skis: the traditional BBQ brush, the Home Depot Wooster Steel brush, and your everyday oval steel brush.

What exactly does a BBQ brush do? I like to think of it as a structure enhancer – it does not re-structure your skis, but rather makes the existing structure more pronounced, often a good thing in warmer snow. However, it also helps to open up more micro level pores in the base to accept & hold more wax, which can often make even a cold snow ski faster in its element. Additionally, proper use of a BBQ brush can help to remove base burn, too.

Without question there is a little bit of superstition involved in BBQ'ing your skis. Some top techs use it only when they need to find new speed in a ski; others use it weekly, no matter what; and still others never touch it at all. In my opinion, these varied approaches reflect the differences in ski bases, grinds, events, experience, and past successes of the technicians involved. As the saying goes, there is always more than 1 way to skin a cat!

So, how to do it? Simple. First, be sure that your skis are really secure in their vice. I use a jaw and 4 supports in my home workshop, and when I travel I use a jaw, two supports, and extension arms. This ensures that I can generate even, consistent pressure along the whole length of the ski from the very tip to the tail, with 5 points of contact always. If it's your first time, it's not a bad idea to have someone hold the opposite end of the ski to prevent it from "flying up" from the pressure you will put on it.

Second, decide which brush you want to use. The BBQ brush will do the most work; the Home Depot Wooster Steel is an intermediate (softer) version; and the oval round steel that you normally use everyday can be turned around backwards (Holmenkol or Toko version) and will have the least effect.

Now that you are fully secured, take your BBQ or Wooster brush, lay it on the very tip of the ski at a 45 angle, then press down firmly and evenly as you twist the brush handle to become level with the ski's base. This will place a great deal of torque on the bristles themselves, and now it is time to hold that torque and move the brush down the ski. Is

you are using the oval steel (backwards), simply lay the brush flat and press down with medium pressure as you move the brush down the ski. What you will see left behind will most likely scare you, but do not fear. I usually do 3-4 passes down the ski at this point with the BBQ.

Now, you have completed the BBQ process. It is time to clean the skis up and make them fast again. The stiff steel bristles have pulled up lots of base material, which needs to be shorn off using a very sharp plastic scraper. Be sure that you have no burrs on the scraper, and re-sharpen it after 3-4 passes down the ski. As you scrape the ski, you will remove most of the "fuzz" that the BBQ process has brought up. Continue until you can scrape no more fuzz from the ski.

Next, using your oval steel brush (in the correct direction), brush the skis vigorously from tip to tail. At this point, the skis should look equal to or even better than they did before! Finish up with some scotch-brite to cut any final micro-hairs, then brush extensively with a brass brush, and you are done! If you have a magnifying lens handy, this is a good time to check your bases to be sure there are no hairs left behind to slow you down. At this point, it is time to prepare the edges, wax, and get ready to go fast!

Good luck at the races!

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