

Week number 8 in the VARA series, Holmenkol takes a look at overlays.

Just what is an overlay? An overlay is the final coat of a highly pure, custom engineered fluoro product designed to maximize acceleration & glide. They can be counted on to last between 1 and 5 runs, depending on the application method and snow type. Overlays go by many names, such as TopSpeed (Holmenkol), and come in a variety of forms (powder, paste, stick, block, liquid).

You should use an overlay when you are searching for the most speed possible – usually just at a race. However, for developing athletes (J3 thru J1's), it is important to have a handful of training days in GS & SG with a complete race wax & overlay application. The reason for this is to adapt the racers' timing to the significantly faster glide and speed. I have heard of World Cup technicians being concerned about making their skis "too" fast and throwing off the timing of a younger Europa

Cup or World Cup athlete.

An overlay can be chosen in most snow conditions. First, read the label and understand the snow temperature range and humidity range that the product is engineered for. The wax company has done the research for you, so you should trust their findings. If you have a snow temperature and humidity that falls outside of the range of the product you have, you will most likely be faster without than by risking the application. Many mistakes are made when the athlete, coach, or parent tries to second guess the wax brands' recommendations.

Since this series of articles deals with alpine racing, I'll make suggestions that are relevant only to alpine skiers.

In my opinion, forget the powders. They are difficult for most to apply properly, and when applied near the start house are usually applied incorrectly, due to cold temps. & wind. I suggest using only stick/block format, paste, or liquid for

alpine, as the results will be much better. You should never use any type of overlay when there are fresh snow crystals present on the race course – you will be slow!

Generally, you will want to apply the overlay before your race runs. If you are forced to inspect on your race skis, apply the overlay after inspection. Stick application should be through rubbing (crayoning) on the length of the ski. For paste, simply apply with the sponge. Liquids require the user to follow the individual instructions, as their use varies greatly. When you cork the product, it should be with great pressure, enough to generate heat and a waxy film. Perform the same step again with a felt covered cork, then brush 5-10 passes tip to tail with a horsehair brush.

Generally speaking, a club, athlete, coach, or parent only needs 3 separate overlay products to cover the entire range of application. The first is for "spring" conditions – warm & wet snow,

middle & high humidity. The second is for mid temperature snow, and usually is the least discerning of humidity range. The last is for very cold, “dry” snow, and is best at lower to middle humidity ranges found there.

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