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NORTH AMERICA'S

25 Best skiers

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THE TOP FIVE

CURIOUS WHO ROSE TO THE TIP-TOP? HERE'S WHO SCORED THE MOST NUMBER-ONE VOTES:

1. Shane McConkey 2. Jonny Moseley 3. Jeremy Nobis 4. Seth Morrison 5. Daron Rahives

WE BOLDLY PICK THE TOP 25 SKIERS IN NORTH AMERICA. MEET THIS YEAR'S GODS OF THE SKI WORLD. EDITED BY BEVIN WALLACE

There are a lot of terrific skiers out there—hell, we bet you're pretty darn good yourself. There are also quite a few scarily great skiers, the folks who make your jaw drop watching them straight-line an Alaskan face or fly through the air in a tangled configuration Rube Goldberg couldn't make heads or tails of. But what makes *these* 25 skiers the best is their consistent greatness, their ability to dazzle every time they touch ski to snow.

When we hatched the idea for this list, we knew it would spark controversy. "Just think how many people we'll piss off!" Well, that clinched it. So, we surveyed hundreds of skiers, SKIING contributors, photographers, coaches, ski-film makers, and other ski-industry types; we argued the merits of skodeos versus switch back flips; we sat on the sidelines of World Cup races; we watched ski movies. Ultimately what hit us was not the preposterousness of the task, but how simple it was. When it comes to godlike skiers, there is a surprising amount of consensus; these 25 big-mountain freeskiers, ski mountaineers, jibbers, racers, freestylers, and telemarkers just bubbled to the top of almost every list.

So here they are, in no particular order, the 25 best skiers in North America today.

J.P. Auclair, 23
Stoneham, Que.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Progenitor of new school big air, he won the first U.S. Open Big Air comp in '98 and has been at the top of just about every podium since. Performs every single trick with impeccable style. Remembers beating Jonny Moseley in a World Cup moguls final in 1997: "He crashed and came in 12th; I was 11th."
BEYOND THE PARK: Designed his own twin-tip powder ski, the Pocket Rocket, for Salomon this year. **PGTS:** Kazan, "the stupidest dog alive."
SKI HERO: Flake. **MOVIES:** He's been in 12 or so, including *Ski Movie*, *The Game*, and Willy Bogner's new IMAX film, *Ski to the Max*—"It's hilarious; we wore neon and did stunts like in the '70s."

The

Gordy Peifer, 31

Alta, UT

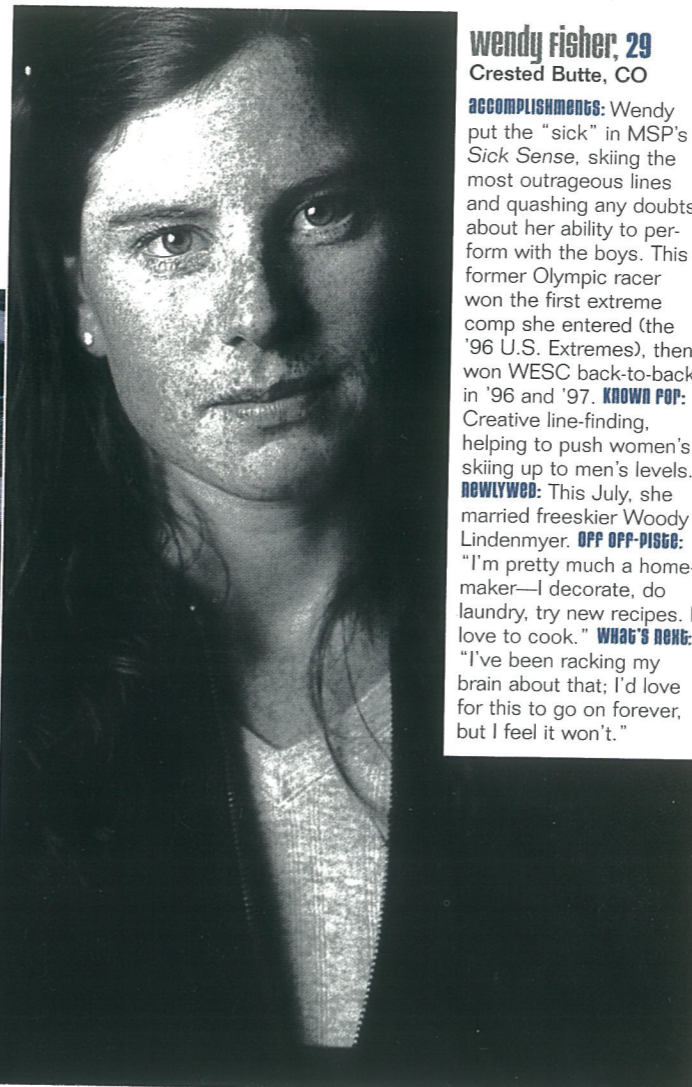
CLAIM TO FAME: Once notorious just for sick airs ("I hit a lot of big cliffs and always tried to stick my landings."), he's now known more for his turns and blistering speed—for "actually skiing a peak as opposed to jumping a peak." Won the 2000 U.S. Freeskiing Nationals at Snowbird. **FORMATIVE YEARS:** Learned to ski at Pine Knob, outside Detroit, at age 4. **LAST BOOK:** *Endurance*. **TERMINAL PARKS:** "Every area should have one; they're breathing life into younger skiers." **WHAT'S NEXT:** "I'd like to segue into photography." **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Ski first lift to last. That's a big part of what made me a good skier—loving to ski."



Wendy Fisher, 29

Crested Butte, CO

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Wendy put the "sick" in MSP's *Sick Sense*, skiing the most outrageous lines and quashing any doubts about her ability to perform with the boys. This former Olympic racer won the first extreme comp she entered (the '96 U.S. Extremes), then won WESC back-to-back in '96 and '97. **KNOWN FOR:** Creative line-finding, helping to push women's skiing up to men's levels. **HOWLYWEE:** This July, she married freeskiier Woody Lindenmyer. **OFF OFF-PISTO:** "I'm pretty much a home-maker—I decorate, do laundry, try new recipes. I love to cook." **WHAT'S NEXT:** "I've been racking my brain about that; I'd love for this to go on forever, but I feel it won't."



Daron Rahives, 27

Sugar Bowl, CA

RESULTS: Won two World Cup downhill within 24 hours last March in Kvitfjell, Norway, bringing his World Cup total to 15 top-10 finishes. The U.S. Ski Teamer is also gaining the respect of new schoolers by winning skiercross competitions (four in the last two years, including at last spring's Whistler World Ski & Snowboard Festival). **SKI HERO:** "Shane McConkey—he's the best skier there is. The guy is sick." **MISSIONARY:** My girlfriend's a pro snowboarder; she kills the halfpipe. I just got her skis and boots, though." **ON 2002:** "It's close to home. It's going to be unreal. The ultimate would be to win at Snowbasin in 2002."



Reid Sabin, 28

Big Mountain, MT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: The first American ever to win a World Cup telemark race. Won six of 15 races last year and was the overall winner. **SIGNATURE EVENT:** Telemark classic: starts with downhill, then there's a GS section with double jumps ("you fly 120 feet at times"), followed by a skating section with gates. **BEGINNINGS:** "My mom and dad were ski instructors. I started on Alpine but switched to tele at 22, mainly to get into the back-country." **FAVORITE BAND:** Beastie Boys. **BEVERAGE:** Cheap beer. **WORDS OF WISDOM:** "Get involved just for the love of it. Tele skiers don't make any money, but it's completely worth it. Try new things; try twin tips; take it to the next level."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCOTT MARKWITZ (2), SCOTT SPIKER, TIM HANCOCK