

Masters National DH Championships

and Speed Series at Aspen Snowmass • February 2–4, 2015 • by Luke Keenan

This year, the Masters National DH Championships will be held on the Tiehack Parkway and Racer's Edge trail at Buttermilk in Aspen Snowmass. The series will consist of two full DH training days on Feb. 2 and 3, followed by the national DH championship race on the morning of Feb. 4. Following that will be a second Rocky Mountain Speed Series DH race, on the same course. After the DH championships will be the USSA FIS Master's Cup/Western Region Championships Feb. 5–8. This starts with an SG on Feb. 5, followed by two GS's and one SL race. All races occur on the same hill.

Course Description:

All descriptions are from the skier's point of view. The downhill starts right at the top of the brand-new Tiehack express quad chairlift on the Tiehack Parkway, and continues onto the Racer's Edge trail. Some of you might remember having to take two slow double chairs just a few years ago. Both of those old lifts have been replaced by a single high-speed detachable quad lift. This means more time for inspections and free skiing!

The top of the course starts off with a 20-second flat very similar to the start of the Beaver Creek men's World Cup DH course. Then the pitch slowly increases from the SG start to the GS start. This section features long, drawn-out tuck turns. It is important to stay relaxed here, as the action gets intense after the GS start.

The **Waterfall** is the first true pitch on the course. It is very important to stay high and early going over the Waterfall pitch, because directly following it is a series of high-speed offset fall-away turns. The fall line through this section runs to the left, so every left-footed turn is a fall-away. The main focus here should be clean, carved turns while keeping high and early on the line through Wirebump.

Wirebump is generally set as a right-footed turn over a small knoll. If you are

high and early on your line, Wirebump isn't much of a bump. However the lower and later you are coming out of the fall-away turns, the bigger it gets. This is due to the fact that Wirebump is an angled ridge

of Peanut Island is a small bump two gates before the finish. This jump can be a bit blind if you are still leaned over coming out of the left-footer above Peanut Island. It is very important to make sure you have finished your turn here so that you are jumping straight or slightly to the right. As with the whole run, this finish pitch also has a fall line that runs to the left, so if you jump to the left, you're most likely jumping out of the course!

Finishing: Many people hit the finishing nets at Okemo—myself included. Remember that inspection does not end at the finish line for speed events. Inspect the whole finish area and know which way you are going to stop. Do not ever hockey stop with your skis pointed to the closest net at a speed event, because if you take too long to switch sides, you will hit the net. That being said, it's recommended a right-footed hockey stop here, as it will give you the most room to slow down.

A big thanks goes out to Bill Tomcich for getting us 45% off of the Inn At Aspen, which is right at the base of Buttermilk. This is an amazing deal and should not be passed up! Also worth noting is that if you stay at this hotel, there is no need for a



line that grows bigger from left to right.

Coming out of Wirebump is the **Meadows** section. If you come out of Wirebump with a high and early line, this can be a section to grab your breath before hitting Coaches Knoll. If you came into Wirebump late, you will be struggling to get back on line through here, and given that it's fairly flat, that is not fast!

Coming through **Coaches Knoll** is the steepest section of the course. You come across the top of the pitch by doing a 2–3 gate traverse out of the bottom left of the Meadows, finishing on the far right of Coaches Knoll. Then they set you free, down a three-gate speed corridor down the far skier's right side. This sets up for a long high-G, right-footed turn coming out of the bottom of the pitch.

Next up is a nice long left-footer up and around **Peanut Island**. Coming out

car, as the lift is about 25 feet from the front door. It may also be worth flying directly into Aspen with no car rental needs.

Lodging

Contact Bill Tomcich
 btomicich@stayaspensnowmass.com
 www.stayaspensnowmass.com
 Official host hotel at the base of Buttermilk Ski Area: Inn At Aspen By Wyndham vacation rentals; rooms starting at \$155/night, 45% OFF!

Eligible travel dates: Feb. 1–10, 2015
 Book before Feb. 9
 Minimum stay: 1 Night
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