

## **Masters Racing and Training at WV**

What is masters racing? Did you know that USSA has a masters division with seven different regions around the country (including Alaska) that compete regionally and then meet at the nationals in late March? At nationals, the winners in each age division are then named to the USSA Masters National Alpine Ski Team for that year. In addition, Spyder selects a separate national team using World Cup scoring, so selection for the USSA Masters Team does not necessarily mean selection to the Spyder National Team. Masters age categories start at 18-29 then are divided into five year age groups after that (30-34, 35-39, etc.). All age groups are quite competitive with some racers from former national teams represented (US, Irish, Norwegian, Austrian). Many ex college and high school racers also compete, but some of the best masters racers only took up ski racing as adults.

Waterville Valley has had a masters training program for many years and is one of the only areas offering three days per week training for adults who want to race. Our program starts the day after Thanksgiving and continues until the end of the season. Masters members train on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. After New Years many masters are away every Saturday and Sunday at races. Our division, the New England Masters, will hold 22 races this season at areas in New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine (unfortunately none are at Waterville!). In addition, many masters racers will compete in the Eastern Championships held at Sugar bush, Vermont in early March and the Skier's Edge U.S. Alpine Masters Championships at Big Sky, Montana March 26-April 3.

Masters racing is fun and competitive and offers a way for racers to enjoy the sport after high school/college into old age. New England Masters range in age from 21 (18-21 was just added this year) to an incredible 87! If you are a parent and have "paid your dues" gate keeping and driving your kids to races, remember that masters racing may be in your future!

## **Masters Racing - Why do they do it?**

*by Larry Young*

-Who are these so-called masters and what are they doing running gates (you might well ask). We train for various reasons. Some to become better basic skiers, some to avoid getting worse, some to win cups (an average Masters Sise/WES cup costs about \$1250, based on outlays for equipment and training) and some to recover the dreams of youth. We are *used to be* and *wannabe racers*, mostly in our 50s and 60s but with some very fast *kids* in their 40s. As the 2nd oldest, at 69, I will give you my perspective.

-We train (and some of us race) for the pleasure of working hard to attain something difficult, in a healthy, beautiful and supportive environment. We have known, competed against and joked with the same gang for decades, some since our college

racing days. We learn and unlearn ski racing techniques as equipment and methods evolve. We wear speed suits and shin guards for no apparent reason, and we even get nervous in the starting gate. We lift weights and bike hard in August to be stronger skiers in December. We enjoy winning - but most of all we love to meet our own growing standards of what we can achieve. We know that on average we are getting slower (0.5% per year over 30 for GS and 1% per year for Slalom according to the Rocky Mountain Masters) but we each try to push forward a bit. By competing in age groups the pursuit remains reasonable and fun. ***Ski Racing is a lifelong sport and remember, it is not the destination but the voyage that matters!***

### **Masters Program Athlete Profile**

Klaus Haas

By Suzie Boulter

Klaus is at the top of the standings this year in the very competitive class 9 of the New England Masters Sise Cup Series. Klaus started to ski at the age of 3 in his small home town in Austria where he would walk to a local hill, climb to the top, then ski down – landing in either a brook or a bush at the bottom of the hill to stop. As a child he skied a few bigger hills in Austria but did not race. He then moved with his family to Michigan when he was 14 and did not ski again until age 20. While in college, Klaus joined a recreational ski club that took a yearly trip to Aspen. While skiing there, Klaus would carefully watch the Austrian pros – former Olympians Tony Spies and Anderl Molterer – then he would try to copy their style. Klaus reports that one of the best days of his life was when Andre spontaneously gave him some pointers on his ski technique!

College, medical school, children, and the pressures of practicing surgery kept Klaus busy for the next few decades. His children, excellent skiers, joined BBTS and started to race. Simultaneously Klaus and a few other skiers started the Masters Program at BBTS about 20 years ago. Klaus was busy at that time watching his kids race and giving them pointers until one day his daughter Stephanie said – “get off my back and race yourself”! After that challenge Klaus started to race in the masters series, at first going to just a few races but training and racing more seriously over the past six years. His results have continued to improve, and currently he is at the top of his class beating some ex-national ski team members and lots of former college racers! Klaus attributes his success to the WVBBS masters program and the support that has come from the ski club, from head coach Tom Barbeau, and from our masters coach Mark Godek.

Klaus is easily the most intense WVBBS masters skier. After the masters course is pulled and the rest of the group has gone home Klaus can be seen training with the 1s and 2s – in the ruts and on the ice. He skied so well at masters race camp that Tom Barbeau accused him of being on steroids and asked for a urine drug test! Now that Klaus has retired from his surgical practice, he can often be seen skiing and training at Waterville Valley on week days as well as weekends. Another senior masters racer Larry Young has coined a phrase that describes Klaus well; “from riches to rags – abandoning the life of a surgeon to become a “senior” ski bum”!