

Tested on Tour

By: Craig Nicholson

Pilot Skis

Last January, BRP introduced its new Pilot 5.7 Ski at a media unveiling of their 2006 product line. For 2006, the Pilot will replace the Precision Ski on all Ski-Doo snowmobiles. Some media questioned if the Pilot's fortuitous arrival derived from the settlement of a recent lawsuit that precluded BRP's continued use of its dual carbide in the Precision ski configuration. However, the fact is that the Pilot Ski was in development long before the Precision became a legal issue. Regardless, BRP has likely produced its best ski yet with the Pilot 5.7.

I was so impressed with the handling capabilities of the new ski that I asked to test it throughout last winter, a task I was uniquely set up to accomplish. I had access to two 2005 Ski-Doo GTX Limited 600 SDI sleds, so I put the Pilot skis on one and for benchmarking, left the Precision skis on the other. Then my companions and I rode both sleds over 7,500 km. on groomed trails, switching back and forth for instant comparison on the same snow and under identical conditions.

My verdict is that the Pilot ski delivers on all of the best features of the Precision ski, but with half the operator effort. The Pilot definitely has a lighter, airier feel, but when it comes to control and handling, especially on corners, it really bites and tracks true. Best of all, it avoids the main pitfalls of the Precision ski, which are heavy steering, darting, and grabbing in previous Precision tracks. Altogether, a pair of Pilot skis shaves 4lb. off the weight of your sled's front end.

Underneath, the Pilot is also configured with two carbides. However, the main carbide is in the centre, the other on the outside edge of each ski. The centre

carbide is in constant contact with the snow, but it has been moved slightly farther back, to directly under the ski leg. This configuration places optimum weight on the carbides. It also means that the front end of each carbide is less likely to vibrate laterally in the snow. This improvement reduces the levering effect that more forward carbide placements may have on ski tips, which can result in wobble and pronounced darting.

The secondary, exterior carbide comes into play when weight transfers while cornering, pushing it into the snow. This extra carbide bite happens just when it's needed and enables more tightly controlled maneuvering. One tip: when installing more aggressive carbides on Pilot skis, try using a longer carbide on the outside for increased cornering bite.

So what's the user verdict? Everyone noticed a significant improvement in the Pilot Ski over its predecessor, and even over many other skis. Judging by my wife's reaction to the Pilot, I think BRP has a hit on their hands with female riders. She raved that the Pilot ski required much less shoulder and arm strength for steering, so her operating confidence and touring stamina both increased. In fact, my greatest challenge in testing the Pilot was trying to keep her off that sled long enough to do a proper evaluation!

The best news of all is that the new Pilot 5.7 ski can be retrofitted easily to any Ski-Doo snowmobile currently equipped with Precision skis, so you can get yourself a whole new sled for the \$200 cost of a pair of Pilot skis. Snowmobilers presently riding other makes of sleds can also benefit by upgrading to Pilot skis. Available at Ski-Doo dealers for \$99 each. Click on www.ski-doo.com (accessories).

Agressiveness

Low Speed



Large ski turning angle.



No weight transfer.



Outside ski, center keel (runner) is active.

Inside ski, center keel (runner) and outside keel (runner) are active.