

SNOW
EAST!

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A NEW Binding!

Is it about time?

Marker has a new binding, the Jester, designed specifically for wider skis. But do these new bindings work any better on a wide ski than a standard model? Well, to find out, I had a Jester Binding (made to go on skis at least 76mm wide at the waist) and a standard Marker M-12 Twincam step-in binding (made for 63 mm or wider skis) mounted on identical pairs of Volkl Mantra skis. These featured a waist of 96mm, ideal for powder and big mountain skiing. I did not have to wait long before a nice powder day as one came along in the middle of March.

When testing skis, the normal thing to do is to take a couple of runs on one pair and then switch to the other. I decided to be clever. Since the skis are identical except for their bindings, I would wear the Jester on my left foot and the Twincam on my right and test the bindings side by side. What better way to feel the difference! Plus, I did not have to return to the base of the mountain to switch skis. Seemed like a good idea!

As I stepped into the mixed pairs of bindings on that powder day, I noticed that the two-piece Twincam binding has a soft-entry feature, while the Jester's Inter-pivot heel did not. Chalk up one point for the M-12 step-in.

With a foot of new snow, my strategy to get "freshies" was to start on out-of-the-way groomers and then head for the trees. Switching skis from foot to foot I can honestly say I felt very little difference in the first runs on untracked snow. Going to the woods, I skied into chopped up snow. Now I could feel the Jester binding helping the ski edge more powerfully and precisely. I had to work the M12 binding harder to get the same edge angle I had on the Jester.

The moguls were next on the menu. The secure hold of the Jester binding made me feel that wide skis can be fun in the bumps (of course, with all the powder, these were soft bumps). Whereas edge to edge quickness is usually handicapped with wide-waisted skis, the Jester binding seemed to help them feel narrower.

Since I had the skis for a whole month (life is good) I took them out as much as possible. On those days when the corduroy was firm and fast, the mixed pair of bindings did not last long. The Jester bindings made such a difference that I had to switch to having them on both skis.

Hmmm, lets try something else. Being a visual learner, I decided to take the skis to the shop, clamp them into ski vises and see what happens when I torque them.

With both skis held firm and my boots in the bindings,

I gently tried to move the boots sideways. Your lower leg does this - edge the ski - more easily than I could by hand. I could see with my own eyes what I had felt on the firm snow. The heel piece on the Jester binding was not budging an inch, while the step-in Twincam allowed the boot to move.

Pushing on the boots harder, I could see the Jester's Inter-Pivot heel holding the boot so well that the plastic on the heel lug of my boot was bending, while the step-in binding allowed the boot to rock upwards on one side. Moving to the toe pieces, I could see that the Jester toe has a broader base at boot contact point (2 5/8 inches wide), designed for better retention. The design of the M-12 (2-1/8 inches wide at boot contact) has boot release as a bigger priority and is also capable of releasing during a backwards fall.

During the last few ski seasons, manufacturers have been pushing the dimensions of the all-mountain skis wider and wider and now a binding has come for the ride. After testing the bindings side by side, I can *see* and *feel* why Marker went to a whole new design from the bottom up and created the Jester binding specifically for wider skis. ❄️

