

Shadowing the SBINZ Level One in Niseko

I recently had the opportunity of shadowing the SBINZ Level One exam whilst progressing towards becoming a Level One examiner. This was an incredible experience, being the culmination of the past 6 years progressing through the SBINZ qualifications. Being able to help facilitate the process of qualifying snowboarders with their Level One was awesome.

We all met on day one at the bottom of Hirafu. There were two groups of 6 candidates being trained by Keith Stubbs and Luke Gillett, two long-term Niseko shredders. I was going to be shadowing Keith Stubbs who is on the SBINZ board, Level Three examiner and has been coming back to Japan for several years. We started out the morning with the plan for the next five days of learning, the marking criteria and discussing the safety and professionalism section. We were paired off for the chair ride up and had to find out as much as we could about our partner, we would be introducing them to the group on the first run down. Not only to get to know each other but also learn one of the first things about being an instructor, how to make a connection with your students and using that to create better lessons. Keith had a great example with his partner Ken, who studied engineering, stating that once getting to know Ken he might be able to use more technical explanations that his engineering background might allow.

Having learnt the power of a great introduction and riding a couple laps on the great Hokkaido snow, we delved into the importance of the basic stance. A solid basic stance enables us to move through the four movements for biomechanical efficiency and to optimise board performance. After discussing some different analogies to help relate it to different people we were paired off again on the chair. Each pair had one of the movements and had to come up with other ways to describe the movement, when we use it in snowboarding and also specifically how we move through that plane. This is where the SBINZ E-Learning came into its own. The E-Learning is a new resource that's been created as a prerequisite to sitting Level One, Two and Three. It's an excellent tool that provides all the information you need to successfully pass the examination process. With the E-Learning under their belt and some guidance from Keith and I, we were able to successfully bring the knowledge gained online and explore it out on snow with some fun exercises.

At lunch each of the candidates had an opportunity to read through the teaching cycle and present it back to the group. We discussed how to utilise the teaching cycle to help structure the information we deliver in a simple and logical manner. Which rolled perfectly into Keith leading the First Timers Progression. Everyone strapped in switch to get a feeling for how a beginner feels, strapping in for the first time. We stopped at various points to expand on some of the more difficult parts of the progression or to sprinkle some knowledge on adapting it to different students. Throughout the teach candidates were assigned different learning styles to look out for from the VAK model. Keith gave excellent examples on how they could cater to individual learning styles throughout the progression.

The next morning there was a bit of fresh snow, it was straight up the chair to get some nice turns in and also develop their edge awareness. We were snowboarding on a variety of terrain with individual feedback given for rider improvement. We then headed to a flatter run and started to develop everyone's basic skidded turn. This is an important part of the Level One for a few reasons. Firstly, as instructors we need to show our students

what their first turns are going to look like, as well as presenting an aesthetically pleasing demonstration for visual learners. It also develops the candidate's knowledge on the capabilities of beginners and how they're going to be moving. Furthermore, slowing down their riding and ensuring a solid basic stance, efficient movements through the lower body, both forwards and switch, makes a huge difference with higher end riding. Since we were working on edge awareness it seemed appropriate that we did some 50-50's on a box in the park.

At lunch everyone was given an aspect to present on teaching children, either the CAP model or the children's teaching model. Teaching children makes up a large part of snowboard instruction, understanding why we change the structure, delivery and information based on how developed kids are is important in being able to provide to this demographic.

It was then time to put the knowledge they'd gained over the last two days into some practice teaching. Everyone had a go at presenting a couple sections of the First Timers Progression with peer feedback and Keith and I offering areas of improvement. It was really cool to see everyone take on the role of instructing and there was some really constructive stuff taken away. We had a quick challenge to see who could explain how to do a J-Turn as simply as possible. This served to prove it didn't take many words and it was often easier to understand when simplified.

Over night the candidates were given the Level One rider analysis, which is the perfect introduction to evaluating snowboarders movements. It breaks down the rider analysis simply and gives candidates an opportunity to develop how they approach this essential skill. Keith discussed how he would approach the detect, correct and develop for the specific rider. We were then out on snow getting some more turns on amazing snow and work shopped through how to make a positive group dynamic. We did some rider development with basic skidded turns, went through the 3C's for their riding and how to use it when instructing and also hiked the box.

In the afternoon we explored the Learn-to-Turn progression in a similar way to the First Timers progression. Breaking down each step and going through the What, Why and How while assessing the terrain choice and knowing when to progress their students. The Learn-to-Turn progression is vital in teaching snowboarding, getting our students moving on their boards with two feet strapped in and developing the skills necessary to turn. This is a fundamental stage in a beginner snowboarder's life, delivering exceptional lessons that educate, support and stoke out our students is crucial in converting people into being long-term snowboarders. Once we got to linking C-turns everyone could see the purposefulness of the progression and we finished out the day with a blast down from the top.

Day four being the last day of the workshop we'd covered the majority of the material. It was now time to get ownership of the content. In the morning we did one big top to bottom lap and got into some more rider development on the basic skidded turn demo. It was awesome to see the evolution of everyone's riding both forwards and switch over the week. Not only in their beginner demos but their riding all over the mountain. Progressing into practice teaching on different terrain to consider tactically how it might change. Everyone had a go at choosing either kids or adults and if they had a specific progression they wanted to teach or if they wanted it to be random. Everyone went straight into the role of instructor or student and there were some fun, informative and

safe lessons. We continued into the afternoon with the candidates wanting more practice teaching. Keith set them up exam style like they were instructors in a snow school. Introducing themselves, using questioning to work out the level of students and then following the steps of the teaching cycle to deliver a lesson. Everyone had enough time to teach and provide feedback to his or her peers and Keith and I went between them sprinkling words of wisdom. It was the perfect way to get everyone ready for the teaching exam portion that's undertaken the following day.

Day five, nerves were high and the snow was falling, unfortunately the upper lifts were closed so it was straight into teaching. It would be three at a time, one teacher two students. Keith randomly assigned what they would be teaching, we flipped a glove to decide whether they were teaching children or adults and came up with some interests to give the instructor a chance to incorporate this into the lesson. Everyone had 15 minutes leading the class as snowboard instructors. After a few nervous introductions everyone soon forgot it was an exam and just started teaching snowboarding. There were some excellent lessons and once in a snow school they will no doubt get people stoked on snowboarding.

It was awesome to get the chance to shadow the SBINZ Level One. It was insightful to see how effective the examination process is. Building an understanding of the four movements on snow and how they relate to the board performances. Then covering the SBINZ First Timers and Learn-to-Turn progressions, gaining a technical understanding and being able to communicate it simply, being able to adapt it to children or adults and also gaining some insights into the reality of instructing from an experienced examiner. I observed a significant improvement within everyone's snowboarding, making more efficient and balanced movements and presenting a nice picture when riding. The SBINZ Level One exam is a really positive and progressive environment to learn how to teach beginners, receive some rider improvement and as an introduction to everything snowboard instructing has to offer.