

Ski

Slippery slope of style

Think your form on the mountain is fab? It could be better, **Rachael Oakes-Ash** writes.

ALL SKIERS know that on a day when there's fresh powder snow and the sun is shining, we can all feel like Olympic downhill gold medallist Hermann Maier as we take on the mountain. We may even envy the folk skiing behind us, for they get to admire our sensational form and may pick up a few useful pointers for themselves.

Few skiers know the truth, however: that if you haven't stood on a podium, featured in a Warren Miller film or been sponsored by a leading ski brand, then you've probably still got a fair bit to learn no matter how long you've been skiing.

If you're self-taught – or worse, been taught by a well-meaning family member – then your technique may be a little off-centre. Sure, you can get down the hill and have no doubt developed certain quirks of technique to ensure you don't fall, but you've probably stayed at the same level for years.

Most skiers get stuck in an intermediate rut, especially if they're once-a-year skiers who take to the snow for seven days every August. Ski improvement programs are designed to help even the most advanced skier

break free from their bad habits and go up to another level.

Programs happen over three or five days and involve a small group of similarly skilled skiers who share a common goal.

Video analysis lets the instructor film each skier on their runs down the mountain, and analyse and discuss style as the film is played back.

Playback scenes can be harsh – some would even say cruel – as your image in your head of the perfect turn doesn't quite match the snow plough on the video.

Ski instructors know what they're talking about because they've been trained to pick up the subtle errors in your skiing technique and given tools to help you change what's bad into something good.

A two-hour group lesson can go a



long way to fixing errors, but for long-lasting change it's a matter of repetition with the same instructor, day after day, till you get it right. That's why ski improvement programs work.

Good instructors will instil a confidence that you didn't previously have and have you making turns once reserved for champions.

There are a number of programs this winter in Australia; it's a matter of deciding which one suits you.

Ski like a girl

Women ski differently to men and we learn differently, too. More suited to a nurturing environment than gung-ho, race-you-down-the-hill, testosterone-fuelled groups, women not only thrive in women's ski programs but also surprise themselves while doing it. Throw in some pampering, apres-

ski social activities and voila, ski buddies for life.

Perisher Blue has developed a three-day program designed by women for women, with female instructors. It includes video analysis and five hours of daily instruction for intermediate and advanced skiers.

August 7-9, 14-16 and 21-23. \$653 including lift pass. See www.perisherblue.com.au.

Thredbo developed its WHIP or

Women's High Intensity Program as a five-day program of tuition, video analysis and graduation dinner.

August 6, 13 and 20. \$986 includes lift pass. See www.thredbo.com.au.

Falls Creek has the choice of a three- or five-day program with the Mim Sodergren Women's Program. Groups have no more than seven participants, so tuition is personalised.

August 4-6, \$619, or five days, July 30-August 3, \$999. Lift passes included. See www.falls creek.com.au.

Mount Hotham's L'Oreal Visible Results Women's Week includes daily tuition, video analysis, and a L'Oreal pamper pack and beauty treatment. It also includes a welcome breakfast and a social program.

July 23-27, \$799 including lift pass. See www.hotham.com.au.

Blokes included

These programs allow both genders to participate. **Thredbo's** High Intensity Program is more than a simple daily tuition program. There are equipment and fitness tips seminars every night, an active social schedule and video analysis to make sure you look good and ski well at the



same time. There's no way you can't improve with this program. August 6, 13 and 20, \$986. See www.thredbo.com.au.

Mount Hotham's Mountain Masters is intense. Ski the entire mountain like never before with committed instructors. Demo skis, race training, video analysis and a welcome breakfast are included. July 23-27, \$799. Five-day lift pass included. See www.hotham.com.au.

Freerider teens

When teenagers have outgrown ski and snowboard school, it's time for them to take on the terrain parks. With a Freeriding program they can learn all the tricks, as well as increase their safety.

Mount Hotham offers eight to 17-year-

old riders an opportunity to work on their rails, boxes and jump skills in the terrain parks. Two five-day programs from July 2-6 and 9-13 for \$299. See www.hotham.com.au.

Faster masters

There are skiers, and then there are ski racers – people who don't mind bearing their butt in lycra, no matter what their age. If you're an adult, into racing and feel the need for speed, then **Thredbo's** five-day Masters Race Program will suit you, but you'll have to get up early.

7am to 1pm, July 23 and July 30, \$986. The super keen enrol for the masters' training every Saturday for eight weeks at 7am or 9.30am for \$72 a session. See www.thredbo.com.au.



SNOW WORRIES: (above) A Thredbo Ski School instructor hands out some helpful advice to a student who has a way to go before she can slalom like this young skier at Mount Hotham (above left).