

Six-Foot-Four Skiing Wonder

The stereotype of Canadians as winter-sport aficionados doesn't always apply

by **Mark Koning**, Sutton, Ont.

It was a winter vacation to remember. It all took place at Sir Sam's Ski Resort in Haliburton, Ont. We were eight friends in all, only five of whom downhill. The remaining three—Jamaican-born Persis, Gemma from England and myself, the wholesome Canadian—did not ski. We Canadians are supposed to know everything winter-related, right? Wrong! But if the two foreigners were going to go for it, so would I!

After renting equipment, we headed off for the kiddie slope. There were a few other adults in line, the difference being they were there with their kids. It was a bit embarrassing, but I went ahead, tucked my poles under my arms and bent down to take the rope pulley up the hill.

Now, I'm a six-foot-four man and this tow rope was made for three-foot-tall children. But after I hit a few of the parents in the face with my poles, for which I apologized, I was on my way up.

I was not used to downhill skis and my lack of coordination didn't help me keep in a straight line. Twice I managed to get myself stuck

and I ended up coming to a complete halt, stopping the motion of people behind me. On occasion, some even got fed up and walked around. When I reached the top, I let go too early and slid backward into the line, again causing a ruckus!

Krista, one of my good friends who is a pretty good skier but a lousy instructor, tried her best to get me going once I'd gathered myself after the tow-rope fiasco: "Make a pie with your skis." Those were her words of wisdom. Off I went down the hill, straight for a couple of feet, then to the left and back into the line of victims coming up. The only way I knew how to stop was to fall down. I know technically there is a better way but, come on, I was panicking way too much for logic.

I swivelled with my butt and used my knees to get to the other side of the small but treacherous hill—all

the while watching little ones speed right by, some even without poles. The show-offs!

My friend, who patiently stuck with me, gave the same instructions. I got to my feet and tried it again, only to quickly end up on my rear sliding farther down the hill. At least, I figured, I was now making some progress.

At this point, Krista was done and wanted to go do her own thing. I was too busy thinking that the little girl skiing by was on her third run and I hadn't even done my first. But I do remember waving Krista away. Now I was on my own. I quickly decided two things: The "pie" thing was out, and my butt was the way to go. I was going to coast down the remaining way on it. And that is exactly what I did.

My two novice friends were both standing at the bottom when I got there with smiles on their faces; so much for being the superior dude from Canada.

I will never forget that day. It was my one and only run up and down the hill. At least I gave my friends—and probably most people on the hill—a chuckle; unless of course they just wanted to kill me. ■

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