

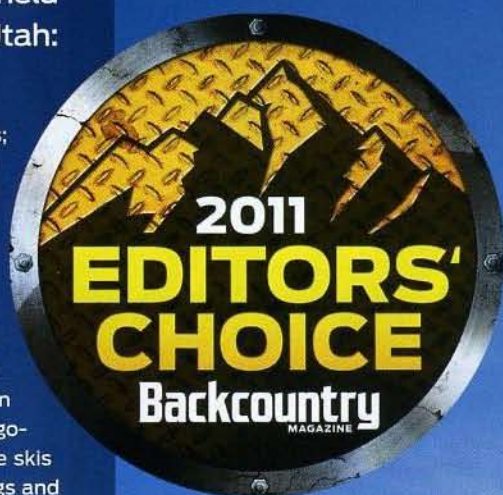
# BACK TO THE BACKCOUNTRY

GEAR GUIDE 2010-2011

**A SINGLE TREND EMERGED** at this year's ski, boot and binding extravaganza held again at aptly named Powder Mountain, Utah: We're going back to the backcountry.

After years of fatter, heavier skis; stiffer, bulkier boots; and stouter, sidecountry-oriented bindings, the bc market—and our legion of testers—has turned a corner. The top-rated products of this year's test represented a re-centering of backcountry ideals, and an overall lightening of the load.

Much of this has to do with the extraordinary gear available today. Rocker technology allows narrower, lighter, and more skintrack-friendly boards to surf and smear powder like much larger, cambered skis, increasing the fun factor all around. Ultra lightweight boots with incredibly ergonomic tour modes finally have enough power to drive these skis with authority. And with more proven free-pivot tele bindings and super-efficient AT tech bindings than ever, there's no reason not to go farther, faster and higher than ever before. See you out there.



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# YOUR GUIDE TO OUR GUIDE

## SCENE OF THE CRIME

For the third year, Powder Mountain, UT hosted the *Backcountry* circus, and once again impressed everyone with its expansive terrain, backcountry-esque conditions, and relaxed atmosphere. Dispersed over nearly 5,000 acres of terrain, *Backcountry's* testers found steeps, chutes, bowls, glades, and plenty of fresh snow—especially after a 10" dump halfway through the week that blew in thigh-deep along Paradise Ridge and on James Peak. But we also had corn, crud, windpack, breakable crust, and a host of other conditions that make for excellent, well-rounded testing. With virtually no one else on the mountain, we had the run of the place and put it to good use.

## THE CORPS

**This year, over 40 testers—half AT, half tele—** assembled from nine states: two-thirds of them from

across the West, the rest from the East. As usual, there were plenty of new faces, but a few grizzled vets returned for their fifth and sixth consecutive years. Two-thirds of them were male, 22 to 50+ years old, and while some log exclusively human-powered days, most split their season between bc and resort turns. Their styles and preferences run the gamut, from meadow skipping to charging big lines, but all are passionate and knowledgeable about gear, and work hard to provide the best information possible. Visit [backcountrymagazine.com](http://backcountrymagazine.com) for complete tester profiles.

## CATEGORY BREAKDOWN

**Freeride**—Products designed for big sidecountry lines, high speeds and deep snow, with unmatched power and stability. They are, however, usually heavy on the climb and less than forgiving.

**All-Mountain**—The most versatile choice: the go-to option for everyday, any-condition ripping. These products are powerful enough to handle resort beatings, but light enough to really excel in the backcountry.

**Ski Mountaineering**—Light and fast, these typically lean products are designed specifically for the bc and will take you farther, higher, and faster with less effort, but don't expect freeride power or stability on the down.

## ICON GLOSSARY



**Previous EC** Products that were awarded a 2010 Editors' Choice last year.



**Rocker** Skis that possess at least some degree of tip or tail rocker. See page 48 for explanations of rocker technology.



**Women's Products** Not just pink and flashy; these products are female friendly *and* made to rip.



**Made in USA** Does it matter if a product is made on American soil? We think so.



**Made in Canada** Our neighbor to the north is like America, only friendlier, eh?



**Bang for Your Buck** Products that are easy on the wallet, but still high in quality.

### Skiers

Becca Friedlander  
Cat Ambrose  
Weston Deutschlandler  
Jeremy Bailey  
Brendan Mumey  
Matteo Campbell  
Pat Gilroy  
Megan Schultz  
Christine Raymond  
Crista Seier  
Eli Moore  
Gavin Cooper  
Mike Lorenz  
Gregg Davis  
Jim Rose  
Jaime Krakowiak  
Lance Riek  
Mindy Mulliken  
Jason Layh  
Price Gilroy  
Jay Prentiss  
Marla Bailey  
Rachel Wood  
Sean Prentiss  
Rob Bohn  
Sheridan Davis  
HJ Schmidt  
Willie Kern  
Ron Johnson  
Damian Riddle  
Teri Dudzinski

### Snowboarders

Mary Boddington  
John Chandler  
Jim Deshler  
Eric Dishmon  
Andy Eflin  
Mark Fontenot  
Jess Graham  
Chris Haver  
Josh Hockenson  
Pete Kelly  
Caleb Longe  
PJ Matson  
Steve Pohl  
Matt Porter  
Danielle Owczarski  
Justine Wysong



# YEAR OF THE SPLITBOARD

## SNOWBOARD GUIDE 2010-2011

### IN BACKCOUNTRY SNOWBOARDING,

big change doesn't always mean big numbers. Nine brand new splitboard models are available in 2010-2011, and while that may not seem like many, consider this: there were only eight total splits reviewed last year. That's almost 110% new product turnover in a year, which is just one indicator that splitting has never been more popular—and for good reason. Whether you're a freerider, freestyleist, powder hunter or snowboard mountaineer, there's a splitboard made for you, and it's reviewed right here.

One thing appears lacking on the surface, however—no pretty ladies' topsheets. There are no women's-specific splitboard options yet available, though most models offer appropriately small sizing. Women's splitboards may be the next step, but we'll have to wait 'til next year to find out....—Mike Horn



### THE TESTING GROUNDS

The number of splitboards this year drove the test crew further into the backcountry, and we toured more miles than ever before. Crested Butte Mountain Resort hosted the inbounds testing, but we had a revolving crew working the bc during the five-day test in March, and late into the spring. Conveniently located next to the resort, Snodgrass Mountain offered easy backcountry access, though testers traveled far and wide in the Elk Mountains to put these splitboards through the paces.

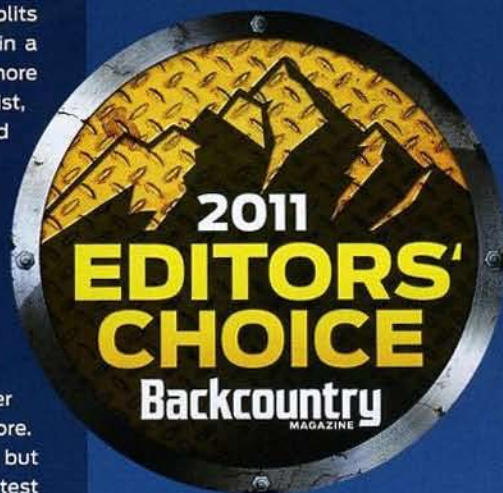
### CRUNCHING NUMBERS

Of 100 snowboards dropped off in Crested Butte this March, only 20 made the Gear Guide. Yeah, just one in five. Of those 20, six boards received *Backcountry's* Editors' Choice award. What this means is that every board included in this review is an absolutely top-notch product, and the EC winners performed above and beyond our expectations. They wouldn't be here otherwise. Select solid boards are included based on sidecountry utility and for riders who still choose to split their own boards.

### ICON GLOSSARY

-  **Available in solid or split** Boards that are offered as both solid decks and splitboards.
-  **Hooks & clips only** "Naked" board packages that don't include binding pucks, slider tracks, touring brackets, or skins.
-  **Hardware & skins included** Complete board packages that include pucks, sliders, brackets, and skins.
-  **Women's** Boards built specifically for the ladies.

**\*NOTE** All splitboard weights are hooks and clips only, unless otherwise noted.







**VENTURE ZEPHYR-R**

\$895  
 SIZES (CM): 146-169  
 WAIST (CM): 25 (159)  
 WEIGHT: 8 lbs. (159)  
 VENTURESNOWBOARDS.COM



**THE ALL-MOUNTAIN ZEPHYR-R—FORMERLY A CAMBERED BOARD—IS NOW ROCKERED**

at the tip and tail, with flat camber between the bindings. Adept at tight turns and straightlines through hard and soft conditions, the Zephyr won over testers with its responsive ride and predictability. "Playful for a splitter," said one. Others described it as "quick to initiate turns," "stiff," and "poppy."

**+** "Easy to turn, floaty enough in the pow, and charty enough in the weird. Killed the wide open, but damn good in the tighter stuff."

**-** "Loved the rocker going down, but it took a little getting used to going up, especially on a baked-out skintrack."

**=** The elusive quiver of one: an all-season, all-conditions animal that devours all things powder.



**1. ARBOR WASTELAND - \$695**  
 SIZES (CM): 155, 159, 163  
 WAIST (CM): 26.1 (159) WEIGHT: 5 lbs. 14 oz. (159)  
 ARBORCOLLECTIVE.COM

**Who says looks don't matter?** With its arresting graphics and wood-inlaid topsheet, the Wasteland was taken from the rack more than any other board. This directional, twin-shaped work of art doubles as a cambered, mid-wide snowboard designed for all conditions. It features Arbor's lightest core, built from a 50/50 blend of paulownia wood and poplar. "Pounded hard snow and steeps," said a tester. "Seemed natural all over," reported another.

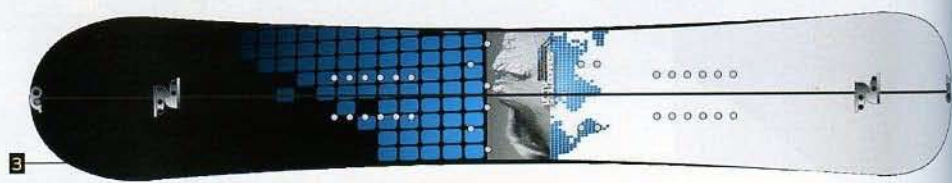
- +** "Very fun, lively, easy. Buy two of these—one to look at every night and one to shred."
- "A little soft and 'loose' in the cruddy, chunky stuff."
- =** A snappy twin with all-mountain savvy for freestyle-oriented riders.



**2. ROSSIGNOL DIVA MAGTEK - \$450**  
 SIZES (CM): 144, 148, 152, 156  
 WAIST (CM): 24.4 (152) WEIGHT: 5 lbs. 15 oz. (152)  
 ROSSIGNOL.COM

**The top-rated women's-specific board in the test,** the Diva Magtek is a solid, directional twin designed for all-mountain freestyle riders. It blends positive camber underfoot with early rise tip and tail and Magne-Traction edges. "Great for switch with a lively pop," said one tester. Two others reported, "This board is an effortless carver," with "no chatter—a very smooth ride."

- +** "I felt like a Diva! Really responsive, strong and playful. Good grip on ice and crust."
- "In crud and variable conditions it was a little sluggish, but still a stable ride."
- =** A top-tier option for women who need a board for in and outside of the gates.



**3. UNITY DOMINION - \$900**  
 SIZES (CM): 159, 164, 170 (more sizes available in solid)  
 WAIST (CM): 25 (164) WEIGHT: 8 lbs. 8 oz. (164)  
 UNITYSNOWBOARDS.COM

**The Colorado-made, durable P-tex sidewalled Dominion enamored testers** with its ride in soft snow, thanks in part to a directional, rockered profile that merges camber underfoot with a rockered nose. We only tested the solid version, but Unity's Dominion is also available as a splitboard. Testers said it had "big-mountain chops" and "blends camber and rocker to near perfection."

- +** "Built to last but not like a 2x4—very responsive when turns matter most."
- "I wish the waist on the 159cm was a little wider for my 10.5's."
- =** The solid was a top performer in soft-snow conditions; we look forward to trying the split.





**PRIOR AMF**

\$1,129  
 SIZES (CM): 153, 156, 159, 162, 165, 169  
 WAIST (CM): 25.2 (164)  
 WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 8 oz.  
 PRIORSNOWBOARDS.COM



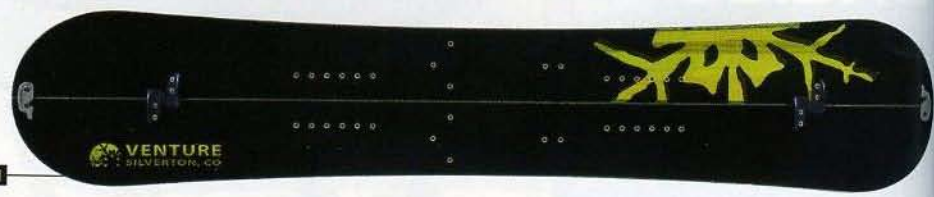
**EARNING ITS SECOND EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD IN AS MANY YEARS, THIS ALL-MOUNTAIN FREESTYLE SPLITBOARD IS TOP**

dog for switch riding and overall fun in powder. The twin-shaped AMF has full-wrap steel edges and a tip-to-tail aspen and maple core. Camber underfoot and rocker at the tip and tail provide the best of both worlds. One tester deemed the AMF "electric." Another concluded, "Pillows to ollies, it's nothing but fun."

**"Amazing flotation for a 156, very agile for tight terrain and spins, and solid construction,"**

**"A bit too stiff; it took work to turn."**

**The testers' favorite freestyle split makes mincemeat of nature's terrain park.**



1

**1. VENTURE HELIX-R - \$895**  
 SIZES (CM): 153, 154, 158, 159, 162, 163, 164  
 WAIST (CM): 25 (162) WEIGHT: 8 lbs. 3 oz. (162)  
 VENTURESNOWBOARDS.COM

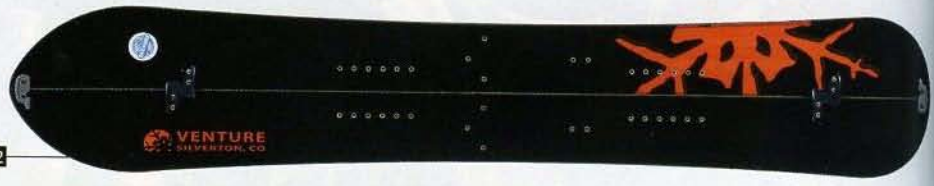


This year, Venture stiffened the Helix's tip & tail, increasing this twin-shaped split's big-mountain brawn. Flat camber between the bindings and a rockered tip and tail give this Silverton-made slugger plenty of float and firm edge grip. Testers said it was "super stable for maching long-radius turns," and "easy steezy" in edge-to-edge transitions.

**+** "I'm pretty sure they made this board with magic and love. The faster the better: super stable, very playful."

**-** "Not sure why they made a rockered, twin-shaped board this stiff."

**=** A board that excels on backcountry jibs and riding switch, but holds its own on steep, high-speed descents.



2

**2. VENTURE STORM-R - \$895**  
 SIZES (CM): 152-181  
 WAIST (CM): 25 (165) WEIGHT: 8 lbs. 6 oz. (165)  
 VENTURESNOWBOARDS.COM

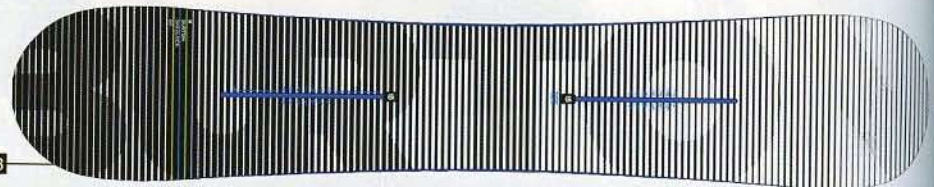


Known for its powder prowess, last year's Editors' Choice-winning Storm-R delivers more of the same superb performance. The Storm-R has a directional, moderately tapered shape, softer nose than mid-section and tail, and flat-to-rockered profile. This year, Venture stiffened the tip and tail for greater stability. Testers deemed the Storm "super quick-turning" and "playful and stiff."

**+** "It's stiff and solid, yet playful and floaty. You can really dominate steeps and pow at full speed."

**-** "I would have liked it a bit shorter, though the length wasn't a problem."

**=** Built for big lines and soft snow, the Storm is predictable, stable and surprisingly versatile.



3

**3. BURTON SHERLOCK - \$490**  
 SIZES (CM): 154, 157, 160, 163  
 WAIST (CM): 25.4 (160) WEIGHT: N/A  
 BURTON.COM

Our crack team of testers said Burton's new Sherlock solved the snowboard mystery of how to make every turn fun. The twin-shaped board features a directional flex and blends camber zones underfoot with an overall rockered profile, tip to tail. Burton lengthened the tip and tail contact points to improve edge hold and powder planing. One tester said, "This board dominated all terrain," and was "on edge before I knew it." But another found the Sherlock "a little bouncy and chattery in hard, frozen stuff."

**+** "Effortlessly cranks turns through tight trees, and jump turns are easy. Super fly edge to edge."

**-** "A little soft for fast straightlining through chopped-up mank."

**=** An electric ride in soft snow that takes the work out of turning, and can make an average day great.





2011  
**EDITORS' CHOICE**  
Backcountry

**NEVER SUMMER SUMMIT**

\$1,299  
SIZES (CM): 156, 160, 164, 169  
WAIST (CM): 25.4 (164)  
WEIGHT: 9 lbs, 3 oz. (164)  
NEVERSUMMER.COM



**NEVER SUMMER'S NEW RELEASE, THE SUMMIT SPLITBOARD, HAS A TAPERED SHAPE AND SETBACK STANCE,**

rocker underfoot and camber towards the tip and tail. To improve edge hold and versatility, Never Summer added a new sidecut shape with five points of contact. Also new, the Carbonium top sheet—used for durability, scratch resistance and a carbon-fiber visual—sheds snow well, and testers thought it helped reduce weight overall. "Trippy to look at, and a trip to ride," said one tester.

- +** "A big-mountain brawler that never backs down."
- "169cm was a little tough to swing in tight trees."
- =** Still a powder hound first and foremost, but now also holds its own in hard, icy conditions.



**1. LIB-TECH JAMIE LYNN - \$539**  
SIZES (CM): 151, 154, 157, 157 WIDE, 160  
WAIST (CM): 25.4 (160) WEIGHT: 6 lbs. 8 oz. (151)  
LIB-TECH.COM

**Sexy in an Avatar kind of way,** Lib-Tech's Jamie Lynn C2BTX boasts rocker underfoot and camber at each end of the board. Magne-Traction edges sliced like a serrated knife, and its mid-range flex had testers saying: "Smooth; butter baby!" and "Strong like bull, but still has pop and play."

- +** "Feathers through pow and powers through hardpack. The Jamie Lynn grips like a pro arm wrestler."
- "Not the most nimble board of the test, but solid and reliable turn to turn."
- =** Female testers buzzed over this board, making it a versatile option for freestyle forays into boot-accessed bc.



**2. RIDE HIGHLIFE - \$550**  
SIZES (CM): 155-172  
WAIST (CM): 25.4 (161) WEIGHT: 6 lbs. 10 oz. (161)  
RIDESNOWBOARDS.COM

Testers found Ride's new HighLife a more versatile version of the Slackcountry, which won an Editors' Choice award last year. The lightly rockernosed board provided a ride one tester called "floaty and responsive," with a flat cambered tail for grip and pop. Testers had only praise for the HighLife: "Rides great switch... the fun starts with the name."

- +** "This board is everything a rockered board should be—it carves powerfully, has a 'springy' feel and great energy."
- "The edges stayed locked in longer than I expected when transitioning out of one turn and into the next."
- =** A rockered board that's fun, and reliable in tough conditions.



**3. WINTERSTICK TOM BURT PRO - \$895**  
SIZES (CM): 172  
WAIST (CM): 25.7 WEIGHT: 8 lbs. 12 oz.  
WINTERSTICK.COM

**Cleaved from the mind of a legend,** Winterstick's Tom Burt Pro splitboard has a progressive flex, stiffer at the tail than the nose. It sports flat camber at the nose and tail, taper (4mm), and a straighter sidecut than most boards for maximum control at speed. Our riders called it "AK spine-session ready," and added that it's "built for REAL mountains."

- +** "I would make this my go-to split. Turned quickly for its length, very stable, lively and fast."
- "I need something shorter than 172cm."
- =** Not for the timid, this board gives back what you put into it—a trusty stick in all conditions for hard-charging, aggressive riders.





## JONES SNOWBOARDS SOLUTION

\$799  
 SIZES (CM): 161, 164, 168 WIDE  
 WAIST (CM): 25.4 (164)  
 WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 9 oz. (164)  
 JONESSNOWBOARDS.COM

**SNOWBOARDING LEGEND**  
**JEREMY JONES LAUNCHED HIS OWN COMPANY THIS YEAR WITH A SPLITBOARD IN HAND.**

The Solution is laid up with an FSC-certified beech and poplar core, and has Magne-Traction on all four edges, giving the inside edges mini sidecuts for added grip. The Solution features a hybrid rocker/camber flex pattern, with light positive camber between the bindings, and more tip rocker than tail rocker. One tester called it a "feathery skinner." Another calculated, "Magne-Traction equals ice-axe grip on bulletproof steep."

➕ "Best at warp speed. In sun-baked snow it still kept its nose above the crust line. In a steep chute, it kicked turns fast."

➖ "Because of Magne-Traction edges, it took a few runs to adjust and smooth out my riding."

➖ "Light underfoot and a beast on the steeps, the Solution will take you anywhere, anytime."



**1. HEAD AK SCI - \$499**  
 SIZES (CM): 155, 159, 163, 167  
 WAIST (CM): 25.7 (163) WEIGHT: 6 lbs. 6 oz. (163)  
 RIDEHEAD.COM

Head's "Snake Camber"—positive camber under the back foot, offset dramatically by heavy rocker at the tip—had testers crying "Snake Oil" at first glance. One even claimed, "There is no way this camber profile works; this board looks broken." On the snow, however, testers said it was "easy to ride, but hard to understand," and "torsionally soft, great for carving."

- ➕ "Shocking. Wow. Huh? I don't even want to speculate on this board's engineering, but damn does it work. Great—up and down the speed dial."
- ➖ "Looks weird.... Strange camber takes getting used to."
- ➖ The AK SCI's all-mountain abilities surprised male and female testers across the board.



**2. PRIOR BACKCOUNTRY - \$1,129**  
 SIZES (CM): 149-176  
 WAIST (CM): 26 (165) WEIGHT: 8 lbs. (165)  
 PRIORSNOWBOARDS.COM

Designed for riders with a bent for fast, long-radius turns, this directional freeride board is tough to keep below the speed limit. The Backcountry split is laid up with vertically laminated aspen and maple, and is very lightly tapered, tip to tail. A mix of rocker and camber enhances flotation in the deep stuff while maintaining solid grip in firm conditions. "A nimble tank that turns quickly and cuts through anything," said one tester. "See you at the bottom," said another.

- ➕ "Predictable, with bomber stability; take it anywhere, anytime."
- ➖ "It's not my first choice for switch riding, but I'll take it."
- ➖ The Backcountry split remains a stalwart snowboard for day tours and multi-day missions.



**3. PRIOR SWALLOWTAIL - \$1,199**  
 SIZES (CM): 172  
 WAIST (CM): 26 WEIGHT: 8 lbs. 10 oz.  
 PRIORSNOWBOARDS.COM

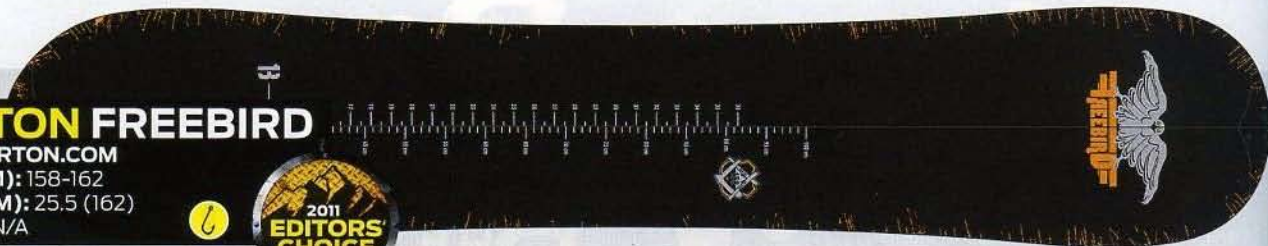
Nose rocker has only improved the Swallowtail's ability to plane through powder, and allows riders a more even—versus backseat—stance. Made in Whistler, B.C. with full-wrap steel edges and aspen/maple core, it's laid up with a lightweight quadaxial fiberglass weave with carbon stringers for added control. Testers were hypnotized in the deep stuff: "Lays fat slashers," said one. Another added, "A premier powder stick!"

- ➕ "Fast, huge, stable pow board with a giant platform for landings. Even rides decent in variable snow."
- ➖ "Not my first choice for tight trees or in crud."
- ➖ One size fits all for one purpose—feed the Pow Hog.



**BURTON FREEBIRD**

\$599 - BURTON.COM  
 SIZES (CM): 158-162  
 WAIST (CM): 25.5 (162)  
 WEIGHT: N/A



**INSPIRED BY THE NEW SHERLOCK, BUT WITH A MORE DIRECTIONAL FLEX AND SHAPE (7MM OF TAPER),**

the Freebird is rockered from the nose to the front binding, where it transitions to traditional camber. Testers found it had great edge hold for a rockered board, gave high marks for ease of turn initiation and described it as "super responsive," "poppy," and "electric."

- + "I couldn't even tell it was a splitboard; everything was just right. My favorite split of the test."
- "The ride gets a little choppy at high speeds in variable snow."
- = The Freebird flies high in all conditions and any terrain.

**1. ROME ANTHEM - \$500**

SIZES (CM): 157-163  
 WAIST (CM): 26.1 (160)  
 WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 10 oz. (160)  
 ROMESNOWBOARDS.COM

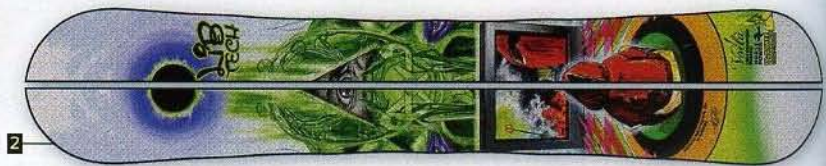


The Anthem had riders singing its praises: "Breaks through it all," "wide platform great for landing airs," and "a blast in the pow." It has a rockered tip and tail and positive camber profile, but when weighted and flexed, the Anthem transitions to flat rocker between the bindings. Our testers recognized (and loved) the familiar feel of camber, and didn't find the rockered element diminished its edge hold or pop.

- + "Great width for my 11.5 size feet; super solid underfoot, stiff but very responsive; and all-mountain versatility. I LOVE REAL CAMBER!"
- "Wide boards aren't as fast edge to edge."
- = A solid (pun intended) option for sidecountry.

**2. LIB-TECH TRAVIS RICE VOILA - \$769**

SIZES (CM): 164.5  
 WAIST (CM): 26.2  
 WEIGHT: 6 lbs. 4 oz.  
 LIB-TECH.COM



Lib-Tech cleverly calls their first splitboard—a split version of the T.Rice C2BTX—a "convertible mono-ski." It features semi-serrated Magne-Traction edges, rocker between the bindings, and camber at the tip and tail. Testers found the construction made it "light and snappy," with "grip like a bear claw" on hard snow. One tester lauded the Voila as "fast edge-to-edge," though another "couldn't find the sweet spot."

- + "Magne-Traction gives great edge hold—skinning and shredding."
- "Hard to predict turn release points in four inches of dust on crust."
- = The Voila excels in powder and offers unparalleled edge grip, but it takes some getting used to.

**VOILÉ MOJO-RX**

\$895 - VOILE-USA.COM  
 SIZES (CM): 154, 161, 166, 171  
 WAIST (CM): 25.5 (161)  
 WEIGHT: 7 lbs. 14 oz. (161)



**THE RX RETAINS THE ALL-MOUNTAIN ABILITIES OF THE ORIGINAL MOJO, BUT VOILE TWEAKED THE DESIGN**

by adding nose rocker and increased taper toward the tail. They also polished some of the split hardware, adding lighter touring brackets, more durable slider tracks, plastic-coated climbing wires and a new binding support shim for improved skinning performance. Testers, especially women, applauded the new Mojo-RX, saying it was "easier to initiate turns than before." One declared: "Tip rocker rules in powder!"

- + "Perfect board for negotiating tight couloirs and milking pow turns; it's nimble but nasty enough for riding variable snow."
- "I'd prefer a 'beefier' tail for arcing long-radius, high-speed turns."
- = Improved riding and skinning performance made it our female testers' favorite splitboard.

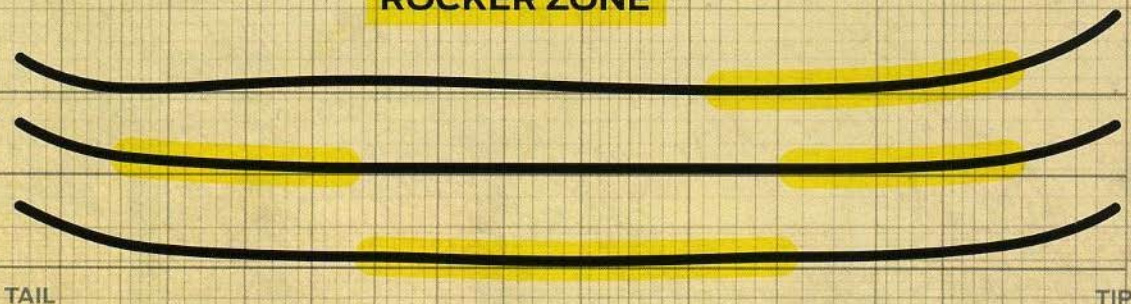


ROCKER  
TYPE

TIP ROCKER

TIP & TAIL  
ROCKERROCKER  
BETWEEN  
YOUR FEET

## ROCKER ZONE



## SNOWBOARD ROCKER BASICS

**Tip Rocker** is often offset by positive camber towards the tail. A free-floating nose floats through pow with minimal effort while the cambered area from the back binding to the tail offers precision edgehold, pop, and power. For example, Burton's S-Rocker:

*"The forward rocker portion hints at the free-slashing ability of rocker boards, while the center and aft camber section provides the pressure distribution and rebound needed for long treks through nipple-deep pow."*—Scott Seward, Burton Snowboards

**Tip and Tail Rocker** is just what it sounds like and provides a surfy ride as the tip and tail contact points are elevated off the snow. Edgehold is primarily engaged

binding to binding, due to either positive or flat camber in the midsection. Venture utilizes this profile in its boards.

*"Flat between the bindings with a mellow, early rise tip and tail, our version offers increased maneuverability so you can pivot at will rather than getting locked into a turn. It also makes the boards surfy and virtually unsinkable in pow. But you still need good bite for icier or more technical conditions. The combination of flex and sidecut are the secret sauce here, and dialing that in has given our boards their playful feel without sacrificing stability or edge hold."*—Klemens Branner, Venture Snowboards

**Rocker between your feet combined**

**with camber at each end of the board** creates the positive camber "pop" to which riders are accustomed, with contact points at the tip and tail for tip-to-tail stability and a rockered mid-section. Lib-Tech's C2 technology represents this blend.

*"C2 Banana Technology helps with splitboards because it distributes your weight out to the tips and tails when you are using the board as skis: giving you more control in the steeps, better float and making you faster. The camber at each end puts a bit more pressure out towards your tips and tails moderately re-engaging them in the turning process and adding pop and end-to-end stability."*—Pete Saari, Lib-Tech



**SPARK R&D BLAZE - \$299**

**WEIGHT/PAIR:** 3 lbs. 13 oz.  
**CRAMPONS:** \$100  
 SPARKRANDD.COM



Spark R&D won an Editors' Choice Award for their Fuse binding last year, but a new splitboard binding, the Blaze, is due out this fall. Though unavailable for testing, the Blaze promises to improve on Spark's Fuse design by adding custom-made highbacks and more durable straps, as well as their optional LT touring bracket and pin, which shave weight (60g/pair) and offer improved touring stride by utilizing smooth-riding pivot bushings. The stiffer highbacks' forward lean will top out at 25 degrees rather than the 18-degree max of previous models, and rearward mobility has been improved from +8 degrees to -5 degrees for maximum stride length on the flats. The highbacks also have vertical slots for standard 1.5" webbing to accommodate a booster strap, and a large "grab hole" for secure hand grip when billy goatin'. Stay tuned for an in-depth review once the Blaze is available for on-snow testing.

**BOMBER SIDEWINDER - \$299**

(w/out Voilé plates)  
**WEIGHT/PAIR:** 2 lbs. 8 oz.  
 BOMBERONLINE.COM



A major downside of snowboarding in hardboots (AT, mountaineering, or hard snowboard boots) is the lack of side-to-side flex in ride mode. With the new Sidewinder, Bomber addresses that shortcoming by incorporating a lateral flex mechanism into the sole blocks of the bindings. This lateral flex is controlled with urethane pads, called E-Pads, inserted into the pivot assembly. There are soft and medium E-Pad options to customize the flex. Prototypes weren't available for testing this winter, but word is the Sidewinder will hit the market for Fall 2010.

**BLACK DIAMOND EXPEDITION 3-PIECE POLES - \$90**

**WEIGHT/PAIR:** 1 lb. 5 oz.  
 BDEL.COM



Some riders prefer the rugged construction and simplicity of one-piece ski poles, but they rise above your head like a flagpole on the descent, and can catch on tree branches and other hazards, making the packability of three-piece poles much more appealing. Highly adjustable, the Expedition poles come stock with 4-inch powder baskets, and the grips feature a more aggressive hooking point for engaging heel risers. A couple tips—after climbing, collapse the poles but don't re-engage the Flicklock clamp for the descent. This decreases the chance of freeze-up, especially if you're doing multiple laps. Also, at the end of the day, extend the poles sections fully to dry them completely; otherwise, the aluminum will corrode over time.

**VOILÉ LIGHTRAIL**

**\$299 (TRAX \$199) - VOILE-USA.COM**  
**SIZES:** SMALL, MEDIUM/LARGE  
**WEIGHT/PAIR:** 4 lbs. (med/large)  
**CRAMPONS:** \$85

**A LATE-SEASON RELEASE LAST YEAR, THE LIGHTRAIL IS ONLY THE SECOND SPLITBOARD-SPECIFIC SOFT-BOOT BINDING ON THE MARKET.**

Testers appreciated the lean weight—21lbs. per binding, thanks in part to a waffle-cut aluminum baseplate—and improved touring efficiency compared to the slider track system. Two rails are attached to the bottom of the baseplate; they sit flush inside the touring bracket for "ski mode", and slide smoothly onto the pucks in "ride mode." An avalanche-release mechanism consists of a cord connecting the two quick-release levers on the heel-and-toe ratchets for one-pull exits. While great in theory, testers expressed concerns about accidental releases caused by hooking on low-hanging branches, and the quick-release ratchets occasionally disengaged when touring in high-walled skin tracks. Forward-lean adjustments can be made with gloves on, and Voilé makes compatible crampons.

The less expensive Trax version is slightly heavier (3oz. more per binding), and doesn't tour as efficiently because it utilizes Voilé's traditional aluminum slider track rather than the new Lightrail system.





**VOILÉ**  
**DUAL HEIGHT CLIMBING HEELS - \$36**  
 WEIGHT/PAIR: 5 oz.  
 VOILE-USA.COM

Splitboards are already capable of climbing straight up slip-and-slide grades because of their broad surface area. Now, Voilé offers a set of dual height (55mm and 75mm) climbing heels, with the 75mm setting offering greater height than previously available. A durable plastic coating applied to the top of each wire prevents wear on your splitboard binding base plate, and the hole pattern matches factory split inserts.



**DIY PORTABLE REPAIR KIT**

Backups and backcountry rigging can save the day if your system fails in the mountains, and these items cast a wide, inexpensive, and lightweight safety net.

- Multitool
- Screwdriver
- Rubber Ski Strap
- Zip Ties
- Duct tape
- Hose clamp (for fixing a broken pole)
- Backup split binding pin

- Extra bootlace
- Glopstopper Wax (stops snow from sticking to skins)
- Extra binding strap/ratchet/screws
- Scraper
- Lighter (leave child safety on to avoid fuel leakage)
- Small chunk of P-tex