

Zermatt Ski Test 2014,

Contributed by IMCZ sports' editor Joseph Dow

Another Exeptional Swiss Ski, XO by Exonde



Last year, I had such a good time testing skis at the big November ski test in Zermatt that I decided to go back. Again, I went outside the main building at Trockener Steg, away from the offerings of the big manufacturers, to the area with the small, independent, exotic ski builders. This year, tests were offered by AK Skis (*presented at our IMCZ Ski Night in September 2013*), RTC Skis (*my personal favorite brand*), and a few freeski companies: DPS, Black Crows, and Dynafit. As I was leaving the station, I also noticed the new Swiss manufacturer, EXONDE, with their black XO skis.

I first noticed the XO ski in Davos a year or two back when their CEO was giving a private demonstration to a client up on the Parsenn. The all-black ski with white "XO" logo on the tip caught my eye. Its cool, minimalist design was reminiscent of the old AK Black Race ski that bore a simple black P-Tex topsheet with a silver medallion. They look more the kind of skis James Bond would use than would a World Cup racer.

When I heard the ski contained no metal, I thought "*this is not a ski for me.*" I always go for something with a traditional sandwich construction, vertical sidewalls, a wood core and two or three titanal belts. But, when the XO representative said the test was free, I figured a run or two couldn't hurt. Plus, I soon discovered that the ski possessed that magical sidecut I have been raving about the last few

articles: Cross Carver "Frontside" ski, 126mm Tip – 77mm Waist – 107mm Tail (very close to the fantastic early AK The Off ski at 128mm Tip – 77mm Waist), which produces a versatile ski capable of handling both freshly-groomed and variable snow conditions quite well. The XOs are designed to be skied in relatively short lengths and come in sizes 148cm, 154cm, 160cm, 166cm, and 172cm, all available in the two flexes, V3 and V7. They also have a slight rocker in the tip.

The first thing you notice is the light weight of the ski and wonder how can this ski have any stability at speed and how can it hold on hard, icy surfaces (snow conditions: groomed hardpacked snow with some slightly icy patches). Wow, the ski is amazing. It turns very easily, has wonderful hi-speed stability, and tracks nicely on ice. Even a short 154cm length ski performed spectacularly for a big skier like me at 100kg. I was so impressed by the XO skis that I spent the whole weekend skiing exclusively on their models in almost every size and in both stiffnesses.

The key to their stability and grip without adding the metal is the technology that goes into the design and construction of the wood core, which is "*an authentic Swiss recipe, secret and unique.*" Well, I definitely like what's cookin'. Similar to the RTC skis, the XOs are relatively short compared to normal skis but do not seem to lack any performance. I found the 154s very zippy and the 166s nice and smooth, but the 160s seemed to be the perfect fit for me. The 172s were fine skis, but I felt I did not need the ski so

long. The difference in flex did not make that much difference to me but was most noticeable in the longer lengths, where the stiffer V7 flex gave the ski slightly more pop.

Despite being an exotic ski, the XO ski is reasonably-priced and costs about half the price of some of the other elite carving skis, such as RTC. I found the XO ski on sale for 799 CHF (flat) and 1'049 CHF with a Marker binding in some local shops in Zermatt. While I do not think there is any carving ski that can top the RTC, I would definitely recommend the XO ski to the ski enthusiast looking for an excellent piste ski. With its light weight, the XO should also appeal to the woman skier and Exonde produces the colorful Gen Z line of skis for juniors, too. So, if you guys are looking for Christmas gifts for the whole family ...



Additional Information:

- Exonde AG, Thun: www.exonde.com
- Exotic Skis: www.exoticskis.com/exoticskis/list.aspx?mfriD=347
- Zermatt Ski Test Packages (example for next year): www.zermatt.ch/en/Media/News/Ski-Test-Days-on-offer-until-30-november-2014

If you have questions about skiwear or equipment or want a recommendation, feel free to send me an email: jjdow@hotmail.com.

