

Forgetting ORM on the Slopes



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One of the great things about being stationed in Fallon, Nev., is the abundance of outdoor activities available. As an on-and-off skier for nearly 16 years, I decided to take advantage of a command-sponsored trip to Mount Rose ski resort in the Reno area. This trip to the slopes would be my first in about six or seven years.

It was a great day for snow skiing. Because of my long layoff, I decided to get a lift ticket for just the beginner-level slopes and work my way back into it. My first run down the mountain was great. I hit every slope I could with the lift ticket I had and soon realized I needed a bigger challenge. With all these warm-ups, I was ready to upgrade my lift ticket.

My first two runs down the intermediate slopes were fast and exhilarating—just what I was looking for, even though I fell a couple of times. At the end of my second run, it started snowing and getting windy, but I never thought anything about it. I took a break, then went up for my third run.

By now, it was snowing harder, and the wind still was blowing. Once I got to the top and started down the hill, I quickly realized something was different from my previous two runs. The slope had become faster, and it was somewhat harder to control my turns. I took a couple of small falls—the kind that embarrass you if shipmates are watching—and then came the big one.

I was turning when the inside edge of my lead ski caught, causing my other ski to cross over it, and then I was airborne. I flipped in mid-air, and, when I hit, I tried to roll. I was partly successful: I hit the way I had pictured, and I rolled, too, but the impact still got me. I came down hard on my right shoulder.

When I finally stopped sliding down the hill, I knew something was wrong—I was done for the day. The pain in my shoulder was severe, and it took a lot of control just to sit up. The ski patrol came and took me off the mountain.

While I was waiting for them, though,

I had looked back up the hill and could see where I first had landed. I slid another 30 or more feet before I stopped.

This incident cost me a type III separation of my shoulder from my collarbone. It will be about six months before I will have full use of my arm again.

My mistake was not using a little more ORM in my playtime. I used it on the beginner slopes, and I even used it when I upgraded to the intermediate slopes. I forgot it, however, when the weather changed. I didn't consider what the snow and wind had done to an otherwise nice day. My skills weren't up to the level required for these new conditions. The next time, I'll stay more alert to what's happening around me. ■

For more info, go to: <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/orm/default.htm> or www.nps.navy.mil/safety/osh/CNRSW-Monthly/01-2004_NewsletterNPS2.pdf.