



Did Someone Ski

Over My Head?

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If you are acquainted with the San Juan and Skagit Valley areas of western Washington, you are undoubtedly familiar with the cold, wet dreariness associated with Northwest winters. As a resident of the area, the only ritual that keeps me from checking into the nearest asylum is a weekend trek to the Whistler ski resort in nearby British Columbia for 48 hours of heart-racing, ski-slapping moguls. The thrill of sailing through a sea of “bumps,” with just the slightest bit of stability, is indescribable.

On one of my weekend trips, the day was bright and sunny. The night before, the mountain had received an additional foot of fresh powder. The runs were smooth—even the bumps felt like feather pillows. I had fallen several times, but since the snow felt like down, I hardly felt the impact. Because of these great conditions, I thought this would be a great time to improve my skills and be more aggressive on the slope.

That’s what I was doing when I was halfway down the slope and planted my skis to “bunny hop” around a specific mogul. My skis locked in the snow.

Unfortunately, one ski disconnected, and my body kept driving down the slope. When I hit the ground, I remember thinking for a brief second that it was simply another fall. I started to look up for my right ski when suddenly it found me. The extra

powder had prevented the brake on the ski from adhering to the slope, and its momentum had sent it rocketing down the hill after me.

My head was facing uphill as the ski struck me just above my right eye. At first, I thought someone had skied over my head. However, as I rolled over to look down the hill, I saw my ski continuing on its own for another 50 yards. I grabbed the spot where the ski had hit my head, and, to my amazement, felt a knot the size of a tangerine bulging from under my ski hat.

After about five minutes, I gathered my composure and hobbled down to my other ski, reconnected it and skied to the nearest chalet, where my ski partner was able to call a medic.

Although the knot wasn’t aesthetically pleasing, I had no lengthy headaches or blurred vision. However, I was downed from flying for four days because I couldn’t fit my flight helmet over the bump.

I realize I could have easily been knocked unconscious and have been downed from flying for several months. Now, before any ski trip, I not only bring my skis, gloves, and goggles, but also my new ski helmet. If I had been wearing one prior to the incident, I would have enjoyed the remainder of the day skiing and would have had a few extra hours of flight time as well. **■**