



Skin Skis 101 - Old is New Again!

If you haven't paid much attention to the xc ski market over the last few years and are just taking a peek now, you're likely noticing a few changes - skis are lighter, metal edges are making a bit of a comeback, and clear-base, wet snow skis are a thing. But, the big deal in nordic is still skin skis. Here's a fun look at old tech that's new again.

Skin Skis 101 – Skin skis are basically a classic ski with strips of synthetic placed underfoot to replace either one's kick wax or klister or one's waxless "fish scales" for grip on the snow. Skin skis are a twist on waxless classic technology that dates back further than most skiers realize. Originally, strips of animal hide with fur still attached were placed on the bottom of skis for uphill travel, the hair fibers allowing forward sliding but grabbing the snow when pushed backward. Skins would be removed when downhill glide was needed. Humans have likely used this technique for centuries. Fast forward to modern times... Full-length skins, usually synthetic, are still used today by backcountry and alpine skiers in mountainous or hilly terrain to get off the beaten track. Skiers "skin up" to ascend to higher elevations, remove the skins, and then enjoy the gravity-aided ride down.

For the Birkie-inclined skier, the story is a little different. Ski companies have found skin materials and ski designs that work great for waxless classic skiing – both for serious racers and casual shufflers alike. Short strips of artificial fur, "skins", usually 12-18" in length, are secured in the ski's kick zone. The skins bite the snow just like natural animal skins to provide forward kick with no additional kick wax or fish scales needed... and kick they do! Skins made a brief appearance in the 80s but failed due to poor performance. Far better materials and fabrication methods completely changed today's skin skis.



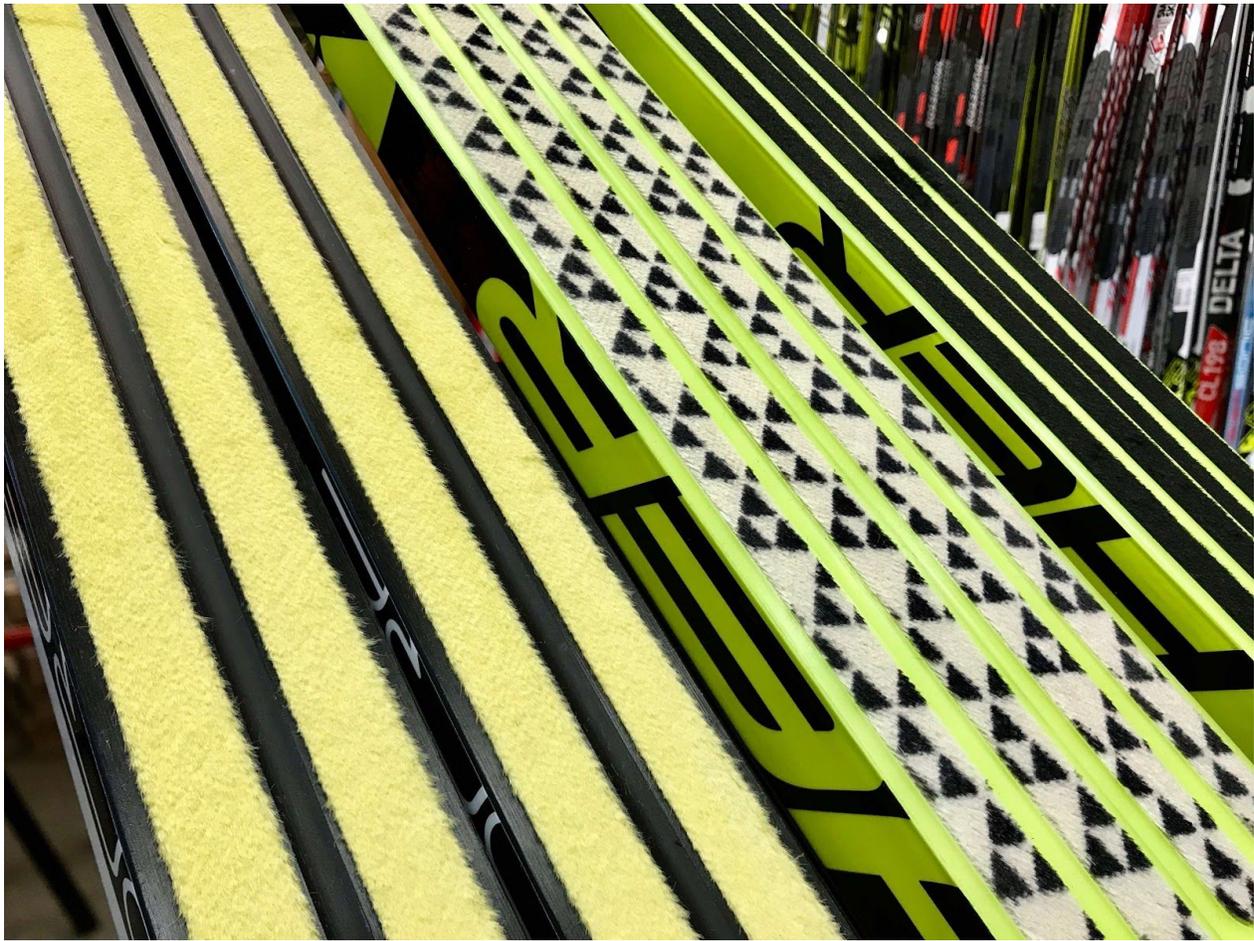
Skin skis from the early '80s suffered from poor performance due to inferior materials and construction methods.

The benefits of waxless skis, and skin skis, specifically, are numerous.

- Convenience is the biggie. Like other waxless designs, skins offer the priceless benefit of simply grabbing your skis and skiing – no fussing around with kick wax, corks, binders, etc.
- Grip on Ice! Skins get good grip on icy and glazed snow. This is huge for skiers that struggle with freeze/thaw cycles. High ski traffic will glaze the tracks, leaving an impervious, icy sheen. With thousands of stiff fibers to grip the ice with, skins will kick where more traditional fish scale bases won't.



A close inspection of Fischer's Skin patterns shows variable depth from front to back and offset placement.



Today's Skin Skis use far better materials and fabrication techniques. Fischer Twin Skins feature dual fabric strips recessed into the ski base.

- Dirty snow. Every trail has its own nemesis – pine needles, dust, grass, oak leaves, whatever. They are all poised to ruin your perfect kick wax application or turn another skier's klister into a compost pile. Skins quietly scoot over such aberrations without drama. Extremely messy snow can make a skin ski's glide a bit herky-jerky at times, but they will still work.
- Mushy, wet snow. Skins kick on mush, they kick really well, too! One caveat - wet snow can stick to the hair pattern, just as with kick wax, klister, or even fish scale bases. Easy-to-use, anti-icing products can be applied to the skins to eliminate icing. this will also improve glide. Treating the skin pattern takes only takes a minute.
- Cold snow, also? While legions of classic skiing faithfuls wouldn't be caught dead on a waxless ski on perfect tracks at 15 degrees F, those with little time to wax find a skin ski works just fine in perfect conditions! Try it, really. This is especially good news for skiers with limited time to prep skis or few opportunities to get out. Skins glide a bit

slower than your favorite waxable race skis with blue kicker, but you'll already be 5K down the trail by the time your ski buddies get their waxing sorted out!



Skin Skis work great in both dirty snow and clean snow. Pine needles and leaves can make classic skiing nearly impossible on waxable skis.

“Is it true? Does all this mean I can have a waxless classic ski that’s race-caliber, will kick on sun-baked slush, go into the shade and still kick on an icy track, then glide right over the needles and bark by the big pine tree... then leave ‘em in the car and do it all over the next day???”

...Ya sure, you betcha!

Not sure about skin skis? Try before you buy! Skin skis’ benefits are real, and ski companies have responded in a big way. Skin ski models are offered at nearly all price points and for all ability levels – great news for skiers everywhere. New Moon features the [Twin Skin family of skis from Fischer of Austria](#). Twin Skins use special, dual skin strips precisely recessed into the ski base for improved glide properties. New Moon

also offers skiers the ability to [test Twin Skins on the Birkie Trail](#). Skiers can try different flexes and lengths to see what best suits their taste. If you like the test pair, you can buy that pair!

Add pair of skin skis to your quiver this season. You won't be disappointed.



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