

INTRODUCING

MF Outdoors!

Get out of the gym. Get outside. Get airborne.

ERIC BUTTERMAN

Imagine: Your face is inches from icy white powder whipping by at what seems like hundreds of miles per hour. Pine trees and snow-bound squirrels speed by in a blur. But you're not tumbling down a mountain, strapped to skis, about to get your mouth stuffed with snow. You're not even on skis. In fact, you're leaving many

skiers in your blustery wake. What they won't believe is, you just learned this new sport a few hours ago. Welcome to the insta-buzz that is airboarding.

Invented by Swiss engineer Joe Steiner, the six-pound airboard gives you the feeling of boogie-boarding—on snow! All you have to do is plop down stomach-first on the inflatable urethane wedge, then use a combination of handles and your own body weight to jet your way down slick slopes.

Adam Chase, an airboarding enthusiast and tax attorney from Boulder, Colo., says it's much easier to learn than skiing or snowboarding. "With just a little instruction, you can master the turns." And the airboard deflates, too, so storage is easy.

Perhaps even better than the sport's major speed rush is the workout it provides: This is upper-body über-training, as you are constantly in a semi-pushup state throughout the run. (Imagine what Jack Palance could have done at the '91 Oscars if he'd only invested in an airboard a few months ahead of time.) Of course, the snow-scraping is not all hard work; there's also plenty of play. Once you master the board, you can attempt

to whip a 360-degree "worm turn," a flipping, twisting "barrel roll," or even a balls-out blast into midair, kinda like Evel Knievel with frozen snot.

Upstate New York and Colorado are considered the primo airboarding territories, although any ski slope with some frozen snow will work. Just expect a few odd looks from the other lodgers. Although the sport is already a hit in much of Europe, especially Switzerland and Austria, it's still catching on in the States. But fear not, the first big-time U.S. competition—the Airboard Boarder Cross & Speed Competition—wraps up at the end of February, so the sport's future looks bright.

Airboard instructor Erik Skarvan, who runs Sun Dog Athletics, an adventure sport school in Aspen, agrees. "There are many people who've been scared out of the mountains by the danger of skiing but who still want a rush. With the protection of the air cushion on the airboard, you've never been closer to the ground and yet have never been more safe." Well, unless you stay home, sip hot cocoa, and play Scrabble with Grammy. But just try working a 360 into that competition.



AIR FORCE: "Now this is my kind