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## **Telemark Bindings**

No doubt 'bout it, telemark skiing is growing. The increasing popularity has done great things for the skis and boots. Both have enjoyed exponential leaps in technology. Telemark bindings, however, haven't changed all that much. The most exciting thing to happen is the switch from tension spring on the old Rivas to the new compression spring (the tube-looking thing).

There are a few companies that have tried to reinvent the telemark binding wheel with some success. To make navigating the mediocre quagmire that is tele bindings easier, we'll put these things in categories for ya.

First off would be the Tension system. Think old school wooden skis and leather boots. These bindings work great on lighter touring skis and light boots or flip-flops. They get overpowered by much more than that. Check out the BD Riva for an example.

Next up is the Compression system. The undisputed kings in this category are G3 and Rottefella. They have a toe piece connected to the compressible cartridges via a cable. To further complicate this simple system is use of a flexible cable or a rigid wire. The flexible cable is pretty much what it sounds like; a flexible cable connecting the heel throw and the springs. Have a look-see at the G3 Targa for a good example. Typically you want to match the stiffness of the compression spring to the stiffness of your boot. Having a stiff spring and a soft boot is like trying to drive a car that has no power steering with a steering wheel about as big as a donut. In short, you have no leverage, so you gotta pay attention. Cartridges with different stiffness levels are available for different boots. The rigid wire variety

is just like it sounds; a rigid wire connects the cartridges and the toe piece. The Rottefella R8 is a good example of this.

The Plate system is by far the most rigid binding for a tele ski. It is also the heaviest. The Linken is a great example of this portly binding. If control and downhill performance are important to you, this is the binding you want. However, they are heavy and your buddies will be forever waiting for you on that hut trip this winter.

The last binding is the releasable variety. These are similar to their alpine buddies. They, well, release. Some like the 7tm have DIN settings to keep your kneecaps pointed in the right direction so you don't end up walking like an ostrich.

One thing to consider is how easily you can fix these things. We highly suggest buying a backcountry kit for your bindings. This usually includes bailing wire, a Leatherman-type tool, extra cartridge, extra cable that is the right length, and an extra heel throw.

That's the binding world in a nutshell. They are pretty simple little creatures, but we couldn't tele without them.