

## Gear Exclusive: The Revolutionary KneeBinding Interview

WRITTEN BY PETER KRAY / SKIPRESSWORLD.COM

TUESDAY, 23 JUNE 2009 08:21



Stowe, Vermont (Ski Press)-Already hailed as “The Best Innovation in the snow sports industry,” (SnowPress 2008), and as a BrandNew Awards Finalist at ISPO 2009, the KneeBinding gets a full scale launch at ski retail this year.

By promoting the product’s patented “PureLateral Heel Release,” KneeBinding is promising a dramatic decrease in the number of knee injuries on the slopes. Here we sit down with **John Springer-Miller**, Chairman of KneeBinding, to discuss just why you might want to be considering using the KneeBinding to attach your skis to your boots.

**Ski Press:** By even naming your product the KneeBinding, you guys have pretty much staked out your territory – what exactly is it that allows you to make a “safer product” claim?

**John Springer-Miller:** All ordinary alpine bindings do the same thing, and they basically do it the same way - forward heel release and lateral toe release. These two concepts do a good job of reducing the incidence of leg fractures, and have remained basically unchanged for over 30 years. But neither of them can prevent knee injuries. This is the most frequent injury in skiing and all other binding companies specifically and aggressively warn people that they cannot do anything about it.

World-wide, there are 70,000 ACL injuries each year on skis. It is, by far, the worst medical challenge the sport has ever faced, with knee injuries now accounting for over 30% of all reported alpine ski injuries. KneeBinding’s PureLateral™ heel release specifically targets the “Phantom Foot” event that causes most of the knee injuries in skiing, dramatically reducing this type of injury.

Since there are so many knee injuries, and since KneeBinding is the only binding on the market that can mitigate these injuries, KneeBinding is much safer than ordinary bindings. KneeBindings cannot prevent all knee injuries. But they are, by far, the safest alpine bindings on the planet.

**SP:** Before you’ve even been available at retail, you’ve won awards on both sides of the Atlantic (2008 SnowPress Innovation Award, and a 2009 ISPO BrandNew Award Finalist) – why is there so much interest in this product before it even hits the shelves?

**JSM:** Just as we began winning awards this past season, we also began selling the bindings on a limited basis - to get any kinks out, to perfect our company systems, and to learn why and how people bought them. We achieved these goals. It quickly became clear to us that almost everyone in the industry, along with most skiers, is keenly aware that knee injuries are out of control. The most astute realize that this epidemic impacts individuals, families, ski

professionals, resorts, retailers, ski manufacturers, and everyone else connected with skiing. It is like an enormous black plague, darkly hanging over the entire industry.

KneeBinding is like the polio vaccine of the ski industry. It is the only proven method of mitigating this injury, and it does this very, very well. The skiing world has been waiting for a solution, and now we actually have it.

KneeBinding is a serious company with a serious solution, and of course, we are absolutely thrilled by these awards. The people that studied our bindings and conferred awards upon them recognized more than just innovation. They celebrated the larger benefit.

**SP:** How do you back up the hype?

**JSM:** There really isn't a lot of hype going on. We are certainly very excited by what we have to offer. But it is really very simple. You have an injury occurring at epidemic proportions, and for the first time, a real, honest-to-goodness solution has become available. People don't need a lot of hype to add that up.

From an industry perspective, this is the first major safety innovation in ski bindings since brakes. Like ski brakes, and like shaped skis, KneeBindings generate a visceral, positive response at the consumer level. People KNOW they should have them. For the first time in 15 years, consumers have a really good reason to go out and purchase new ski hardware – a reason that is NOT based on hype, or style, or the hottest color of the season – but on safety. Skiers want to have fun, and ski hard – but they would prefer not to be injured doing it.

**SP:** Talk to me a little about the design and production team behind the binding and why they have created something that the industry hasn't seen before?

**JSM:** It has long been proven that the only way to mitigate knee injuries in skiing is with a lateral heel release, but all previous attempts were cumbersome or complicated, and generally all suffered from significant pre-release issues.

Sometimes, the best answers are the simplest ones, and like many inventions, KneeBinding is an evolution. KneeBinding made small adjustments to proven concepts, and then combined them in a unique and innovative way. What we do is really simple, common sense. We were the first to see it, and to patent it.

**SP:** Isn't marketing safety in an inherently risky sport like skiing something of a double-edged sword?

**JSM:** Many, many products succeed because they are safer. Safety is a very good reason to buy something, and the more danger you're in, the more you want something to keep you safe. Remember 35 years ago, when lots of people were breaking legs on skis? Safety bindings changed that - they were a lot safer, and they were marketed as safety bindings. Everyone bought them, and broken legs became an asterisk. We're offering the same kind of step forward. Our bindings are even safer because we ALSO mitigate knee injuries.

Anyone who worries that we are telling people the sport is dangerous is underestimating the consumer. They already know it. Remember when cars only had seat belts? Every driver knew there was a significant risk of smashing into the steering column, even if you had your seat belt on. And then, suddenly, there were airbags. Every driver



John Springer-Miller

instinctively knew they would be safer, and everyone wanted them. Well – we’re the only company with “airbags,” and we believe consumers will find value in that.

**SP:** What is the retail strategy and how do our readers get to go and find out how this binding skis for themselves?

**JSM:** KneeBinding offers industry-leading performance, and would succeed, feature for feature, against ordinary bindings based on performance alone. But the safety benefits make it all very simple. Since everyone knows that knee injuries are a huge problem, we feel we need only to make people aware that we offer a high-performance solution. We settled on a “3D” concept to get the point across – we offer the only binding in the world with a 3rd dimension of release – specifically to mitigate knee injuries. We have some clever ideas about how to inform a lot of people very quickly, and we are looking forward to the coming season.

We are carefully allocating inventory to shops across the country. Consumers that wish to purchase KneeBindings this year should use our web site to find out where to buy them, and do so quickly. Shops will be ready to sell them by September 15, but supplies are expected to be gone well before Christmas.

FOMO: [www.kneebinding.com](http://www.kneebinding.com)