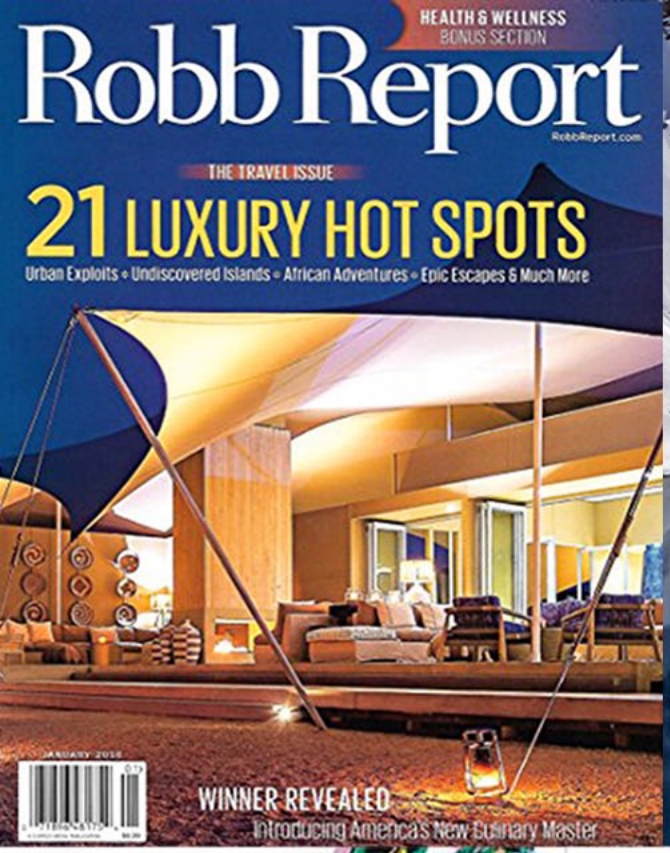
HEALTH & WELLNESS
BONUS SECTION
Robb Report
RobbReport.com
THE TRAVEL ISSUE
21 LUXURY HOT SPOTS
Urban Exploits • Undiscovered Islands • African Adventures • Epic Escapes & Much More
JANUARY 2016
WINNER REVEALED
Introducing America's New Culinary Master

Bombs Away
ON THE POWDERY SLOPES OF PORTILLO, THE OLYMPIAN BODE MILLER AND NEW PARTNER BOMBER SKI HURTLE FORWARD ON THEIR QUEST TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD OF SKIING. BY TIM NEVILLE
IT IS LATE WINTER IN SOUTH AMERICA,

BOMBS AWAY
TWO OTHER COMPANY HAS COMPLETE CONTROL OVER ALL OF THE PIECES BEHIND MAKING SKIS, FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, ALL THE WAY THROUGH."
—BODE MILLER

BOMBS AWAY
Portillo's sole lodge, built in 1949, knows a who's who of alpine racing during the South American winter.
Portillo, however, is more Alta than Aspen, featuring steep, unruly slopes, unique surface lifts that slingshot skiers five at a time, and only a single hotel in its modest base village. After a day on the mountain, skiers retire to the Portillo Hotel—a yellow concrete bulk constructed by the Chilean government in 1949—to read by the fire or play dominoes in the old-school lounge lined with leather-paneled walls. The property also has a cinema and a spa, both of which add to the cruise-ship atmosphere—one where everyone is swaddled in Gore-Tex.
"The thing I love about this place is that if you go to Vail, you have dozens of hotels and restaurants and you might see somebody once and that's it," says Siegel, who first came to Portillo in the 1970s for a ski training camp. "Here you're guaranteed to reconnect with people because there is only one place for everyone to go."
In addition to promotional videos, Siegel and Miller have come to Portillo so the skier can experiment with the company's current line of skis—and determine exactly what he wants to do to change them. One ski, a powder model, comes with a rounded tail that Miller wants to change right away. "I'd square it off for better control," he tells Siegel.
"But people don't want that," Siegel counters. "They'll say, 'How can you possibly make a powder ski with a square tail? It'll stick in the turns!'"
"That's where you need me," Miller replies. "I could come in and say, 'Calm down, sir. The feeling of getting stuck in a turn has nothing to do with the shape of the tail but with the flex.'"
Siegel likes what he hears.
"Treat me," Miller says.
The Bomber skis Miller is testing are not custom skis but rather boutique models handmade in small batches at Siegel's Italian Alps factory. Unlike larger companies, which Miller says sacrifice performance for the bottom line, Bomber does not cut corners in the development of its skis, which start at about $1,800 per pair and can go up to $10,000 or more for versions decorated with reproductions of artworks by artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring.
When the new Miller-designed line debuts this winter, the company's partners believe it will bring an unprecedented combination of form and function to the sport. "Think of it like a car," Miller says. "You're not going to put inner tubes on your Porsche instead of tires. You want tires for tires, suspension for suspension, steering for steering. It's the same with skis. Even beginners—especially beginners—benefit from having skis that perform the way skis are supposed to perform."
It is hard to believe Miller himself was ever a beginner. At 6 years old, he walked the 5 miles from his home, which had no running water, to the slopes of Cannon Mountain in New Hampshire. He survived his first avalanche at age 12, and by the time he was a senior in high school he was sponsored by the U.S. ski company K2. While with K2, Miller

BOMBS AWAY
Bode Miller tests Bomber's Tribal Warrior laying skis on the slopes of Portillo.
convinced the brand to develop a ski with a parabolic sidecut, which allowed it to carve through a turn in the same way that a best playing card can carve through carpet. The revolutionary K2 Four was an overnight sensation, and the term shaped ski echoed through the lift lines.
Siegel is no stranger to the snow, either. Raised on Long Island, he has considered skiing a part of his life—if not his business—for decades. "I've always loved the sport, the adrenaline, the balance between absolute control and absolute freedom," he says. "But as an investment, skis are horrible. The industry has trained the consumer to think of skis as a cheap, interchangeable commodity." Siegel's disillusionment with the ski business soon became the impetus for his decision to change it. "Why can't you take something mundane and make it beautiful?" he says. "All the reasons that I didn't want to make skis became all the reasons I wanted to make skis."
"THINK OF IT LIKE A CAR. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PUT INNER TUBES ON YOUR PORSCHE INSTEAD OF TIRES. . . . IT'S THE SAME WITH SKIS."
—BODE MILLER
His quest to craft the perfect ski struck a chord with Miller. In June, the athlete was impressed enough with Siegel's plans that he ended his contract with the sports equipment company Head to take a formal stake in Bomber. The collaboration offers him not only a creative outlet but also a long-term exit strategy from competitive skiing. In October, Miller announced that he would not race on the World Cup circuit this season, and he has few hopes of competing in the 2018 Olympics in South Korea. "I know I'm going to live really long," he says, "and no one is going to care that I was a ski racer when I'm 100."
For now, at 38 years old, upright and with most of the snow wiped from his face, Miller lets his manager escort the model to safety. He takes off again, this time setting a fine pair of tracks that scribble their way into a smooth future. ■
Bomber Ski, bomberski.com