



With the help of Bode Miller (right) Bomber founder Robert Siegel is looking to offer “five-star” skis and service.

THE ART OF SELLING SKIS

Looking for a value buy? Bomber isn't your brand—and it's just fine with that. **By Joe Cutts**

ROBERT SIEGEL, THE GUY BEHIND BOMBER SKIS, DIDN'T JUST BUY A luxury ski brand in May of 2015. He bought a ski factory too.

It's an important distinction. After all, super-premium skis are nothing new. Countless luxury brands have come and gone, and usually their skis were little more than custom topsheets slapped onto skis built using existing technology and excess capacity at factories that normally turn out Fischers, or Elans, or some other mainstream brand.

Not so with Bomber skis, which are built in the Bomber factory in Cassato, about an hour's drive northwest of Milan in Italy's Piedmont region. “We don't build skis for anyone but us,” says Siegel.

The other remarkable thing about Bomber, of course, is that Bode Miller—one of only five men to win World Cup events in all five disciplines and the most successful male American racer of all time—has a stake in the company. Miller also appeared, at this writing, to be ready to extend his record by clicking into his Bomber skis and pushing out of the start of a World Cup speed event...much to the consternation of Head skis, his former equipment sponsor, which released him from his contract with the expectation that he would not compete on another brand.

As all that works its way through the courts, any publicity is good publicity for Bomber. And even before Miller signed on as brand ambassador (on the 18th green at Spyglass Hill golf course) Siegel saw a workable business model in the super-premium niche.

“The industry has completely commoditized skis,” Siegel says.

“They're trying to get people skiing, and I love that, but they're doing it by making skis as inexpensive as possible. They're using the best engineering talent not to make skis better but to make them less expensive.”

All of that is fine and good for the long-term sustainability of the sport of skiing, of course, but Bomber sees its future in more rarified spaces, such as the Gagosian Gallery in New York City, which sells the skis on its website. There's some logic in play, as Bomber adorns its topsheets with the work of well-known artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. The Artist Series was launched this holiday season, with skis priced at \$2,500 and also available at Gorsuch stores and at the Bomber Ski Gallery in NYC.

A luxury real-estate developer, Siegel is clearly enjoying his new project. He's a lifelong skier whose family spent almost every weekend on the slopes of Sugarbush and Stowe when he was a kid. He even spent a couple years at Green Mountain Valley School. “Within two months of finding out there was such a thing as a race academy, I convinced my parents to let me go.”

He's fine with letting the big mainstream brands build skis for the masses. That's not his vision. “Skiers are the most affluent consumers in the world. And the irony is that they've been taught by the industry to bargain for a hundred dollars off on a pair of skis. Our plan is to make great skis, make them beautiful, and follow up with the kind of service you're used to in a five-star hotel,” Siegel explains. ●