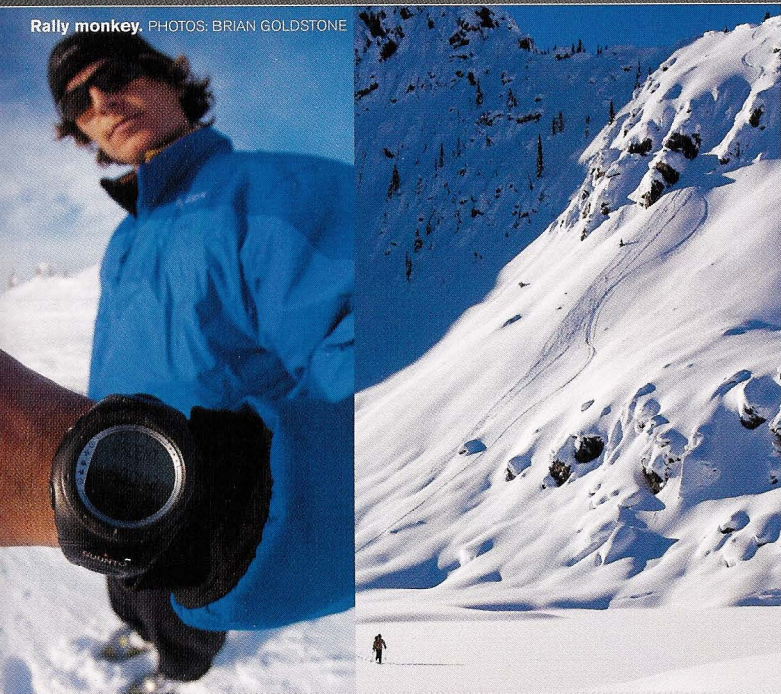


Rally monkey. PHOTOS: BRIAN GOLDSTONE



THE MILLION-FOOT MAN

REVELSTOKE BACKCOUNTRY SKIER GREG HILL CRACKS A DOOZIE

WHEN YOU SKI A MILLION VERTICAL feet at Canadian Mountain Holidays you get a sweet one-piece Marmot suit. At Mike Wiegele's, they present you with the honorary Silver Buckle award. It's a prestigious milestone, one million, worthy of much more than just a pat on the back. And even if the niceties run you \$100,000, at least you get something to show for it. Which is a lot more than what Greg Hill is getting. But he doesn't care. Aside from the odd tank of gas and a few hundred Snickers bars, he didn't pay anything for his million. For the 30-year-old ski mountaineer from Revelstoke, B.C., the vertical he amassed in the winter of 2004-05 wasn't about a shiny buckle or a new suit. It was about, well, what the hell was it about?

If you ski in B.C. there's a good chance you've run into Greg Hill. The quiet, square-jawed, wild-haired skier beat me to a pulp showing me around Revelstoke a couple of winters ago. Shortly after that I saw him in Bella Coola getting ready for a three-week epic on the Monarch Icefield. Last winter I'm lazily carving a groomer on Blackcomb when I see Hill hammering effortlessly up. Well behind him a huge pack of Lycra-clad randonnee racers hack lung just to keep him in sight. There he is, destroying them, baggy pants, fluid style, and the presence to crack a smile and ask me how things are going.

Hill, who works as an assistant ski guide in the winter and a tree-planter in the summer, deemed his project "The Odyssey," an activity he says was fueled by a desire

to "dream up a challenge that was larger than anything I had ever accomplished. My previous high was just under 700,000, so a million feet felt ambitious but obtainable."

Ambitious is right, especially when you break down the numbers. Between October 30 and May 9, the parameters of Hill's epic, are 191 days. To tour a million feet within that timeframe requires a daily average of 5,235 vertical feet. Of course, Hill didn't tour every day. But last year he broke his own one-day vertical record for the tour-core Revelstoke area, bagging 40,000 feet in 21 hours. He also had 37 days of 10,000 feet or more (hurts just thinking about it). While there isn't a backcountry badass association keeping stats on such craziness, you have to think a lot of these accomplishments are firsts.

But what's interesting about Hill, and one of the main reasons why he bags vertical like a high-speed quad, is that he's a fairly wicked skier. He's not just yo-yoing lame slopes. He's picking burly lines and raging them with fast, wide-open turns and busting the odd huck, pinner Dynafits and all.

The question is: After such an intense season, what do you do now? "I'll be attempting to set an official vertical world record at the first annual 24 Hours of Sunlight at Sunlight Mountain Resort in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, this February," says Hill. Hopefully, if he pulls it off, he'll at least get a one-piece. Lord knows he deserves it. **-Mitchell Scott**

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