Increase traction to stay safe while running in the snow

▲ Distance runner John Stoltz, of Bend, uses screws in his shoes to provide traction on ice and snow.

▲ FootZone in Bend offers kits and installation to put screws in any shoe.

▲ Yaktrax up the traction on a shoe at FootZone.

Dean Guernsey/Bulletin photos

▲ Kahtoola NANOspikes can be seen on a shoe at FootZone.

TOP PICKS
WHERE TO EXPLORE

Top picks in the mountains

Meissner Sno-park — It's one of the most popular sno-parks in the area for a reason. Located just east of Mount Bachelor and with several trails groomed regularly and several more loops and tracks marked for Nordic skiing its many trails can take days to fully explore. If you are a snowshoer, there are even a few designated trails to check out, but you are welcome to follow the Nordic trails too as long as you walk at least 2-feet to the side of the set ski tracks. The main lodge is closed this year, but the shelters are still open. If the main parking area fills up, Swampy Sno-park also has access to the Meissner trails.

South Twin Lake — You may have to hike or snowshoe into the lake west of Sunriver this time of year, but the lake is still open for fishing, provided you can reach the water. If you do cast your fishing line out, a stocked rainbow trout may come up for a bite. The summertime hotspot is beautifully covered in snow now with the tree-lined shore looking idyllic for those out for an afternoon snowshoe trip. Don't walk out on the ice.

Walton Sno-park — Home to the greatest concentration of snowmobile trails in the Ochoco National Forest, Walton Sno-park also has few cross country skiing trails to partake in as well. Snowmobilers can connect to trails that wind all through the forest lands save for the Bridge and Mill creeks wilderness areas. Be sure to stay in designated areas and trails. Getting there: The park is located between Prineville and Mitchell along Forest Service Road 22 off U.S. Highway 26.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin

Snow

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"I think that's the best way to go, honestly," said March Stockamp, an avid runner and marketing manager at the FootZone running store in Bend. "It's the most cost effective, and it offers the best traction, as well. The main downside is not everyone has two pairs of running shoes. You need a second pair because then you can leave them in one pair of shoes for an entire winter."

FootZone offers sets of carbide steel screws for $10, and the store provides installation, as well.

Runners in Central Oregon like the screws because they seem to work better in variable conditions, including snow, ice and bare pavement, which can all be encountered on the same run. Traction devices that are strapped onto the bottom of shoes, such as Yaktrax and Kahtoola, work great in fresh or packed snow, but can be cumbersome on bare pavement and could slide on ice.

"Bend is super patchy with snow and ice," Stockamp said. "With screws, you don't have to worry as much about where you're placing your foot. With Yaktrax, you're more trying to stay on the snow and ice."

Yaktrax (which cost about $30 to $40) employ a coil traction system. The Yaktrax Run include carbide steel studs that dig into the snow and ice.

"They have the most name recognition," Stockamp said of Yaktrax. "Personally, I don't think they offer the most traction. One of the complaints is on sheer ice surfaces, the coils tend to slide. If you have them on, you want the ice and snow because on the bare pavement, they don't work great. But a lot of people like them."

King said the screws work better because they are lower profile, making them more manageable on bare pavement.

"And you can take them out in the spring," King said. "It

doesn't do much to the shoe or reduce the durability. It just puts a little hole on the bottom."

Kahtoola NANOspikes traction devices (which cost about $50 to $60) are similar to Yaktrax but do not use coils. Instead, they use only carbide spikes.

"They offer better traction, in my opinion, and feel more natural when you hit a dry surface," Stockamp said of Kahtoola. "They don't slide or slip on dry surfaces. They're also a little more durable, but a little more expensive."

Because snow- and ice-covered trails in Central Oregon can become lumpy and uneven during the winter, Stockamp does more road running than trail running this time of year. Plowed roads and sidewalks tend to offer a more steady and stable running surface.

"Right after it snows, I just hit the roads in my trail shoes," Stockamp said. "As it becomes

"There's a lot of people who just will not run in the winter, or they run on the treadmill. I think it's beautiful. I think it's nice running in the winter."

— Max King, professional runner

more packed, I switch to my screwed shoes. When you hit dry patches, it clicks a little, but it feels fine."

Runners can often venture east or north of Bend to find snow-free trails during the winter. King said he likes to run trails at Smith Rock State Park and Gray Butte near Terrebonne, and he also enjoys trails near Lake Billy Chinook, including the Otter Bench and Tam-a-lau trails.

Stockamp prefers the Oregon Badlands Wilderness east of Bend, an open, flat expanse of juniper trees and lava rocks that tends to melt more quickly than other areas near Bend. Horse Butte and Horse Ridge, both southeast of Bend, are other popular wintertime trail-running destinations on the High Desert.

Some locations, though, would be best to avoid until spring.

"One area I would avoid is Shevlin Park," Stockamp said. "It's just an ice bowl in there. I've seen so many people at FootZone who have hurt themselves falling at Shevlin Park. It's a beautiful area in the winter, but it's not worth it to me to deal with all the ice there."

Still, Central Oregon runners have myriad options for trails and traction to get them through the winter.

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