

# Mount Twynam

By Dr. L. G. Teece.

Until last season, Downhill racing, as the term is understood amongst first-class runners in Switzerland, was quite unknown at Kosciusko. Such Downhill races as had been held consisted usually of short dashes down the Kerry Course to the Golf Links. The heavily wooded nature of the country around the Hotel made it impossible to secure a course for a continuous Downhill race of more than a few hundred feet. Certainly, in 1929, races were contested over a course from the Gates of Heaven to the Golf Links, but at best this was a poor substitute for a true mountain course, since it only involved a descent of about seven hundred feet, the track was too narrow for a simultaneous start, all the grades were easy, and it even included one small stretch of uphill running.

Now that the Chalet is an accomplished fact we have the whole length of the mountains from Kosciusko to Gill's Knobs available for racing. This country provides an endless succession of suitable courses of varying length and steepness, all of which are sufficiently wide for the races to be conducted with a simultaneous start. Though the interval start still retains its supremacy in continental racing, there is no question but that the simultaneous start is infinitely more spectacular and produces finer running.

The first real Downhill race ever held at Kosciusko took place last season. This was the Downhill Championship of the Ski Club of Australia, held from Carruthers Peak to the Snowy River, and is described elsewhere in this issue. Downhill races of any length have not as yet been held on any of the other possible courses.

The uninitiated might imagine that the longest vertical descent would be obtained from the Summit of Kosciusko itself. However, this is not the case, for if the descent be made via Rawson Pass there is a considerable uphill section along the side of Etheridge before continuing the descent to the Snowy Valley, and this valley is reached at a comparatively high level, and thereafter the descent along it is too gentle for racing purposes. Mount Twynam, on the other hand, is but little lower than Kosciusko itself, and from here a continuous descent is obtainable to the Snowy River at Spencer's Creek. At this point the height above sea level is only five thousand feet—the same as at the Hotel. Since Twynam is over seven thousand feet, the possible vertical descent amounts to over two thousand feet.



Map of Country south-east of Mount Twynam taken from Professor Griffith Taylor's Survey. Contour lines from 6500ft. to 5500ft. are not included. The accompanying article describes the Downhill courses indicated on the map from the top of Twynam to the Snowy River on the north-east side and the south-east side of the mountain.

There are many routes by which Twynam may be climbed or descended. Until recent years this country was comparatively unknown to the ski-runner; indeed, it was not until 1925 that the first winter ascent of this mountain was accomplished. In that year the writer led a party, which crossed the Snowy River near where Dr. Foreman's Hut now stands. From that point we endeavoured to make a bee-line towards the Summit of the mountain. This proved to be a very bad route, for numerous intervening foot-hills had to be surmounted and descended. The party finally reached Blue Lake and then skirted its southern shore, and climbed thence into that sector of the Main Range between Twynam and Carruthers Peak, whence the remainder of the ascent was easy.

Since it is now recognised that such a long continuous descent is obtainable from Twynam, it must be seriously considered as a course for future Championship events. By far the easiest ascent of Twynam is first to climb Carruthers Peak and then proceed north along the Main

Range. This route is not suitable for a Downhill race in the reverse direction, for a considerable climb would be necessary to regain Carruthers Peak after running off the high point of Twynam. In this part of the country the main backbone of the Range runs north and south and undulates not very steeply; projecting forwards from it in an easterly direction are Mount Lee, Carruthers Peak and Mount Twynam. The Range is high where Carruthers Peak originates, so only a short steep climb of one hundred feet is necessary to reach this peak from the back. However, to climb Twynam from the back, a long steady climb of half a mile is necessary. When one stands on the Summit of Twynam the contour of the ground varies



CARRUTHERS PEAK.

greatly in different directions. Looking east there is a dip separating one from the lesser pinnacle of the mountain, which hides the descent to the Snowy from view. Even if one were to start a race from this lesser pinnacle it would be impossible to run it due east to the Snowy River, for this side of the mountain is extremely precipitous and heavily overhung with cornices.

The usual descent from the Summit is down the northern slopes of the mountain, gradually curving around to the north-eastern slopes and finishing at Spencer's Creek. The first eight hundred feet of this descent is very steep, but it is quite open and free from cornices. The runner who had the courage and skill to take this portion straight would complete the whole descent in exceptionally fast time. Personally, I have never seen anyone take this portion straight, but even with the check afforded by three or four traverses joined by downhill turns the speed can be sufficiently alarming. This steep portion runs out on to an almost flat shoulder of the mountain, about three

or four hundred yards in width, which slopes gently upwards to the east. On arriving at this spot the speed is usually so high that one is tempted to check it by turning east. This, however, is a mistake, as beyond the crest of this gentle rise there is a precipitous fall with many cornices. It is much better to continue north across this relatively flat area until one again starts to descend sharply. As soon as this descent commences to carry one down into the bed of an obvious creek one should be careful to keep to the right bank and remain about one hundred feet above the level of the creek bed. One should continue bearing gradually around on to the eastern slopes of the mountain at a point well below the most precipitous and corniced part of the eastern face of the mountain. If you do not keep sufficiently to the right at this part of the run, but continue into the creek bed and thence straight towards Spencer's Creek, your continuous descent will be checked by a small ridge which involves two or three hundreds yards' of uphill work. When, however, you have circled around the eastern face of the mountain, the rest of the descent is magnificent continuous running. Do not, even from here, make a bee-line to the point where Spencer's Creek junctions with the Snowy River, the point which lies north-east from here. Rather set a course as if desiring to strike the Snowy River some four hundred yards above this point, and then when within six hundred yards of the river turn somewhat north again and gradually lose height till you strike the river at Spencer's Creek.

It will be seen that this course is a somewhat complicated one. If a point to point race be run from Twynam to the Snowy it would give a tremendous advantage to those few runners who know this part of the country well. Indeed, last time I did this run, the best runner in the party was the last to arrive; this was because he took what was seemingly the most direct route and was thus unable to obtain a continuous descent. To give an equal chance to all competitors, the course would have to be carefully and liberally flagged. A field of any magnitude could be started from within a few yards of the actual Summit, but it is unfortunate that the steepest part of the run is immediately at the start. Many competitors would be certain to fall on the first slope and possibly interfere with the chances of others.

However, this course undoubtedly provides the longest descent, and one that is the most exhaustive test of good running.

It is not possible to run a Downhill race direct down the southern side of Twynam—at least, not a continuous race to the Snowy River. A shorter course of about twelve

hundred feet direct descent is available on this side and would provide a splendid second-class test run. But it finishes in a deep gully, out of which the skier has to climb before continuing to the Snowy River. The alternative course, which I have never yet tried, but which I believe to be feasible, is as follows:—

This starts on the top of Twynam and runs back westward on to the main backbone of the Range. On reaching this point you turn left and run south along the Main Range until the ground becomes nearly level—at this point you are not far from the spot where Carruthers Peak projects forward from the Range. Here you swing fairly sharply to the east, though still travelling slightly south, and one long continuous open run takes you to the Snowy River almost directly below Charlotte's Pass. Since by this route the Snowy River is reached at a much higher point, the total descent is about five hundred feet less than that by the firstmentioned course. However, it would have the advantage that the first mile of the course is very open and free from cornices, and it does not become very steep until the field has had time to spread out. Furthermore, throughout the whole run, the skier can see the entire course before him without fear of error, and there are not hidden corners, such as are unavoidable in the first route. One additional small point which is of some importance is that the whole of the race would be in view of the spectators if they posted themselves at the pile of rocks on the ascent to Carruthers Peak, from which most of them last year watched the Downhill Championship of the Ski Club. Only half of the course on the northern and eastern side is visible from any given point, and a large number of controls would have to be posted to ensure that the competitors took the correct route.

These courses and any others that may seem feasible will have to be gone over carefully in the earlier part of the season and the best routes determined. It would be wise for the committee to have a choice of courses at their disposal, since snow conditions vary so widely from day to day. Last season some of us ran the north-eastern descent from Twynam to Pounds' Creek in perfect snow conditions, whilst on the same day the first half mile of the descent from Carruthers Peak to the Snowy was so wind-swept as to be unskiable. It will probably be necessary for the committee to select a number of courses and for the final decision to be left to the course setters on the day of the race. If, however, snow conditions prove favourable, there is no doubt that a course starting from Twynam will provide the best Championship test, both of skill and stamina.