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Obermeyer: Ski Clothes for Real Women



Yvette is at the very top of Mammoth Mountain. Right after that picture was taken, she skied down the double black (expert) run into the bowl below.

Obermeyer makes technical ski clothing for real-sized women that works.

This is a story of success and failure. And progress. Sort of.

I am not svelte by anyone's measure. But I ski. I cycle. I scuba. No, I don't run. But I do step classes with folks 30 years my junior. My kicks are higher than half of them. And I once rode my bike across the state of Florida ... 174 miles in one day. The average temperature was 95 F., by the way.

Many, many years ago when I got into serious cycling and wanted shorts, I was laughed out of the shop and resorted to cutting off polyester pants. Those of you of a certain age will remember those pants. They had a hideous seam down the front and stretched horribly when wet.

Sadly, it rains a lot in South Florida, where I was living at the time.

My ski wear consisted of men's very large sizes tailored to fit. Eventually someone came out with skiwear for "fat ladies." The coat was neon pink and, well, looked like something the Michelin X Man would have worn. Be real guys. Nobody that size is gonna wear something that makes them look like Lake Superior. And it had hardly any pockets.

Women's sportswear back then was notorious for not being technical. Fat women's sportswear? You can imagine.



Not every woman on the ski slopes is a size 8.

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About 25 years ago I got into a shouting match with a designer about ski wear and was told, well, it was useless, because women "of my size" simply came in too many figures ... big hips, big stomachs. It was useless to keep up.



Mammoth Mountain made a great place for Yvette to test out the Obermeyer technical ski pants.

Then a strange thing happened. The world caught up with me. Suddenly, there were kids bigger than me doing cheer flips in high school and skiers my size doing credible jobs on race courses.

Enter Obermeyer. Go to the company website, click on women, then plus size and you actually get a choice. Mine late this season boiled down to a pant called the Birmingham with all sorts of nice techie add-ons ... fleece lining, storm flaps, high back, scuff guards, sturdy zippers, pockets. POCKETS!

By the time I decided to get them, the only color left in a size 20, yes, I am a size 20, was white. That is not a color someone my size EVER wants to be seen in public. Sigh.

But they arrived. And to my surprise, didn't look nearly as ghastly as I expected.

Um, but they were four inches too large. I put them on, held them at the waist, let go and they fell to the floor by themselves.

Back to the website, where my next choices were the Sugarbush, size 20 and the Andorra, size 18.

Which is when I discovered another thing about clothing. The more expensive the clothes, the smaller the claimed size at a particular measurement. In other words, two pants that measure the same might be a 20 in something less expensive, an 18 in a mid range and maybe even a 16 if it's REALLY spendy.

Being rich, I guess, means you never have to admit to one of those embarrassing fat sizes.

So in the pants I really loved, the Andorra, I am a 16. Yay.

These things have style. They have pockets ... lots of pockets. They fit. I could actually bend and squat in them while still managing to breathe.

And embedded somewhere in the fabric are Recco reflector strips which are passive detectors that let a rescue team find you in case of emergency on the mountain. These strips are now embedded in all sorts of outerwear ... boots, helmets, jackets, you name it ... and can pick up a signal at 200 yards.

Then, off I went to Mammoth Mountain in California to put the pants through their paces. And yes, they did the job. Our first day, despite the April date, it was still full on winter with enough wind to close the top of the mountain. I wondered if it was possible to get frostbite on your tongue (you pant a lot at 11,000 feet). But the pants survived and kept me toasty.

Then spring arrived, with 50 degree temps. I expected to sweat my knees off in these pants. But, oddly, I did not. Somehow, I stayed cool while diving into Mammoth's famous Cornice Bowl.

I finally have a smart, technical pair of ski pants.

Now all I need is a jacket.

With lots of pockets. – Yvette Cardozo, RFT Ski & Dive Editor

Obermeyer: www.obermeyer.com

Mammoth Mountain: www.mammothmountain.com



Yvette at Epcot Center in Orlando, Florida, is not only a RFT Ski & Dive expert, she's also a true foodie.

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