

# SUMMIT @PLAY

Your daily survival guide to sports, recreation and outdoor news in Colorado's High Country

## Ski apps: Real life ...

## or just another video game?

It seems there is an app for just about everything these days, a device to enhance your life experiences or some other form of technology that you are convinced you need. Love it or hate, technology has nestled its way into our snow sports culture.

Let's be honest, it isn't going away. Technology addiction is taking over, and people of all ages are hooked on the easily accessible drug of tech, and the ski slopes are not immune to this trend.

As a native Ohioan, I didn't move across the country to access Colorado's great screens, legendary technology or sick GoPros. I came here for one thing: the mountains. That was enough — I didn't need any sort of technological enhancement to make skiing any better. Skiing was the life-enhancement I craved.

### LIFE THROUGH A LENS

Whether it's your iPhone, GoPro, Facebook, Epic Mix, Strava or the tech-of-the-day, all of these act as a lens for which we view the world. Lenses have limitations, shift our behaviors and don't ever tell the whole story. They are all filter, a layer of removal from reality — a reality that is heavenly, beautiful and the reason you traveled here.

iPhones and GoPros have literal lenses, filters removing us from the beauty and purity of skiing. The lens of a camera or a phone can never catch just how sick that line you charged was, the breathtaking scenery or how gnarly the wipeout was. Lenses have limitations — they can't see everything or reflect pitch and are limited by their design.

You ever notice how a picture never does a steep run justice? I remember taking a line on the Waterfall at Wolf Creek Ski Area some years ago. Unintentionally, I chose the steepest, iciest, most terrifying line on the treacherous run. I precariously snapped a photo of the cliff-like waterfall — it looked like nothing. I was stuck with just the memory of this rather epic run. I haven't ever looked at the picture

again, but that run sticks in my head as one of the craziest moments of my life. No documentation needed.

We get so hung up on sharing ... and not the pro-social sharing preached in kindergarten — self-gratifying sharing. Instagram and Snapchat are two of the biggest apps in the world for this very reason. We have forgotten a very important type of photo: the mental photo. Memories do not

need to be on a website. In fact, they are better off kept secret sometimes. They don't need to be charted, logged and quantified. Just remembered.

### NO 3G ON IMPERIAL

Epic Mix is quite the invention. Tourists eat it up! I have never — and will never — "check my stats" on Epic Mix. The reason: I ski to get away from technology, not add more of it to my life. I go out there to get away from my phone, someone "tracking me" and worrying about how much I am measurably "accomplishing" that day. Epic Mix is everything that I don't want while skiing.

A few years ago, I was on Imperial chair lift about to hike Snow White at Breckenridge Ski Resort. The people on the lift asked me how many vertical feet they could get from the lift.

No clue. With some goal in mind of how many feet they were going to ski that day, they asked where I was headed and how many feet I had skied that day. I laughed and said, "I have never, and will never, know how many feet I ski!"

I told them I was hiking and pointed to looker's left (up the hill). They asked how Epic Mix would track that vertical footage. "It doesn't — at least I hope it doesn't," I replied. They were astonished that a local didn't care about total feet. I was somewhat disappointed in the motives of these two, but the fresh 9 inches of untouched gnarpow on Snow White made that fade away.

### THE EPIC MIX PHENOMENON

Why did these people come here? To play a virtual video game on the mountain? They had their phones out, tracking vertical feet, receiving fake medals and virtual praise on the lift — even complaining about not getting 3G at the top of Imperial. When they tell their friends back wherever, do they talk about the sick snow, humbling beauty and challenging terrain? Or about the sweet screen that actually motivated all their actions? Epic Mix also has some

possibly hazardous elements to it. People are constantly looking at their phones. This is dangerous because people do it while actually skiing and trying to exit the lift. This is clearly a bad idea.

Two, incentives are given for accomplishing tasks on the hill (so I'm told), like ski all five peaks and get a fake medal. Well, what if Johnny Texas wants to really get that medal? It is his first day, but he wants that "medal," so he goes and takes Falcon Chair to get Peak 10 "off his list." He sucks at skiing, and Peak 10 is far too difficult for him — broken leg or worse. Yes, I get we can't blame Epic Mix for this fully, but Vail has to be aware that Johnny Texans are driven by these sorts of things, and it is a real risk, putting all of us in danger.

### VALIDATION THROUGH STRAVA

Strava is an application that allows you to track distance, vertical footage, time, speed, etc. It is not tied to Vail — it works off satellite. This is a very useful tool for athletes, aiding in training, pace and mileage logging. It has benefits, but many people become addicted to this — always having to get more miles, push harder and

go beyond limits. I am all about people pushing and improving; however, limits exist. Epic Mix and Strava do not know your limits; they merely track your movements.

The programs themselves are not the problem, per se. Our obsession for validation from others is the problem. All of these apps link to your Facebook page (I am assuming, again) and display your results for the world to see.

People become obsessed with sharing this with the world. In some part, people want validation about what they have just done — likes, comments and shares become a measuring tool of success, not the rewarding feeling of skiing down a mountain, the rush of going fast, of feeling the cool breeze on your face and the joy of skiing — the whole reason you came out to Summit County, Colorado. They seek social gratification from others.

### THE REALITY LENS

The best lens to view Summit County through is the lens in your eye (The lens in your goggles is good, too). The best photo — and this is coming from a passionate amateur photographer — is the mental photo. I am not saying to stop sharing or don't take

photos — that is asinine. Of course you should. Tell your friends how great Summit County is, show them photos in person, tell epic stories — no quantifiable statistics needed. Do not let the screen-measurables dictate the type of trip you have; let your heart, body and soul guide your trip.

Get your face off your screens. Between hashtags, shares, likes and status updates, you might really have a great trip. Take a vacation from the tether of technology while you are on the hill. I find my spirituality from these mountains, recharge my soul, breathe the freshest air on earth and love ripping down a steep bowl and feeling more freedom than anywhere else in my life. The only screen needed is sunscreen.

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**Drew Mikita**  
Dear Drewbie

### WORLD'S FIRST

**Machu Piccu by tough:** On Oct. 14, blind runner Dan Berlin ascended the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in 13 hours, making him the world's first blind person to accomplish the 26-mile hike in one day. Berlin finished the feat as part of Team See Possibilities, a group of three close friends who helped guide him along the trail with the help of their local guide, Ilyias, with trek sponsor Intrepid Travel. Before heading to Peru, Berlin, a Boulder resident, trained in Summit County with his team to prepare for the rigors of hiking long distances at high altitudes. "Just because you're blind doesn't mean you have to go through life feeling disabled, not able to do what everyone else is doing," Berlin said. For video and additional images from the trek, see YouTube.com and search: "blind athlete conquers Inca Trail Marathon."



TEAM SEE POSSIBILITIES / SPECIAL TO THE DAILY