

ZOOM

**OLYMPIC
TECHNIQUE
EDITION**

WHO

Heather McPhie

WHAT

Mogul skiing

WHEN

Competition starts Feb. 6



1

2

3

4

1 Coming in, I try to keep my hands in front of me and look past the jump as I come into it. I want to be like water. I think: What would water do down this path? How do I flow as smoothly as possible?

2 A little lateral movement in the upper body is fine. But I try to keep my shoulders square down the hill. If I'm hitting the tops of the bumps with my poles, that gets distracting—and it slows me down.

3 I'm almost to the end of my run here, so at this point I'm charging down the hill, trying to maintain speed, pumping the turns, staying within a narrow path—all so I get a huge lift off the jump.

4 The D-spin is all about the takeoff. If you come into the jump well, stand tall and get big, the rest will take care of itself and you'll accelerate. But if you skimp on the takeoff, you'll be working the entire trick.

HOW

In Olympic freestyle mogul skiing, a superlative jump can be the difference between silver and gold. "It provides the wow factor," says McPhie, a two-time U.S. champion. "It puts a big exclamation point on your run." No trick on the circuit involves a higher degree of difficulty than the D-spin, or off-axis 720, and McPhie is the only woman to throw it in competition. The 29-year-old, who crashed in the 2010 Olympic final, hopes to ride the D-spin to redemption in Sochi. Here's how her wow move unfolds. —DEVON O'NEIL



5 On water ramps, you know exactly when you want to pop. On snow, it depends on the jump and the drop time. Unlike water, snow doesn't fall away on the landing, so I need a lot of air.

6 The first quarter of the trick is the scariest part; I'm looking at my knees instead of the snow. My best spins feel easy and floaty. I initiate them with my hips and shoulders, bring in my knees, and it just happens.

7 The high point can be 10 or 12 feet, depending on the jump. The course in Sochi has a lot of air time on the bottom jump. There, I'll get closer to 20 feet high. Then, on the way out, you get a lot of hang time.

8 I spot my landing three-quarters of the way through the trick. I use my left arm to spot the ground. On my best tricks, it stops rotating and slows me down so I can home in and get in position to land.