

Ohio Ski Resorts Set For Season

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — This is the "Year of the Big Snow," the Farmers' Almanac predicts. A half million Ohio ski buffs hope it's true—and soon.

Back when spring began to thaw out last winter, Ohio's ski resorts and lodges began preparing for this winter. The state's nine commercial resorts report at least two new slopes, new snow-making equipment and lodge facilities.

"We're ready to open as soon as the snow flies, or the ground freezes," said Mrs. Mickey Dover, office manager of Brandywine.

Maybe the magic moment will come by the end of November, but temperatures must drop to 26 to 28 degrees. That's snow-making weather.

Sadly, the traditional snow season isn't in full tow until mid-December. Most resorts will crowd the season a bit, opening in November and early December, if the weather cooperates.

Most Ohioans are only an hour or so from one of the state's commercial ski areas: Sugar Creek Ski Hills, Inc., Bellbrook; Valley High, Bellefontaine; Clear Fork Valley, Butler; Alpine Valley, Chesterland; Mont Chalet, Chesterland; Atwood, Dellroy; Snow Trails, Mansfield; Brandywine, Northfield and Boston Mills, Pennsylvania.

Skiing begins at home—but it doesn't stay that way. The longer slopes of Pennsylvania and New York beckon the skier who has passed his ABC's.

"We're just incubators for places like New York, where we can't possibly compete with run lengths," said Boston Mills manager Bud Peterson.

"We teach a lot of people to ski, and then on the weekends they'll go up north or out west to ski. If they want to ski during the week though, they'll ski in the state," he said.

Besides expansions to its lodge and parking lot, Atwood Ski area is featuring a visit by the U.S. Olympic team Feb. 10. The team will be christening recent widening and banking of

the resort's mile-and-a-half cross country trail.

Two new slopes are in operation this season at Brandywine and Clear Fork Valley.

A brand-new 300-foot beginners' slope eases down at Brandywine, the biggest of the Ohio ski resorts with its 240 snowy acres.

Brandywine has installed two "slow rope tows" for the neophytes who make it down the slope. It also plunged for new snow-making equipment.

Clear Fork set up a longer journey for the beginners. A new slope runs 900 feet downhill near the lodge, just waiting for that first cold snap.

Jerry Zeller, who runs Clear Fork operations, has one eye on the thermometer and the other on the road coming in. He's fretting over a new snow-jet he ordered. It hasn't arrived.

Officials at Snow Trails, Valley High, Alpine Valley and Atwood announced a complete conversion to the Hedco-system of making snow.

Under this system, a machine uses a jet stream of water to produce fine, powder-like crystals at a much faster pace than conventional snow-makers.

For those who like to check before they leap, the state bureau of travel and tourism

again this season is offering pre-weekend ski reports. The reports, available by telephone, include weather and slope conditions at all commercial resorts, plus cost and service information.

Services offered at all nine resorts include ski equipment rental, ski instruction, dining facilities and ski patrol. Hours are usually from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Here's how to get there, and some of the special features to expect at Ohio ski resorts:

—Sugar Creek, located northeast of Bellbrook on State 725, has five slopes, including a fenced beginners slope, and has installed new mercury-vapor lighting for night skiing.

—Valley High, seven miles southeast of Bellefontaine off U.S. 33, offers a 7-week learn-to-ski program starting in January, and 2,000 and 3,000-foot slopes. A national standard race for skiers will be featured here next spring.

—Clear Fork Valley, an hour from Columbus on State 95 south of Mansfield, boasts seven slopes plus trails.

—Snow Trails, 45 minutes from Columbus off I-71 five miles south of Mansfield, has added new lighting to its four slopes and two trails.

—Brandywine, accessible to Cleveland and Akron one mile south of route 82 near Northfield, has expanded ski rental operations, lodge and parking lot facilities.

—Atwood, located two miles south of Route 6 in Chesterland, specializes in training for beginning and intermediate

skiers, and cross-country trails for the more expert.

—Boston Mills, two miles north of state 821 in Pennsylvania, offers six slopes serviced by a new snow-making system, plus expanded lodge facilities.

—Alpine Valley, a half hour from Cleveland east of Chesterfield on route 22, boasts six slopes and expanded cafeteria facilities.

—Mont Chalet is located at Tibets and Caves Rd. off route 6 near Chesterland.

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(To be continued tomorrow in this journal.)

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