

Indiana's 9 ski areas

Ski Indiana is no longer a non sequitur. The Hoosier state now has a total of nine downhill ski areas, four of them opening for the first time this winter.

Ski Paoli Peaks became southern Indiana's first downhill resort last winter, and its success is partly responsible for the appearance this winter of three southern competitors — Nashville Alps, Long Mountain and Ski Starlite.

Northern Indiana has four small but well-established ski areas — The Pines, Bendix Woods, Ski Valley and Mt. Wawasee — and will be joined by a fifth this winter in the central part of the state, Pleasant Run at Greencastle.

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Pleasant Run, located two miles from Greencastle on U.S. 231, is the brainchild of two doctors, dentist J. L. Stamper and general practitioner Tom Black, an Evansville native and graduate of the University of Evansville.

The area is located in Stamper's backyard.

"We've been skiing in my yard for two years now," Stamper said. "We used to have snowmobiles pull us back up the hills."

Now, the rookie resort will have four rope tows hauling skiers to the tops of four runs that have an average 125-foot vertical drop. The longest trail is 1,000 feet. All the equipment, Dr. Black explained, was purchased from a ski area in Massachusetts — Pheasant Valley — that went out of business.

Pleasant Run will try to capitalize on night skiing, with a total of 2,500 1,500-watt quartz lights. "We're claiming to be the best-lit ski area in Indiana," Stamper said, proclaimed.

Dr. Black, who spent much of last winter skiing at Paoli, says the Pleasant Run venture is not an attempt at commercial success as much as it is finding a nearby place for a few local families to ski.

"If we can have fun and survive, that'll be success enough."

A modest lodge under construction will offer a snack bar, 300 sets of rental skis (at \$7 on weekdays) but no accommodations. Pleasant Run's target area is a 55-mile radius, Stamper says, that includes Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Lafayette, Danville, Ill. and 11 universities. "But we're not turning anybody away," he laughed.

The area will have one mobile snowmaking unit and Stamper figures the maximum number of people the slopes can handle at one time is 500.

A tow ticket will cost \$7 from noon to 10:30 during the week and \$9 from 9 in the morning to 11 at night on weekends. "We may run all night if things turn out like Paoli," Stamper predicted.

The Pines in Valparaiso boasts that it has the largest ski shop in the Midwest.

With a total of eight runs, six rope tows, four T-bars and an average 135-foot vertical drop, it draws most of its customers from Chicago, 50 miles away.

It began its 17th year earlier this month and is located on manmade hills in an old sandpit and drew an estimated 80,000 skiers last year. Lift tickets are \$5 during the week, \$7 on weekends.

Bendix Woods County Park, located in New Carlisle (8 miles west of South Bend), is better known for its 5½ miles of cross-country trails than its downhill slopes, according to assistant park director Carl Baumgrass.

The 8-year-old, county-owned facility, however, does have four downhill runs — the longest is 1,000 feet — and four rope tows. Instead of a lodge, it has three "warming areas" and, because it operates on public funds, also has low rates: \$4 during the week and \$6 on weekends.

Ski Valley in LaPorte begins its 15th season still advertising itself as an excellent facility for beginners.

With six tows and a T-bar, its longest run is 1,200 feet. It is privately owned by Walter Yoost and located halfway between LaPorte and Michigan City.

Mt. Wawasee, located in New Paris (Elkhart County), is a 17-year-old facility that has been under new management for the past two years.

With nine runs, one T-bar and 7 rope tows, the area draws skiers primarily from Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. With a basic snack-bar type lodge (no accommodations), Mt. Wawasee charges \$7 for an all-day lift ticket during the week and \$9 on weekends.

Owner Bill Stath about summed up the relationship of the four northern-tier ski areas in Indiana: "I don't think we'll get too much business from Evansville," he laughed. "If they're going to drive this far, they're going to go into Michigan."