

Energy Crisis Helps Central Iowa Skiing

By Jim Moackler

Skiing conditions in Iowa could hardly rival those of mountain areas but the transportation pinch this winter — reduction in air travel and gasoline limitations — is expected to increase activity on Iowa's slopes.

At least that's the opinion of central Iowa ski area operators, among them Norman VanHaaften of Des Moines, who manages the Dexfield Sports Area, two miles north of Dexter, and Edwin Bryan, owner of Fun Valley near Montezuma.

Activity Brisk

Activity at both areas has been brisk this month, although the reduction of snow cover in recent days has resulted in a temporary lull.

"This is our third season and it's been the best so far," VanHaaften said. "We had about 100 out Sunday."

The snow at Dexfield was

described as "crusty" Thursday but VanHaaften said a snowfall of 2 to 3 inches would make for good conditions for the weekend.

Bryan has four snow-making machines on his 64 acres at Fun Valley and he was ready to get them in operation if Mother Nature doesn't supply snow for the weekend.

Bryan permits both snowmobiling and skiing at Fun Valley and said that he and his wife sold their farm this fall — 216 acres of it that is — and decided to develop their winter playground on a tract they retained.

Notice Difference

"I'm sure it (the gasoline shortage) will help us," he said. "We're already seeing the difference."

"Some skiers who usually make two or three trips to Colorado during the season have told us they'll be com-

ing here instead. A lot of them on the way up to Minnesota or Wisconsin are stopping here . . . say they can make it back on the same tank of gas."

Although VanHaaften said he hasn't seen such positive results, he admits: "Personally, I feel that the gasoline shortage can do nothing but help us."

He also expects to realize an increase in business from those who normally would be heading for ski areas in the north and west but face transportation problems.

Those northern and western resort areas are taking new measures to keep their ski lifts busy in what they must view as a critical season, offering gasoline for skiers, increased bus service and offering lift tickets at a discount to drivers who arrive with four or more skiers.