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Thrills Come With Spills on Northwest Iowa's Ski Mountain

Plainsmen Find Fun on Slick Staves

HOLIDAY SKI MOUNTAIN, Iowa — Winter sportsdom's glamour boy has set up shop in northwest Iowa.

From this promontory overlooking the city of Estherville and Ft. Defiance State park, 1,000 or more beginners, amateurs and professionals zip on hardwood staves down snow-packed slopes each wintry weekend to the banks of the Des Moines River's west fork.

A professional staff operates the ski mountain from a newly-constructed lodge complete with rental skis, instruction courses and restaurant.

Novices make their first runs on a beginners' slope. An intermediate slope, steeper and somewhat faster, then awaits the emboldened beginner. Finally, there is the advanced slope where speeds of 45 to 50 m.p.h. are attainable on a 30 degree grade, according to the pros. The three trails range from 1,000 to 1,600 in total length.

Skiers glide back to the top with the help of powered rope tow operating over the return trail.

The snow depth is maintained at 18 inches with a nightly grooming by special packing machines, a snow maker and whatever help the weather man can send. The crew prefers temperatures ranging from the low 20s to around zero. Temperature and average snowfall records favor this area as a ski trial site. Holiday Ski Mountain is planning to operate into late March.

A ski patrol is being formed by a nucleus of explorer scouts and other ski buffs, including some eager amateurs and professionals who've been traveling far from Iowa up to now to find fast snowy trails. Holiday Ski Mountain enthusiasts see in the growing throng of prairie dwelling skiers the potential for several ski clubs.

Over all, they figure the new sport center gives the Iowa Great Lakes vicinity a full spectrum of winter activities that in turn will tend to keep the area humming as a year-around outdoor recreational center. Already some of the resorts are gearing their accommodations to skiing, snowmobiling and indoor swimming, in addition to that age-old standby, ice fishing.

"More motels and resorts in the Okoboji community are talking about remaining open into the winter," according to Buddy Dundee, promoter of Holiday Mountain and host to a press tour of the ski area.

The age spread among skiers seen on the slopes indicates that the prisoners of long mid-western winters are responding to an opportunity to enjoy snow instead of merely looking at it through a window. An amateur on the beginner's slope is likely to find a five-year-old zooming past his right and a 70-year-old on his left.

Dillon Hotel Corporation, motel operator in Okoboji 14 miles west of here, has invested a tidy bit of cash in refining the sky trails, buildings and equipping the lodge and tows and staffing the mountain on the bet that there's a winter recreational void to be filled for northwest Iowans and their near neighbors.

The traffic up and down Holiday Ski Mountain during weekends indicate Dillon has a pretty safe wager.

A scenic view of the West Des Moines river and Estherville marks the pushover point on the advanced slope.

Larry Coke of Sioux City makes a deceptive picture of nonchalance in a first run on the beginers' slope at Holiday Ski Mountain.

Instructor Gene Voigt gives first day skiers some pointers that, hopefully, will keep the students on their feet in the first run on the beginners' slope.

Only Thing Taller Than Mountain Is Beginner After First Successful Run

By MARC COX
Journal Sports Afield Editor

HOLIDAY SKI MOUNTAIN, Iowa—This skiing is real humerous stuff. Especially for onlooking friends watching others take their maiden voyages down an incline.

You almost double over with snorts and laughter seeing the funny way your friends wobble and act like stick-men with legs and arms stuck out at weird angles.

And then they fall down sort of ungracefully with skis and arms and legs sticking out in different positions. And then you see them sitting there, rolling this way and that way trying to stand up again.

You can't hear them say anything, like moans or cuss words, because you're way up high on the good flat ground and they're hundreds of feet away.

It's real laughable, too, about your good friends when they get back to the top of the hill, after skiing up on the towing machine.

The very casually slide up to you on the safe, level spot and real professional-like, stick their sticks into the snow. They look like cartoons, big patches of snow on their frontsides and backsides and their stocking caps hanging sideways on their heads.

They're puffing, too, and have redder faces than normal for winter-time, outdoor activities.

Then your friends act even funnier. They sort of wrinkle their brows, gaze down the slope with contempt and say in a flat voice (like Matt Dillon):

"When are you going down, buddy?" Except that they pronounce "Buddy" like "coward" or "yellow-belly."

Fighting Words

Those sound like fighting words. I was just about to reach for my six-gun (like Little Joe of the Ponderosa) when I remembered that you don't fight a man with his skis on.

So I, too, very casually replied, "I didn't come up for this weekend Ski-Fest at Okoboji and Estherville to ski. I'm more interested in the other fun-things like the ski lodge, breathing this fresh air, taking a Sauna bath, going swimming in the indoor pool and sitting around the bar where there are lots of interesting people and conversations."

That doesn't seem to impress them and they start talking about how they'd like to have their own ski boots and custom made skis to do a better job of skiing.

And then that laughable comment again, "Let's see you go, coward."

No Place for Me

"I'm really more of a fisherman," I protested. "And besides I don't have the fine equipment that you have," pointing to their big, long skis, the sticks with the round things on the bottom and their snappy costumes.

"That's easily taken care of," says a bearded individual with a Holiday Mountain cap on. I recognize him as our Ski-Fest host and friend, Buddy Dundee. He turns out to be really my enemy and a ski enthusiast as he twists my arm and propels me to the ski lodge which is full of old people, young people, teen-agers, grandmothers and kindergarten kids getting ready to go skiing.

"What's your foot size? How tall are you?", Buddy demands. I give answers and he hands me two big leather ski boots black and shiny, with four laces hanging all over and weighing more than a limit of walleyes. I sat down on a bench and struggled to put them on. Standing up I couldn't bend my ankles and then clopped over to a railing and dugout where a poised, young boy handed me some skis and said, "Step in." He had a screwdriver and he wedged my boots in, turned things and tightened other things and then let me loose.

Two Sticks

I also was handed two of the ski sticks—just the right length according to my enemy Buddy, who peered at the sticks and also at my eyes. "Don't worry, just about everyone is a beginner here," he said. "Holiday Mountain is making its own customers out of people who've never skied before."

Having no intention of acting foolish and trying to slide down that steep hill they call a beginners' slope, I did go outside and got my skis clamped on. I could stand up real fine and by taking those sticks with the wheels on the bottom I could push myself forward and kind of glide along.

I did a real good job on going down a slope of four inches which went towards the path to the hill they call the advanced slope.

Then some stupid fool, one of my friends, sneered at me and double-dared me to come up at the edge of the beginners' slope. "We've been down again and only fell down twice," friend number 1 said. Friend number 2 agreed and docked the shutter of a camera, drooling for action. Bearded Dundee was helpful, too." I have a movie camera. I need some action shots for TV."

I protested and declined and little 5-year-old girls brushed past my knees and zoomed down the slope, along with the sister of Grandma Moses.

Then some strange power developed and some force pushed me forward, forced my arms up to push those sticks and I started sliding down that devilish steep incline. The snow slid by — as well as the adjacent trees. I decided to slow up but there weren't any brakes. There were people ahead of me, too, but I didn't have a horn. I waved my sticks in the air gracefully but that didn't help.

I just about made the end—80 per cent at least—when the snow and hill came up and hit me. I nonchalantly got my head off the ground and started to stand up. But I found it impossible. I was grounded. Leaning forward I started sliding downhill. Stabbing with the sticks sideways I only found out how heavy I was. Meantime laughing, caroling grade school boys and girls sprayed snow on me as they sped by. Ski Patrol teen-agers executed fancy turns and high on the hill cameras clicked and ground.

By ingenuity and outdoor cunning I righted myself, stood up and agilely slid down the remaining 17 per cent of the slope, falling down again only at the end.

Back at the top of this awesome hill I sauntered over, glided, i.e., to the good friends and looked for some cowards. But I couldn't find any offhand, so I put my six-gun back in the holster.

These Iowa mountains are great and now I am going to tackle that advanced slope. Of course, I've got to get all the real professional gear—especially a long flowing scarf. I might even grow one of those beards like Buddy.

The first spill comes quickly for most beginers, in this scene about 50 feet down the training slope. After that, progress, with a little coaching by instructor Gene Voigt, standing, at left.

Buddy Dundee, Holiday Ski Mountain host to visiting press corps guests, pronounces Journal Sunday Editor Charles Anderson still intact with no bones broken after the later's first fall on the beginners' slope.

Although his skis may point precisely the wrong ways for good control this youth is completely at ease on the ski slopes as is the boy in the right background. Five and six year olds are a common sight on the beginners' run.

A spacious lodge at Holiday Ski Mountain houses an equipment rental department, a snack bar, dining tables and a cheery, wood-burning fireplace.

Police Chief Has Advice for Women

NORTH CHICAGO, Ill. (AP) — Police Chief John S. Matjevich suggests women arm themselves with whistles and pins to ward off attackers.

"I would say that carrying a shrill whistle, an ordinary hat or stick pin and judicious use of teeth, fingernails, feet and voice in fighting off the assailant would be invaluable, both in staving off the man and in later identification," he said.

But the first precaution would be for a woman not to place herself in a situation where a potential attacker would see his way clear for an assault.

"Don't walk down dimly lit side-streets. Watch out for suspicious looking characters and never walk near cars parked in alleys or in unlighted areas," he said.

CITY SAVES JENNY LIND SONG HALL

TORONTO, Canada (AP)—The century old former City Hall, where Jenny Lind once sang, is being restored for use beginning next summer as the permanent home of Canada's National Ballet Company.

The million-dollar project is part of the St. Lawrence Arts Center that is to also include a 750-seat concert hall and a 800-seat theater for drama. The latter structures are to be completed in 1968.

Like an auto race track, a ski resort has a pit by which beginning skiers stop to have their equipment fitted by an experienced skier.

Swimmer to Try Political Plunge

CALCUTTA, India (AP) — Mihir Sen, the Indian who made a name for himself swimming well-known bodies of water such as the Panama Canal and the Dardanelles, has decided to plunge into political waters.

Sen announced he would seek election to parliament's lower house (Lok Sabha) in India's general elections next February. He will contest as an independent.

In announcing his candidacy, Sen said the ruling Congress Party, which warmly congratulated him on each of his swimming feats, "has driven India to the brink of disaster."

Terrell Taunts Clay in TV Bit

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Heavyweight Ernie Terrell taunts his upcoming opponent by singing "won't you come home, dear Cassius?" to the tune of "Bill Bailey" on ABC-TV's Hollywood Palace program Feb. 4. Terrell and champion Cassius Clay fight two days later in the Houston Astrodome.

Behind the Blackboard:

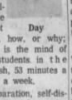
Good Teaching Job Takes Preparation Plus Action

A Salute to Quality

By SHIRLEY DAY and RAMONA ANDERSEN

Question: "How on earth do you teachers do it?" asked an amazed parent.

Andersen


Day

An outstanding secondary teacher, whom we shall call Miss Ware, answered the question as follows:

There are days when I think of teaching as an all-out war. The enemy is not knowing what, how, or why; the battlefield is the mind of each of my students in the world of English, 53 minutes a day, five days a week.

I stress preparation, self-discipline, practice, and creative experience for myself and for my students. My lesson plans reflect the best that I can bring to them; my students know this. In return, I receive from most of them the best that they can produce.

Because I insist on mastery of material and skills, I must be positive that all phases of the work are understood. Some days I explain points and procedures until I'm hoarse. My students never hesitate to ask me questions!

There exists between us an understanding. The faith that they show in my ability to help them drives me to work harder and harder. After many years of teaching, I am convinced that this understanding is extremely important to the accomplishing of my goal, the pupils' mastery of their native tongue.

Several years back this goal was made a bit more difficult to reach by the "progressive education" movement. The label sounds good; the result was as Dr. Max Rafferty, State Superintendent of California, said, ". . . a bland, unctuous, cloying, sick philosophy" that "did so much over the years to soften and weaken and dilute the independent and sternly beautiful subject disciplines."

Some Accepted It

A few parents and an occasional teacher who followed this movement seemed convinced that the end result of all education should be a happy young person who could get along with his peer group. It was considered undemocratic, even reactionary, to burden youngsters with the work of spelling, reading, writing compositions, or doing math. That day has gone by!

We teachers have to be careful of the extremes; we cannot follow every new idea in education, nor can we ignore them all. So we pick and choose as wisely as we're able.

Most of us want what's best for our students. I know that teaching young people is my life. I would never have gone into any other line of work.

o o o

Miss Ware is no teaching machine working with cardboard student. She's a warm, responsive human being who loves people. She cares enough for her pupils to give them what they should have. She's a very special person.

Not all teachers face the same problems, possess the same ability, or have the same dedication as Miss Ware. Surely, it takes all types of teachers with many different sets of methods to handle the myriad of teaching assignments in our schools; however, it is reassuring for us all to know that there are Miss, Mrs. and Mr. Wares in our school systems. We know that they represent something especially fine and that we are privileged to work with or for them!

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