

No Snowballs, But You Can Ski

Skiing in Kansas is a reality at Shocker Mountain Ski School.

You can't make a snowball, and snow won't spray in your face as you make your way down the slope, but more than 3,000 new skiers have developed their skills skiing under the bleachers of Wichita State University's Cessna Stadium.

The slope is a specially built, 117 foot ramp on the southwest side of the stadium — surfaced with a huge, white plastic mat of two-inch high bristles called "Dura Snow."

According to Fred Harvey, director of Shocker Mountain and Midwest Ski Shows, Inc., the slope is tremendously close to real snow, but the consistency of the surface makes it easier to learn to ski.

"Because the plastic snow surface offers less chance for surprise, there also is less chance for

injury," and, adds Harvey, "the frustration level is cut way down, too."

At an elevation of 1,332 feet, Shocker Mountain is steep enough for its intended purpose — to teach the novice to ski. A rope tow lift takes the skier to the top of the slope.

The lesson program, which has been called the best dry-land ski instructional program in the Midwest, offers the opportunity to take lessons at home, and arrive at Colorado ski areas ready to ski.

Lessons are available at Shocker Mountain for all levels of skiers, from beginner to intermediate to freestyle ballet. The beginner class offers four two-hour sessions — the equivalent of two or three days of lessons in Colorado — and teaches all the basic skills, as well as chairlift usage on an actual chairlift.