

Artificial Ice Plant Provides Snow At Ski Resort That Had None

LA RIVIERE, Man. (CP)—A ski resort on the Prairies 104 miles southwest of Winnipeg has overcome the two greatest handicaps to the sport—scanty hills and lack of substantial snowfall.

Noel Later took over the La Riviere ski resort from the Canadian Pacific Railway when he was 23 and had \$13 in the bank.

The railway was losing money on the project. Now, seven seasons later, he controls a 92-acre area valued at \$100,000 where snow-covered hills are available to skiers at a fraction of the financial toll asked by operators in the Rockies or Laurentians.

Later installed an artificial ice plant to make snow for his six, 2,000-foot slopes in the Pembina Hills near the International Peace Gardens on the North Dakota border.

The 300-foot vertical drop of the hills is believed to be the remains of what once was a river, a valley below the level of the Prairies rather than a group of hills.

HELPS TOWN BUSINESS

Skiers from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, West Virginia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Manitoba have registered at the village this season. There are four ski clubs in Manitoba with a combined membership of 400 and a total of about 1,000 active skiers.

Most of the town's 100 population have some part in catering to the skiers. About 96 visitors can be housed in a motel or old-fashioned hotel with prices from \$1 to \$5 a night. A dormitory for men also is available.

A French-made lift went into operation two years ago to

carry the 150 to 300 weekend skiers.

Paul Hunt of Fort Wililam, one of five professional ski instructors, says "some university students who don't mind living in the dorm have spent weekends in La Riviere at a cost of \$12."

Hunt, a graduate of a Quebec skiing school, says free instruction is given to 50 novices a weekend. There are day and evening classes, with floodlights illuminating the hills for night skiers.

Climax of the season is the annual amateur invitation ski jump scheduled for March 12. Entries include some of Ontario's best and runners-up from U.S. contests. The Manitoba ski zone trials were held a week before Christmas.

BLAMES EQUIPMENT

On injuries last season, Later explained: "Sure, our ski patrol used the sleigh to take seven skiers down the hills with broken bones. But the instructors and the individuals were not at fault. Every accident was caused by poor-fitting equipment bought from salesmen who know nothing about the sport."

Montrealer Jack Taylor, a competitive skier in the Laurentians and New England during the last 15 years, now is an organizer of junior programs in the province.

Taylor says La Riviere has "tremendous potential as a family winter playground but the townspeople must improve accommodation and recreation facilities."

"The hills are fine and a lot of fun is there for the average skier . . . but the resort people lack the experience and competition needed to improve the area at a faster pace."