

# Cold blasts make ski buffs smile

## 14 resorts in state hope to open slopes by Thanksgiving

By HAL SMITH, Gazette Staff Writer

Cold Canadian air has abruptly pushed the autumn warmth out of West Michigan. Sunsets come earlier.

Snow from the Rockies has rolled over the Great Plains and Great Lakes, chasing Michigan's fall season toward December briskness.

They are signs of winter that tell skiers it's time to regroup on whitened hills replete with bump chutes and swooping trails.

For the overanxious, the new Michigan skiing season has already begun. Two resorts in the state had preliminary openers last weekend, thanks to some early snow and cold.

The first to open in lower Michigan was Mount Brighton Ski Area in Livingston County where intermediate and beginner slopes, covering 60 acres, were dusted with manufactured snow from 200 snow-producing fans. The first in the Upper Peninsula to open was Indianhead, near Wakefield, a popular spot for Chicago, Wisconsin and Minnesota skiers.

The number to be opened this weekend depends on continued cold weather, but 14 of the state's 57 major ski slopes say only a sudden return to summer temperatures would keep them from opening on Thanksgiving.

Closest to Kalamazoo planning a holiday opening is Cannonsburg near Grand Rapids. Others in West Michigan with Thanksgiving plans are Missaukee Mountain near Lake City, Caberfae near Cadillac, Crystal Mountain near Thompsonville and Sugar Loaf near Traverse City.

Besides Mount Brighton in East Michigan, planning Thanksgiving skiing are Alpine Valley near Milford, Snowsnake near Harrison and Mount Grampian near Oxford.

Those headed for the U.P. can make tentative plans to ski at Indianhead, Briar Mountain near Vulcan, Cliffs Ridge near Marquette, Pine Mountain near Iron Mountain, Ski Brule and Ski Homestead, both near Iron River.

All resorts are urging skiers to call ahead to make sure warmer weather hasn't undone their season-opening plans.

For those unwilling to travel too far afield for skiing just yet, there

are activities in the works to get skiers in the mood for the season. This Sunday from 1 to 4, the Kalamazoo Ski Club will hold an open house at its Plainwell-area club grounds, 3471 West AB Ave, between Douglas Avenue and 12th Street.

A repeat open house is scheduled for Dec. 12 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The Kalamazoo Ski Club is a cooperative family ski club that owns a hill with five runs and two rope tows. Membership dues are \$50 annually for family, \$45 for single. There is a \$5 first-time processing fee, Christian said.

Questions about the club or directions to the open house can be directed to Pauline St. Clair at 344-2906.

While neither Timber Ridge Ski Area's slopes nor the new Bittersweet Ski Resort is open yet, there is activity these days around each area. Timber Ridge's shop is open for ski tuneups, and Bittersweet's work crews are racing to complete the resort's lodge for a grand opening in about three weeks.

Elsewhere on the ski scene:

- The Kalamazoo YMCA is offering ski conditioning classes with participants using the track, pool and gym. The class meets tonight from 7 to 9:30 and each Tuesday from 6 to 7 and each Thursday from 7 to 9:30 until Dec. 21. Cost is \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members.

- Swiss Valley near Marcellus is offering a "prime-time" pass for \$99, good for Monday through Friday skiing, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., beginning Jan. 3.

- The Kalamazoo Nature Center's annual "Bobsleds and Snowsakes" get-together has been set for Feb. 13 to coincide with the "Snowflakes and Spirits Festival" being planned in Kalamazoo.

- Timber Ridge will offer its every-Sunday challenge racing series again this season. Racing will go on from 1 to 4 p.m., with racers gathering at the poma lift. There will be six age groups for both men and women.

- Patrick Deibel has been named ski school director at Bittersweet Ski Resort. American Training Method and Graduated Training Method lessons for all classes of skiers are planned.