

Equipment makes a big difference

By Joanne C. Gerstner
Lansing State Journal

So you're all revved up to hit the slopes of the cross-country trails. Sorry, the jeans, sweatshirt and Michigan State jacket aren't going to keep you warm enough. And what about ski equipment? Your Uncle Leo's rusty skis from 1967 with the Cupco bindings won't look too sporty or even salvagable.

Don't worry. Even the novice newcomer to downhill, cross-country and snowboarding can be transformed into a big skier.

All it takes is a little honesty, time to try things out, and of course, some spare money.

"Everybody can find something to match their ability and their budgets," said Paul Hansen, the manager of the Bavarian Village Ski and Golf in East Lansing.

There are four businesses listed in the Lansing phone book that specialize in new ski equipment: Bavarian Village, Freestyle Ski Shop, Raup Campfitters and the Ski Loft. Ski equipment is also sold at area sporting goods stores, with large selections at JC Sport and Dunham's Discount. Equipment is also sold at most ski areas.

If you want to buy used equipment, Double Play Sports and Play It Again offer good selections.

If you're a novice to skiing, it's probably best to rent equipment and take a few lessons to determine your interest level before you buy.

Mary Gonzales and her 10-year-old son Mike and 8-year-old daughter Jenni started downhill skiing last year.

"The boys have always wanted to ski and I've wanted them to," said Mary, a single mother. "We signed up for the program with the cheaper lessons and we found we really liked to ski. We only went shopping for clothes and skis after I figured out that this was something we really wanted to do."

Mary reduced her costs by waiting for the off-season sales at sporting goods shops and specialty ski stores. She found the best sales during July and August.

"It made a big difference, as some of the prices were close to 50 percent off," Mary, a resident of Lansing, said. "They really want to get rid of last year's clothes and skis. The money we saved let us spend a little more on our skis and boots."

When you're ready to make enough of a commitment to buy equipment, look for items to grow with your skill level.

An option to purchasing new equipment is found at second-hand sporting goods stores such as Play It Again Sports or Double Play Sports.

"It's cheaper to go with used skis," said Play It Again's Paul Hammes said. "Our customers are looking for skis for children. They're growing, so it doesn't make sense to rent hundreds with they're just going to outgrow them in a year."

Shape skis
Hansen said the popular downhill board for 1997 is the parabolic, or shape ski. The ski has an hourglass shape, with the ends being wider than the middle.

The shape allows for easier turns and deeper carving of the snow. A modification in skiing technique is necessary to take full advantage of the shape.

"The shape skis really are the hot thing," Hansen said. "The expert skier experiences a whole new sensation of skiing, as they can lay out parallel turns to the snow like a snowboarder and carve deep turns. The shape ski makes it easier to turn for the beginner and novice."

Some shape skis add a plate to the binding boot area, raising the boot off the ski by a half-inch. This spacing is critical for advanced skiers seeking to mimic snowboarders.

"The plate raises the skier's feet, allowing them to lay out the turns. Plus, it helps keep the side of their boots from touching the snow, because those parallel turns move the boot close to the snow."

Shape skis cost between \$300 to \$600. Most skis run from \$200 to \$500.

Wider skis
The latest innovation on the cross-country side is wider skis. Skiers preferring to explore ungroomed paths found it hard to make their own trail with this ski.

Wider skis make it easier to cut through the snow, which can be icy, hard and deep on ungroomed paths. The starting price point for cross-country skis is \$89, with the top of the line skis running around \$200.

Snowboards
There aren't many innovations to report in the area of snowboards. Picking the right snowboard takes more than an attraction to a chair-lift technical freestyling board with falling stars painted on it.

Sure, the bright colors and designs make it a bit fun and cool, but the snowboard has to match your skiing style.

Hansen said snowboarding is still the thing with kids and teens. "Snowboarding is the definitely the fastest growing part of our sport," Hansen said.

He recommends snowboarders planning to do the majority of their skiing in Michigan should stick to a freestyle or free carve type of board. The board size is determined by the skier's weight. The lower the weight, the smaller the board.

Hansen said one of the most important components for good snowboarding is to use a proper snow-binding board. Winter boots do not provide the necessary foot support and heel protection during turns.

"We're really stressing that this season," Hansen said. "You need something that's not too flexible, it's got to give more support."

Snowboards cost from \$89 up to \$300, with the boots averaging around \$130.



Share your stories

Do you have some favorite places you like to ski in Michigan not shown on this map? We'd like to hear from you. Send your favorite ski site to Ski Michigan, Sports Department, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee, Lansing 48919 or fax us at (517) 377-1296.

Downhill skiing

No. Upper Peninsula City Phone number

1. Al Quail Recreation Area	Ishtemo	906-489-8181
2. Big Powderhorn Mountain	Besseyer	906-332-4538 or 1-800-272-3131
3. Boyne Mountain Resort	Boyne Falls	906-224-8100 or 1-800-848-7125
4. Gablehorn Sports Park	Gablehorn	906-439-8131
5. Grand Haven State Park	Grand Haven	906-224-8100 or 1-800-5-INDIAN
6. Marquette Mountain	Marquette	906-225-1155 or 1-800-944-7669
7. Mt. St. Helens	Ishtemo	906-489-8181
8. Mt. Sunapee	Ishtemo	906-489-8181
9. Norway Mountain	Norway	906-489-8181 or 1-800-272-3131
10. Pine Mountain Lodge	Pine Mountain	906-714-2171 or 1-800-321-4598
11. Porcupine Mountain State Park	Porcupine	906-489-8181
12. Ski Boreal Inc.	Iron River	906-265-4957 or 1-800-OO-BRUIE

No. Northern Lower Peninsula City Phone number

13. Boyne Highlands Resort	Harbor Springs	918-326-3000 or 1-800-GO-BOYNE
14. Boyne Mountain Resort	Boyne Falls	918-326-3000 or 1-800-GO-BOYNE
15. Crystal Mountain Resort	Thompsonville	918-378-2000 or 1-800-969-7686
16. Hickory Hills Recreation Area	Grayling	918-341-8566
17. Hickory Hills Ski Area	Grayling	918-341-8566
18. Mt. St. Helens	Ishtemo	918-341-8566
19. Mt. Sunapee	Ishtemo	918-341-8566
20. Mt. St. Helens	Ishtemo	918-341-8566
21. Mt. Sunapee	Ishtemo	918-341-8566
22. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
23. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
24. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
25. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
26. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
27. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
28. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
29. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566
30. Petoskey Winter Sports Park	Petoskey	918-341-8566

No. Central Lower Peninsula City Phone number

31. Apple Mountain	Freeland	917-781-0170
32. Caberete Peaks Ski Resort	Calmar	918-462-2300 or 1-800-700-SKI
33. Cannonville Ski Area	Cannonville	918-462-2300 or 1-800-700-SKI
34. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
35. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
36. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
37. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
38. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
39. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069
40. Muskegon Mountain	Muskegon	918-339-7575 or 918-638-4069

No. Southern Lower Peninsula City Phone number

41. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
42. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
43. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
44. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
45. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
46. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
47. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
48. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
49. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183
50. Alpine Valley	White Lake	918-387-4183

*Participates in Discover Michigan Skiing Month in January

Cross-country skiing

Here are some cross-country ski sites in the Lansing area:

No. Area sites City Phone number

44. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
45. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
46. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
47. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
48. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
49. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
50. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
51. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
52. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
53. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
54. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
55. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
56. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694
57. Brookfield Inn	Williamston	517-455-4694

Source: Michigan Travel Bureau, Lansing State Journal research

Jim Dandy club growing fast

African-American club has trips planned all over the country

By Joanne C. Gerstner

Wanda Bradley-Scruggs likes answering machines. Her telephone line is very active, leading to more messages than a mortal machine can handle.

But she doesn't mind the chorus of busy answering machines — it's a sign of success. Bradley-Scruggs is the president of the Jim Dandy Ski Club, a Black American group affiliated with the National Brotherhood of Skiers (NBS).

"We've been growing tremendously the past few years," Bradley-Scruggs said. "We have more families joining. We have a large single population. And we have a lot of

children too. It's definitely growing."

Metro Detroit-based Jim Dandy, a 34-year-old group, counts more than 500 adults and 100 children as members.

The club also has over the country, taking day trips to Michigan resorts and longer trips to Colorado. Jim Dandy welcomes all types of skiers, with members participating in downhill, cross-country and snowboarding.

The club also has a race team. The big ski trip for this season includes Vail, Colo., from Feb. 22 to March 1 and to Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine over the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend on Jan. 18-20.

Bradley-Scruggs said the club expects to take at least 12 trips during this season.

Important phone numbers

Michigan ski conditions hotline
800-444-SNOW
Michigan Department of Travel
800-543-YES

Ski clubs

Cougar Ski Club (Lansing Catholic Club)
517-321-7899
Easton Rapids Middle School
517-463-4151
Falcon Ski Club (St. Gerard)
517-321-7899
Lakewood High School
616-374-8668
Jim Dandy Ski Club
313-259-5118

Internet web sites

Alpine Valley
www.alpinevalley.com
Boyne County
www.freeway.net/boynecounty.html
Boyne Mountain & Highlands
www.boyne.com
Caberete
www.michweb.com/caberete
Cross Country Skier Magazine
www.crosscountryskier.com
Crystal Mountain
www.crystallm.com
Great Lakes Nordic Skiing Council
www.glns.org
Great Lakes Skier Magazine
www.glskier.com
Michigan Travel Bureau
www.travel-michigan.state.mi.us
Michigan Nordic Ski Council
www.michweb.com
Shanty Creek
www.shantycreek.com
Snowboarders United Network
www.snowboarders.com
Sugar Loaf
www.sugarloaf.com
Sylvan Treetops
www.treetops.com

ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal

Ready to hit the slopes: Tracy Watson models a Metropolitan ski jacket with Trak Escape wide cross country skis and Exel cross country poles.

Source: Burton Snowboards and East Lansing Bavarian Village Manager Paul Hansen

Lansing State Journal

STEVE REED/Lansing State Journal

Jim Dandy Ski Club, at its home at (313) 299-5118 or Bradley-Scruggs at (313) 345-8217. To learn more about NBS, call its headquarters at (312) 955-4100.