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Mt. Notch has room to grow

Ski area is off to good start

By PAUL LIJEWSKI
Times Sports Writer

AVON — It is said that Rome wasn't built in a day.

Well, then, let it also be said that Mt. Notch ski area was not built in 20-odd years.

Larry and Leander Notch started clearing trees on their family-owned land south of Avon in the early 1960s. Their dream was to carve downhill ski runs into that land, for the purpose of opening their own ski resort.

That dream was realized when Mt. Notch opened for business last Saturday. But the Notch's have not stopped dreaming.

Mt. Notch, with its five runs — only three of which are currently open — and its 42-by-100-foot log lodge, has not yet reached its full potential.

The area, in its current state, offers quality skiing for a weekend afternoon or weekday evening. It's comparatively cheap ($5 on weeknights from 4 to 10 p.m. and $10-a-day on weekends, $5 after 3:30 p.m.), and the skiing is about as challenging as it gets in Central Minnesota.

Larry Notch, Jr., manager, said the area has met with approval so far.

"(The skiers) like it," he said. "I haven't heard anything negative. Most people are really impressed."

A few skiers have said it would be nice to have a chair lift, "But that's a couple of years down the road," Notch, Jr. said.

Indeed, the tow rope is the only real drawback at Mt. Notch. A pair of hacker gloves is recommended. But that little nuisance is forgotten once on the slopes.

The top of Mt. Notch provides access to all five runs — and a breath-taking view of the Central Minnesota area. If possible, plan to start skiing at exactly 4 p.m. on weeknights to catch a glimpse of the sunset.

Turning to the snow-covered hills ahead is also exciting. The snow winds through a heavily forested area, lending a scenic backdrop to the entire skiing experience.

The three advanced-level runs adjacent to the tow line can actually be turned into six or seven different runs if approached in the right way.

"Our runs have a lot more variety than others in Central Minnesota," Notch, Jr. said. "We have a lot more fall lines here; up to three or four on any one run once we get the whole thing going."

Times photo by Mike Knaak
Skiers head toward the tow rope after finishing a run at Mt. Notch ski area near Avon.

Some areas of the hill were worn to the dirt this past week, due to warm weather early in the week and the difficulty that presented for making snow.

But the paths that were open revealed the senior Notch's attention to detail. Skiers are able to criss-cross from run to run and dodge in and around trees. And, because many skiers aren't yet aware of Mt. Notch's existence, the hills aren't crowded.

Mt. Notch is off to a good start — but just a start.

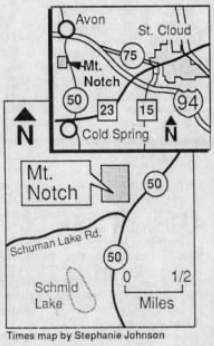
"There's probably enough room for 15 or 20 runs by the time we're done," Notch, Jr. said. "We have about 20 to 25 skiable acres so far. We should be close to 100 acres by the time we're done."

Mt. Notch already has a lodge with fast food and ski rentals and a privately hired ski patrol is present in case of emergency.

The future will likely see additions of a warming house, a ski school, a small skating pond, cross-country ski trails, a T-bar lift (possibly as early as next year) and a chair lift.

There's a lot more to be done because, heck, Rome wasn't built in a day.

How to get there:



Times map by Stephanie Johnson

Youth hockey president responds to complaints

Sports mailbag

Two letters addressed to me have appeared in the Mailbag column in the past month. The first one demanded a public explanation of a statement attributed to me in an earlier article. The second letter made reference to the first, and brought up additional questions about the difference in dollar amounts available to sponsor individual St. Cloud Youth Hockey Association teams.

I answered the first inquiry by a private letter in which I explained that:

■ 1. I had been misquoted, and had a witness to that fact.

■ 2. Rather than continue in a "public debate," I would answer further questions, if any, directly.

The writer of the second Mailbag letter was also answered personally. The problem of raising and distributing funds for our hockey program has been addressed in committee and reviewed by the SCYHA Board of Directors.

Major changes in fund-raising — by expansion of our funding base and continued generous support of our present sponsors — will allow us to significantly reduce the cost to individual teams and players at all levels. The implementation of this program will require volunteers from the general membership of the SCYHA. Anyone interested and willing to help, please contact me.

Further, I encourage anyone with questions or concerns regarding the SCYHA to contact me directly or attend a SCYHA Board of Directors meeting. Our board meetings are open to the public. The next one will be at the East Side VFW Post 4847 at 7 p.m. Monday.

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