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Commercial Ski Slope Near Pacific, Mo., Draws Many

Expert and would-be skiers trekked to Pacific yesterday to use what is believed to be Missouri's first commercially operated ski area.

For the second straight weekend, the Hidden Valley Ski Area was the scene of heretofore unfamiliar sights here: Veteran skiers performing for the gallery, cautious beginners threading their way down the slope, and fearless teenagers overextending themselves to plummet headfirst into a snow bank.

The youngest skier was 16-month-old Frances Ferriss, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Stark Ferriss, of Brentwood. Frances confined her talents to stiff-legged walks around the practice area on her miniature skis.

The new ski area, which has a rope tow, is about five miles south of Pacific, on Franklin County Highway F. For the present, facilities are meager. A tractor-trailer serves as a combined coffee shop, equipment-rental station and warm-up hut for skiers.

A corporation of seven men owns the ski area. Originally, the group planned to use it for their families and friends, Denis Zavadil, a spokesman, said. The area was leased, cleared of trees and rocks, graded, raked and seeded. Word of their efforts circulated. Soon scores of applications were received from groups and persons interested in using the area this winter.

A premature attempt to open was made the day before Christmas. A warming sun appeared early in the morning, however, and "our snow and profits went down the hill," Zavadil said.

Should enthusiasm continue, the groups intends to use all profits for development. A split-level chalet will replace the tractor-trailer. A 200-foot beginners' slope and a 1000-foot experts' slope will be near the present intermediate slope. A snow-making machine will be purchased and used in dry periods.

For the time being, skiers must make do with the intermediate slope, a 1000-foot incline about 200 feet wide. Veteran skiers look at it with disdain, but to beginners its heights are majestic.

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