

Estherville Praying for Snow

Ski-Buffs Require Winter's Weather for Holiday Mountain

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New Concept of Wintertime Sports Opens

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ESTHERVILLE, Iowa — A snow-free March rarely with more than a few inches of white stuff on the ground at Estherville and if it isn't snow, they're sure to get some kind of weather fall from the sky as they can make the snow themselves.

The winterers are ski buffs, that type of winter sportsman who spend their free time whizzing down slopes of snow on legs, the extension of their feet.

At Estherville, the slopes of snow are at Holiday Mountain, an ski area situated on the hills of the Iowa-Missouri River's West Fort. The ski area is about 10 miles from the city and is open to a man in the field of the sport.

The majority of the skiers are from the Iowa-Great Lakes region around Estherville and there have already been more than 4,000 on the Holiday Mountain slopes this winter. That's more than twice the number that used to ski the area the first winter it was open, Severns said.

Holiday Mountain opened four years ago and there are now four ski runs available to the skiers. Two of the runs are for the skiers with intermediate ability and there is a short, gentle slope for the beginners. The slope with the steepest descent is for the expert. The longest run, an intermediate one, is more than 1,000 feet long.

Each of the runs is serviced by a rope tow and the entire ski area is equipped with artificial snow-making equipment. Severns said that snow-making requires a combination of 100 pounds of water and 100 pounds of air pressure. It's the volume of air that is needed that is the most expensive, Severns said.

The artificial snow is put on the slopes at night or on Mondays, when the slopes are closed to the skiers. When the ground is covered and no dirt spots remain, the slopes are good for skiing, according to Severns.

The slopes were open to skiing in the middle of December this season and Severns would like to be able to have them open for at least two more weekends in March. But natural snow or low temperatures are necessary first. Last winter was excellent weather for the ski slopes, Severns said, but the first two winters that Holiday Mountain was open were unusually warm.

The most frequently used run is an intermediate one, but more and more skiers use the run for experts. The ski area has a ski school with two instructors, Ben Rodemann and Lee Carrier. Severns recommends that every beginning skier take at least one lesson his first time out on the slopes. In about two lessons, the skier can learn to control his speed and turns and he will have very few accidents there, Severns said.

There have been few accidents on the slopes this winter, including minor ones, Severns attributes this to control of the slopes by National Ski Patrol members. The patrolmen keep the skiers on slopes they can handle and are also trained to give first aid to those who need it.

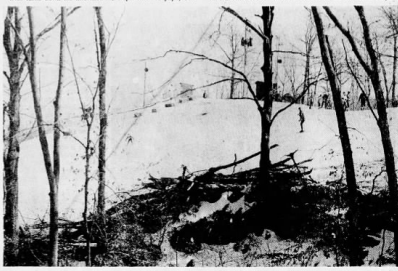
There are 28 members in the Estherville area who are registered by the National Ski Patrol, Rodemann said.



There's a touch of the Alps at the Holiday Mountain ski slopes at Estherville. The bell announces the start of skiing classes, instructed by Ben Rodemann and Lee Carrier. Don Severns, owner-manager of the slopes, started skiing when he was stationed in the Alps while with the U.S. Army.



Ben Rodemann, right, watches one of his pupils as the skier turns down the intermediate slope. Another pupil, center, looks on. Severns recommends that every beginning skier take at least one lesson the first time he is out on the slopes.



Seen through the trees that surround the Holiday Mountain ski slopes is the most popular run in the area. An intermediate slope was added this year and there also is a beginner's slope and one for experts.



Two ropes serve each of the runs at Holiday Mountain. A large percentage of the skiers there are school children like these young skiers. About 40 of the youngsters have formed a ski club and compete as a team at various skiing competitions in the Midwest.



This child houses the rental shop, ski school office and refreshment area for the skiers at Holiday Mountain. There's also a fireplace to warm hands and to dry wet clothing. In front of the chalet is an area to place the skis before going into the building. At the top of the beginner's slope are benches for spectators.