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Conditioning for the Slopes

There is no more helpless feeling for an adult human than being on skis for the first time or two

By RANDY BROWN
Executive Sports Editor

If you're a downhill skier, or want to be one, you can just about do it all right here in Wichita.

You can buy and/or rent everything you might need, and then some. You can work yourself into shape for skiing. You can learn to ski plain and simple. And you can learn to ski fancy.

All the city needs now is a few mountains and a resort out by Lake Cheney.

Ski instruction is the newest addition to the flatlands' booming ski industry.

Just a few years ago, folks laughed when a ramp of Cessna Stadium was converted into a small simulated ski hill and dubbed Shocker Mountain Ski School.

"And I was one of them," says Fred Harvey, now the school's director. "But it works."

Harvey, a member of the Wichita State physical education faculty, and four other instructors deal in all kinds of skiing.

There is the beginner course, with the emphasis on safety; the intermediate course, in which the skier can polish his technical skills, and an advanced course in free-style ballet.

HARVEY AND CO. have developed ersatz moguls they can drag on and off the hill. And Shocker Mountain comes equipped with a rope tow, and separate areas for chair-lift instruction (important, say those who've crashed at the start or end of a lift) and ski jumping.

Shocker Mountain (689-3218) has group lessons (12 hours of instruction and skiing, including a chair lift session) and private lessons (\$25 an hour).

The Slope (263-1914), a year-around ski shop, offers ski instruction on its moving mountain, an indoor slope that simulates downhill conditions.

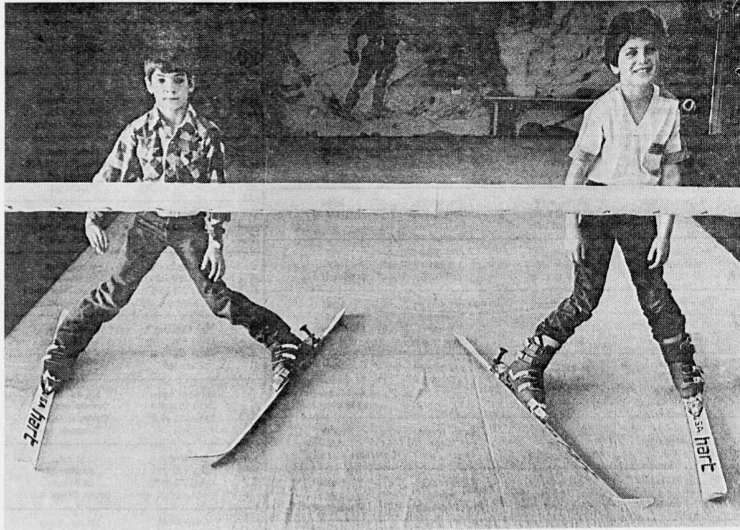
The Slope's four instructors teach a beginning class (five hours of instruction for \$62) and intermediate, parallel and NASTAR racing classes (four hours over a two-week period for \$59 each).

AN ASIDE: This reporter has taken lessons at both Shocker Mountain and The Slope, and heartily recommends the experience.

There is no more helpless feeling for an adult human than being on skis for the first time or two. Although shorter skis have made the learning process shorter and less painful, if the beginner waits until he gets to Colorado for lessons, he could waste a lot of valuable skiing time just learning the basics.

Like getting up after you fall down. It's easy to fall. After that, things get tougher if you don't know what you're doing.

Like turning. And stopping without hitting a tree or building. You get the idea.



Micheal Farris, left, and Rodney Steven practice at The Slope ski shop.

Staff Photo by Bill Youmans

Incidentally, whether or not the beginner or novice tries to learn something in Wichita, lessons are a must once you get where you're going, all local skiers say.

AT COLORADO RESORTS, group ski school runs about \$11 for a half-day. Private lessons average \$25 an hour.

And whether or not you opt for local lessons, the beginning skier should devote a good deal of time preparing his body for the experience. There is nothing like being out of shape to ruin a ski trip, skiers say.

In the movies, it may look like they're just gliding effortlessly down the mountain, but it can be deceptively hard work, particularly when you aren't very good.

The YWCA (263-7501) offers a pre-ski conditioning course for \$36 (\$24 for Y members). It's designed to strengthen arm and leg muscles. The class, held on Monday and Wednesday evenings, will start Jan. 5 and again Feb. 2.

For those who want to shape up on their own, legs and endurance need the most work.

SKIERS RECOMMEND jogging or racquetball or biking. If you want to give your legs some extra work, leg presses on a Universal or running up and down the stairs or hopping back and forth over a suitcase (use both legs for all hops) will work.

And here's one final piece of advice on ski training that all experienced skiers give.

Get plenty of sleep here in town before you strike out for the mountains.

SKI

YOU CAN DO IT

FOR PRE-SEASON CONDITIONING

Bent-Knee Statics for Stronger Thighs

Skiers have used the bent-knee static exercise for years to help strengthen thigh muscles. Find a place where you can rest your back against a wall or tree, so that you are in a position similar to sitting in a chair. Now squeeze a ball (volleyball, soccer ball, basketball) between your knees, holding this position for 25 seconds, working toward one minute. This exercise will build stronger thigh muscles and at the same time develop the muscles on the outside of the upper and lower leg.

When skiing, the full range of the thigh muscle is used, so to use this exercise alone is a mistake. For best results, combine it with sit-ups, push-ups, jump-squats and rope-jumping as well as other conditioning exercises shown on other pages in this issue.



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