

THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

THE MOUNTAIN CLASS: TAKING A WARM-UP RUN

By TONY CRESPI, SKIER NEWS' TECHNICAL EDITOR

The run was steep. The trails were lightly dusted with two inches of light powder. Unloading from the chair, my guide, at that time a Ski School Supervisor and PSIA Examiner, suggested an ideal warm-up. We cut through a few trees, and I followed trustingly. Within a minute I realized it was dust on crust: I lost my edge and tumbled and tumbled until finally coming to a stop at the base.

Sometimes a warm-up does anything but create a feeling of warmth.

I should have known better. When I was a young man living in the mountains and skiing daily my skills were stronger. When you ski daily, the hard descents seem to be more modest. As we all know, weather shifts and changes in temperature can create a combination of different challenges. Sometimes a dusting on top of smooth ice or frozen crud can create a real challenge. Always remember the rule from the skiing code to "Be aware of changing conditions."

Warm-up runs help balance the risks of steep terrain and difficult snow conditions against the reality of possibly skiing more modest terrain. After all, challenging snow can make an intermediate trail more difficult and great snow can make more difficult terrain, quite honestly, less difficult. Ski less often, though, and some folks hate to waste time on a warm-up as they would like to get back into it as quickly as possible.

Where should we start the day?

You can look around the base lodge early upon arrival. From Mount Snow or Stratton Mountain in Vermont to

Steamboat or Crested Butte in Colorado, each morning brings a varied range of skiers into the lodge. From high-powered experts and racers to the casual recreational skier, virtually any athlete in any sport benefits from a warm-up. While it is tempting to skip a warm-up run, that decision risks a crash and burn, sometimes a catastrophic one as well.

It is supposed to be a warm-up. The adventure can follow.

Warm-up runs can help mitigate risk. That pro that I skied with should have known better. I should have known better. Then again, after I crashed, he laughed, commenting that he was clearly a stronger and more powerful skier. He was. And as I brushed off the snow and gathered my skis and poles, I felt fortunate that I had only injured my pride.

Where do you start your day? What kind of warm-up is best for you? When we start a season with poor snow or less than normal amounts of snow, and then when it finally snows, it is tempting to immediately cash in on unused powder days lest we miss precious runs. It is really tempting to rush out and seek the steepest and deepest. But, unless we ski daily, it is not necessarily smart to start the day on black diamond terrain. Ideally, start with a nice warm-up.

Here is the reality: from Okemo in Vermont to Whistler Blackcomb in British Columbia, Canada, big mountains have some steep playgrounds. You know that though. And you know that some trails are really long. Some are really steep. Most skiers at a favorite resort know that conditions

can vary dramatically from one peak to the next. While there may not really be bowls and cliffs, there are trees, parks, slots and a range of steeps. One friend may find it fine to take a warm-up on a black diamond trail. Another may prefer a modest cruiser. Because our skills and muscles vary, our warm-ups should vary as well. That day I crashed and burned happened because I needed a less challenging warm-up than my ski partner required. Years ago, when I lived in the West, my hike near the summit to a bowl helped warm-up and condition all of my muscles. Today on a cold chairlift ride, my muscles tend to stiffen. I need a few turns before I charge ahead.

The warm-up is supposed to be a warm-up. It is supposed to be a prelude to a days adventure. It need not necessarily be on novice terrain. A hike to a nearby peak in the West, at high altitude, may be sufficient. But in the East, waking up and walking to a cold lift on a cold morning may not be necessarily sufficient.

Consider a warm-up. In the end of course, it is always your call, from your first run to your last run.

Be aware.

Ski with care.

Savor your warm-up run.

Contributing Columnist Tony Crespi has served as both a Ski School Trainer and Development Team Coach. A contributor to publications throughout snow country, his instructional pointers are published throughout the season.

SUN VALLEY HITTING 81st WINTER SEASON

- Fly to Sun Valley (SUN) with direct flights to and from Portland, Oregon (PDX) to beginning Dec. 17
- Another 21 acres of gladed skiing added to total 55 gladed acres on Bald Mountain; total skiable terrain is now 2,075 acres

SUN VALLEY, ID – Sun Valley Resort officially turns 80 years old this year. America's first ski destination resort, which opened on Dec. 21, 1936, will be celebrating its 80th birthday. Holiday festivities and a birthday bash are being planned for the big day. Details will be released as they are finalized.

Increased Glading Skiing

The resort may be 80 years old this year, but it is not old in innovation and progress. One example of this is the continued partnership of Sun Valley Resort and the United States Forest Service (USFS) for the Healthy Forests Initiative, which resulted in an additional 21 acres of gladed skiing on Bald Mountain, bringing the total number of gladed skiing and riding to 55 acres. The Healthy Forests Initiative improves forest health by clearing overstocked vegetation and trees to reduce hazards and destructive insects.

Replacement with More Efficient Snowmaking Guns

In addition to the environmental efforts with the Healthy Forest Initiative, Sun Valley also continues their sustainability efforts by replacing another 125 snowmaking guns this year with the highly-efficient Rubis Evo snowmaking guns, bringing the total to 207.

Increased Direct Air Service

The accessibility to Sun Valley increases each season. New for the 2016-17 winter season will be a direct flight from Portland (PDX) to Sun Valley (SUN) on Alaska Airlines, in addition to their existing direct flights from Seattle (SEA) and Los Angeles (LAX). This is the first nonstop flight from Portland to a destination ski area for Alaska Airlines. Flights to and from Portland (PDX) will run Wednesdays and Saturdays, Dec. 17, 2016 through April 1, 2017.

Delta Airlines will continue their daily service to and from Sun Valley from Salt Lake City (SLC) and Los Angeles (LAX) beginning Dec. 17. United Airlines will be offering daily flights to and from Sun Valley from San Francisco (SFO) and Denver (DEN). Nonstop flight service starts Dec. 16 and continues through spring skiing.

On-Mountain Experiences

Ski Patrol 101: Ever wonder what it is like to be a ski patroller? Guests at Sun Valley can enter the "Ski Patrol 101 Raffle" at the River Run Day Lodge for a chance to win a morn-

ing with the Sun Valley Ski Patrol (SVSP) before the lifts open. One lucky winner per week will enjoy a sunrise adventure to the top of Bald Mountain and ski with the SVSP for about two hours, helping to prepare the mountain before it opens to the public for the day. This fun and rare adventure happens most Saturday mornings and is free to enter.

Ride the Beast: How many people can say they have ridden with a snow groomer, preparing the mountain for the next day? Sun Valley Resort offers the Ride the Beast program for guests wishing to experience what really happens behind those big machines each evening. Guests enter a lottery for a chance to Ride the Beast at the River Run Day Lodge. Four lucky winners are chosen each week for rides happening most Friday and Saturday evenings throughout the winter season. There is no charge to enter or win the experience.

SnowSports Programs

The world-renowned Sun Valley SnowSports school is back in action for the 2016-17 season with more programs, top-quality certified instructors, and two of the best slopes to learn on – Bald Mountain and Dollar Mountain.

DIVAS is a women's-only all-mountain experience for intermediate to advanced skiers. Developed for women, by women, the DIVAS program includes a 2.5-hour group lesson, one day per week for eight weeks with Sun Valley's top female athletes and instructors. The cost is \$660 for the eight-week program.

Women's-only Weekend (WOW) was designed as a women's-only development program. WOW emphasizes camaraderie and skills improvement in an atmosphere that maximizes learning in a supportive environment. Small groups develop focus on technique with Sun Valley's leading female instructors. Après ski events and video analysis are included.

The program costs \$750 for the three-day clinic on Feb. 3-5, 2017, from 8:30 to 4:00 each day.

For kids 6-17 years old, FreeRide is a freeride program focused on high-quality and high-energy skills development for the fun of the sport. Offered each Saturday from December through March, plus one bonus day, the program starts Dec. 10 with blackout dates of Dec. 24, Dec. 31 and Feb. 18. A payment program is available if purchased online. The program only costs \$515. The program with Sun Valley Season Pass is \$876.

Nordic, Fat Bike and Snowshoe Center

A fleet of Norco fat bike rentals will be available for guests wishing to hit the Sun Valley Nordic Center trails. More trails may be opened for fat biking this season.

Events Scheduled for the Winter 2016-17 Season

Competition returns to the slopes at Sun Valley this winter. From freeskiiing on Roundhouse slope to snowboarding in the terrain parks, there will be plenty of action happening at both Bald Mountain and Dollar Mountain throughout the season.

Mountain Collective™

Sun Valley Resort is once again a part of the Mountain Collective™, an impressive lineup of iconic resorts. Skiers and riders can enjoy 28 days (two days at each resort are included in pass) at 14 of the world's best mountain destinations, plus get 50 percent off any additional days with no blackout dates.

About Sun Valley Resort

Founded in 1936 as America's first destination ski resort, Sun Valley Resort in the Idaho mountains is a four-season resort. Outdoor adventure enthusiasts enjoy championship-level skiing, snowboarding, skating, hiking, biking, golfing, fishing, shooting, concerts, shopping, world-class restaurants, and conference and special event space. Sun Valley is consistently ranked above other destination resorts for its array of active pursuits. Sun Valley is a member of the Grand America Hotels and Resorts family. Sister properties include Snowbasin Ski Resort, Grand America Hotel, Little America Hotel (all Salt Lake City, Utah); The Westgate Hotel, San Diego, Calif.; Little America Flagstaff, Ariz.; Little America, Wyo.; and Little America, Cheyenne, Wyo.

Sun Valley is served by Hailey's Friedman Memorial Airport (SUN). The airport is located 14 miles from the resort and is easily accessed from the gateway cities of San Francisco (SFO), Seattle (SEA), Los Angeles (LAX), Salt Lake City (SLC), Denver (DEN) and Portland (PDX). All Sun Valley Resort guests receive complimentary roundtrip airport transportation from SUN.

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For more information about Sun Valley Resort, visit www.sunvalley.com or call 1-800-786-8259.

In Northern Idaho SCHWEITZER GETS NEW LODGE and MORE

SANDPOINT, ID – Schweitzer Mountain Resort is looking forward to completing the new lodge at the summit of the mountain. Construction began in July 2015 and the structure will offer unforgettable views of Lake Pend Oreille, three states and Canada. The 9,000-square-foot lodge will offer an amazing venue for on-mountain dining and relaxation with a full service restaurant and bar, cafeteria, space for group functions, and a new home for ski patrol dispatch. Completion is anticipated for December of 2016.

The Schweitzer Snowsports School is pleased to announce the appointment of Nikol Hampton as the new Snowsports School Director. Nikol has an established career in the ski industry starting in 1990 at Durango Mountain Resort in Colorado. She has held various roles throughout the years including a stint as director of Silver Mountain's Snowsports School in 2002-03. In 2009, Nikol joined Schweitzer as assistant Snowsports School director and has served in that role until her promotion this fall.

This past spring, Bret Wieman also joined the company as Schweitzer's food and beverage director. Bret oversees nine food outlets as well as the resort's banquet and catering operations, and he will be launching food and beverage service in the new summit lodge. He has also been busy facilitating a \$125,000 transition to Squirrel Systems as the new food and beverage technology system.

Schweitzer's Property Management group administered a \$75,000 upgrade to the 70 units managed by Schweitzer. With

the participation from the owners, each unit will upgrade mattresses or mattress toppers, mattress shields, sheeting, fitted bed skirts, shams, pillows and duvets in addition to upgrading to washable wool Pendleton blankets. The upgrades have ushered in a new rustic modern look and feel for both the Selkirk and White Pine Lodges.

A new look and feel is also apparent on Schweitzer's website, thanks to a redesign from Dirigo Design and Development. The new site was launched on Sept 5, 2016, and offers more user-friendly navigation and enhanced visuals.

In addition to the new summit lodge, the resort has spent over \$900,000 in capital improvements, which include the new food and beverage technology system, upgrading the entire ski rental fleet, and the purchase of a Prinoth winch cat to continue providing the incomparable high angle grooming.

With the continued growth of mountain biking at ski resorts during their summer seasons, Schweitzer was pleased to be able to work in partnership with the City of Sandpoint, The Selkirk Recreation District and private land owners to connect the recently developed Highpoint Trail with existing trails already in the Schweitzer Basin. This new 2.8-mile trail departs from the top of Schweitzer and meanders southwest around the ridgeline, ultimately providing 13 miles of inspiring single track to the valley floor. This is part of a larger multi-year plan for the Watershed Crest Trail, a 30-mile loop that will be one of the top mountain biking trails in the Pacific Northwest.

The real estate market is continuing to grow at Schweitzer with projects by Copper Basin and Idagon Design Build. Twenty new homes were built in the last three years with three currently under construction on the mountain. Lot sales have also seen significant growth with 12 lots being sold in the last 12 months. Schweitzer still has 23 lots available in highly desirable locations on the mountain. More details about the real estate developments can be found at www.schweitzer.com/explore/mountaininside/

Schweitzer is also pleased to announce that The Powder Alliance has gone "JaPow" with the addition of Kiroro Resort in Japan, rounding out an already impressive resort roster. Schweitzer unlimited pass holders will receive three FREE days at Kiroro as well as 13 other resorts located around the Western U.S. and Canada. You can learn more by visiting www.powderalliance.com.

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For more information on Schweitzer Mountain Resort, please call 1-877-487-4643 or visit www.schweitzer.com

For lodging, you may also call 1-877-487-4643, or, spelled out for easier reference, 1-877-ITS-IN-ID