

It's that time of year again, so hit the slopes

■ With wintry months ahead, the club snowsport teams prepares for their season

By Inge Scheve
For the Emerald

Although some may think the Eugene rain is a pure nuisance, Oregon club snowsport teams are looking merrily toward the Oregon high country, where snow is accumulating at a satisfying rate.

First out were the alpine skiers, who have already practiced systematically in preparation for the snow season.

During the fall term, they practice three times per week, working on general strength, games, plyometrics, sprints and cardiovascular conditioning.

The alpine ski team fields 13 female and 18 male team members this season. Their backgrounds range from seasoned racers to those who are completely new to the sport. There is no requirement to race, but the Ducks do compete in intercollegiate races.

The team hardly lost any members during the summer, which leaves coordinator Chuck Leavitt optimistic about the upcoming racing season.

"I think we could go to nationals this year," he said. We'll definitely go to regionals."

The Ducks sent a women's and a

men's team to regionals last year for the first time. That is also the goal for this season, Leavitt said. Last year, the men's team was only one spot away from a berth at nationals.

During winter term, the alpine skiers practice at Willamette Pass all day Tuesday and Thursday.

Heading to the mountains is also the business of more than 75 students who have registered their interest in snowboarding with the club snowboard team. About half of these are female riders.

"It's mostly for fun, but there is also a club and a team aspect," said Doug Hentges, who is the co-coordinator and coach.

At the club level, there is no skill or experience required, he said. All team members are invited to join the five-day team camp Dec. 9 and the team trip to Whistler/Blackcomb in British Columbia.

"Traditionally, 10 to 15 people volunteer for the competition team," Hentges said.

They attend big air, half pipe, slope style and extreme competitions. There is no collegiate league, but the Oregon riders compete in already established competitions, Hentges said.

Starting winter term, the snowboarders plan on heading to Willamette Pass at least once during the week and once during the weekend to practice and ride. Ideally, there will be three days each

week, but this has not been determined yet, Hentges said.

For those who are interested in Nordic skiing, a small team will embark on various collegiate races throughout the winter term. Coordinator Christian Martin organizes the team and has the schedule of collegiate and citizen races for the upcoming season.

The cross country team lost one of two female skiers to graduation, and needs at least two more to field a women's team, but there is a men's team in place.

For the time being, the Nordic team joins the club running team for practices. The runners meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 4 p.m.

As teams and snow-lovers reach toward the back of their garages and closets to pull out the gear, it makes sense to take a look at current equipment trends. With each new snow season comes new gear from manufacturers.

"Some of the hottest alpine equipment this year is the twin-tippers," said Patrick Sullivan of the Mount Bachelor Ski Shop.

"Kids do whatever tricks they can think up on the twin-tippers," he said.

The twin-tippers have tips on both ends, much like skateboards. That makes them versatile like few skis before them, as they can go on powder, ice and groomed trails, ac-

ording to Sullivan. There are also the new Salomon Pilots, which come with the bindings already mounted.

"You can just slap them on and go," Sullivan said.

The price of them may come as a slap in the face as well: They chime in at \$900 on sale, excluding poles and boots.

Around \$400 will get most beginners and intermediate skiers far in acquiring boots, bindings, skis and poles, Sullivan said. Advanced skiers' packages typically start at \$600.

Snowboarders can enjoy lighter, stronger boards that last longer and are more comfortable to ride, and new boots generally fit better and are more comfortable too, according to Kirk Weatherby of the Mount Bachelor Ski Shop.

A snowboard package starts at \$500, he said. However, many large sporting goods chain stores sell packages for less.

The snowboarding industry also caters more toward female riders, Weatherby said.

"There is specific clothing that's cut differently, and women's snowboard boots are lower and more open to fit ergonomically correct," he said.

In Nordic equipment, manufacturers also discovered the female market. Salomon just came out with a whole line of women's boots

that are narrower in the heel and forefoot.

"This makes a huge difference for those they fit," said Gary Bonacker of Sunnyside Sports in Bend, one of only 12 retail stores in the United States that specialize in Nordic equipment.

In terms of skis, Fischer skis are in the process of re-inventing the full-length ski, Bonacker said. The new Short Cut ski is still shorter than the traditional full-length ski, giving the beginning and intermediate skier more control and easier maneuvering, but at the same time offering more glide and stability, he said.

Newer skis also offer a wider range of weights they will support, making sizing an easier deal, which seems to be the trend within all the major ski producers.

The key in cross country skiing is to spend a little more money on boots and skis and then skimp on the poles. Decent cross country ski packages will run just shy of \$300, he estimated.

Sound too expensive? If so, used equipment is abundant at garage sales and second-hand stores. Cross country packages usually go for \$75-\$120, snowboard packages for \$150 and up and alpine deals start at \$100-\$150, according to Kevin Gabriel of Play It Again Sports.

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Horoscope by Linda C. Black

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Nov. 9). Expect lots of action this year. Once you make up your mind, nothing will stop you. Do that first in November. An explosion that might have derailed you is easily managed in December. Others wonder how you put up with the chaos in February. You have a hidden advantage in April when you need it most. By May you're beginning to emerge, but is that the old you? The reward comes around June, and it's well-earned. Step out in July, and by October you will have impressed even yourself.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) — Today is an 8 — Communication with people who are far away should go well. The problem you dealt with yesterday could finally get solved. Travel looks good, especially if romance is involved. It's also a good day to gather information.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) — Today is a 5 — Don't talk much about what you're doing, but go through your closets. Work's involved, but something you've stashed away could be worth more than you thought. Some of the rhinestones in that box of junk might be real diamonds.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) — Today is a 5 — Is somebody nagging you to join a gym? If so, full speed ahead. An exercise program that involves a group is the best one for you to join. This won't be easy, but just remember — no pain, no gain!

CANCER (June 22-July 22) — Today is a 6 — An older person's trying to talk you into taking on more responsibility. More money doesn't seem to be involved, so you're resisting. Don't settle for a deal that won't be good for you. Being nice is OK, but don't be a doormat.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) — Today is a 7 — Love works out well tonight, but you're stuck at home. How about letting the other person be the aggressive one this time? You can be passive for a change. You might like it. Try something different.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Today is a 6 — You might find the perfect thing on sale. It might be slightly damaged, but there's a huge savings. Don't just check the big ads; look on the bulletin boards at the grocery store, too.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) — Today is a 7 — You're learning quickly now and making a good impression on somebody. The two of you may be quite different, but there's a definite attraction. You may not have much money to spend on romance, but you have an active imagination. That's better.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) — Today is a 6 — A rush order's coming in. The money's good. Ask for overtime or double-time pay. The customer's desperate enough to pay what you're worth. Stay calm.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) — Today is a 7 — Your unusual idea needs a little work but will succeed. Input from a person you admire helps you solve a technical problem. Set your romantic worries aside this weekend. Your date isn't as concerned about your imagined shortcomings as you are.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Today is a 6 — Dig for buried treasure. That item you've been saving to fix up will be the perfect thing. It'll take a little work, but that's OK. When you get it done, it'll be much better than anything else, for the purpose you have in mind. Make time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) — Today is a 6 — A friend could teach you something that will boggle your brain. It'll shake up reality as you know it. Get together with the person who's most likely to do that. Talk about wild and crazy things and stretch your mind a little further.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) — Today is a 6 — Negotiate the cold, hard cash. Ask for payment for work already done, or something you're considering doing. Travel or relocation may be necessary, but that's OK. If this will get you closer to your dreams, go for it.

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