

Focus

A SUPPLEMENT OF

The
Portland
Observer

Publisher

Chuck Washington

Editor

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.

Copy Editor

Joy Ramos

Director of Advertising

Tony Washington

Creative Director

Shawn Strahan

4747 NE Martin Luther
King, Jr., Blvd.
Portland, OR 97211

503-288-0033
Fax 503-288-0015

e-mail:
news@
portlandobserver.net

Deadlines for
submitted material

Articles: Friday by 5 P.M.
Ads: Monday by Noon

Focus welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs can be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

All created display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of the ad.

1999 The Portland Observer

Ski lodges gear up for winter with new lifts, higher prices

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hodag is coming and La Niña returns. Also making their debuts are the "Magic Carpet" and Scapolo's, not to mention the \$43 lift ticket.

Those are the names getting most of the buzz as local skiers wait for the curtain to rise on the final winter recreation season of the 20th century.

Hodag, a new quad chairlift nearing completion on the west slope of Hoodoo Butte on Santiam Pass — around 40 miles northwest of Bend — should be the biggest new attraction.

Named after a fictional critter that loves deep snow, Hodag will provide access to more than 200 additional acres of skiable terrain at Hoodoo Ski Bowl.

Five new black- and blue-diamond runs have been carved through the area to provide more challenges for intermediate and advanced snowriders.

Hodag and its associated runs are the first installment in a major upgrading of the state's second oldest ski area planned by its new owner, Chuck Shepard.

The second installment, scheduled for construction next summer, should even be more impressive. Shepard, a Eugene builder/developer, plans to begin construction of a new \$3 million day lodge in April.

La Niña, as every dedicated skier and snowboarder knows, is the name given to the weather pattern that produced more than 500 inches of snowfall at Cascade ski areas last winter.

If La Niña does her thing as expected this year, ski runs at Hoodoo and every other resort in the Pacific Northwest will again be inundated with snow.

"We are certainly very optimistic that we're going to have a year of abundant snow," said Kathy DeGree, vice president of marketing for Mount Bachelor Ski Area west of Bend. They will open as soon as they have enough snow.

Hoodoo was slated to wait until the day after Thanksgiving. Due to a manufacturer's delay, however, Hodag may not be operational until sometime in December.

Meanwhile, skiers will have to dig a little deeper into their pocketbooks this winter if they want to ski at Mount Bachelor, home of the \$43 lift ticket.

The daily adult pass cost only \$39 when the resort opened for business

last November. A mid-season increase, however, boosted the rate to \$41.

"We feel the price that we're charging for an eight-hour day of skiing or snow riding is really fair," said DeGree. "We have the lowest cost per skiable acre of anybody in the entire West ... and our lifts were just voted No. 1 in Ski Industry News' reader survey."

In addition, with discounts available through the new Express Pass program and the various "point system" options, DeGree said, very few people will actually pay the listed daily rate. "With the Express Pass, we really think that daily lift ticket is not \$43, but \$38," DeGree said.

Both Hoodoo (at \$26) and Willamette Pass Ski Area (\$29) will charge the same for a daily pass as they did last year.

Then there's the "Magic Carpet," which will make its Oregon debut this season at Willamette Pass Ski Area.

"It's like a conveyor belt for first-time skiers," said Randy Rogers, Willamette's director of skiing. It works just like those moving walkways in major airports, he said. The Magic Carpet will carry ski school students about 120 feet up the gentle hill where beginners go through their first "progressions." The device should make learning to ski just that much easier, Rogers said. "No longer will they have to side-step up the hill every time," he said.

Finally, a new restaurant, together with two new coffee and juice bars on the mountain, are indicative of Mount Bachelor's new emphasis on enhancing the "creature comforts" that people like to enjoy while relaxing in the lodges between runs, DeGree said. "With all the express lift technology we now have, it takes half as much time to ski the same amount as 10 years ago," she said.

"You can only ski so much in a day, so our guests are wanting to spend more time around a comfortable fire or lingering over coffee or a good meal."

Providing more comfortable and attractive surroundings was Shepard's top priority when he purchased Hoodoo last spring.

"The first time I came here was in the early 70s and I was really turned off by the lodges," Shepard said. "They were crummy. They reminded me of ice skating warming huts."

"You know, this is a great place for

kids, for teen-agers, but it's not really nice and I would like to make it so that it is nice, so that people could come here and be comfortable."

In his first summer at Hoodoo's helm, Shepard spent thousands of dollars sprucing up the south day lodge, in addition to the \$700,000 the new chairlift and ski runs cost. Nothing has been done, however, to the North Lodge building — other than to hang a sign reading "Going, going, gone ..."

The building will be razed in April and the new 40,000 square-foot lodge will rise in its place.

Shepard, who will be his own contractor, already has the floor plans and has staked out the location of the new lodge, which is scheduled to be completed early in 2001.

Shepard won't stop there. He plans to make improvements every year for five years, with the goal of doubling the number of skier visits over that period. Hoodoo drew only about 40,000 skiers last season.

Among the planned improvements in future years are the addition of a snow play area for inner tubes and sleds, and replacement of the Red and Green chairlifts.

Shepard was able to move so quickly in making changes because Hoodoo already had a U.S. Forest Service-approved master plan specifying the changes.

"I don't have to go through all the environmental impact stuff — that's been done already," he said. "It could be for the \$1.5 million, I bought a master plan and everything else kind of came along with it."

kmhd for the love of jazz

89.1

**McMENAMIN'S
ST. JOHNS PUB**

Live Music · Group Events
Delicious Pub Fare · Great Specials
Handcrafted Ales & Wines

8203 N. Ivanhoe Street, Portland (503) 283-8520

www.mcmenamins.com

All food, ales and wines available to go