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MIDWEST SKI UPDATE -- 3/9/09



By Jim and Ann Neff

You know what they say in the Midwest: "if you don't like the weather wait a minute and it will change." That old chestnut was actually true this past week when it came to ski conditions. Depending on the resort at which you skied, it was the best of times or the worst of times – sometimes at the same resort during the same week!

JIM SAYS: I skied close to home this week at our local ski area, [Caberfae Peaks](#) in Cadillac, MI, and my experience is pretty typical of what spring skiing in the Midwest is all about. (I should preface this by saying that the conditions at Caberfae have been superb this season with copious amounts of snow – over 200 inches – and spectacular grooming.)

On Wednesday I skied with Ron Scott, a veteran skier who laid out the runs at Ski Brule in the UP, and we agreed it was the best day of the year at Caberfae. The snow was dry and carved like a dream and it was in the mid-30's. Ann and I followed that up with another primo day on Thursday, cloudy but still excellent. On Friday the temps rose into the 40's and fog set in so I did not ski.

On Saturday, even though it was gray and the feel of moisture was in the air, I decided to take a shot and ski. Dumb move. Although the grooming attempt was valiant, the snow hadn't set up and was soft and wet. It's what I would call "arthroscopic snow." That's when knee surgeons stand at the bottom of the hill and hand out business cards. By noon it was raining.



On Sunday it was still warm so I didn't ski; a combination of rain and sleet hammered us during the early evening. Hold the phone, though! Around 4" of heavy snow followed the rain and as Monday dawned the skies were full of sunshine.

Ann and I skied on a picture perfect Monday: severe azure overhead, unlimited visibility, 37 degrees, no wind, and Caberfae had laid down a carpet of velvet snow. If I had not declared the previous Wednesday as my best ski day of the year, this Monday would have been it!

What this all goes to show is that spring skiing in the Midwest can be downright awful and absolutely phenomenal all in the same week. The best advice is to check ahead at any given resort. For an overall look I prefer the ski report on the [Weather Underground](#) (from

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One thing you might want to note is that many Midwest resorts, particularly the upper part, have a deeper base than resorts elsewhere in the country. Several Midwest resorts have between 60-70 inches of base. That's more than Breck, Aspen, A Basin and Copper in Colorado.

ANN SAYS: While Jim focuses on the snow this spring, all I'm thankful for is that I can ski without having my nose fall off from frostbite. I've about had enough of below zero wind chills, so having the spring sun on my face is reason enough to go out skiing.

On another topic, this time of year we usually take a trip, either out West or somewhere in the Midwest. In a about a week we'll be heading for [Lutsen Mountains in Minnesota](#).

Regardless of where we go, staying in a condo means doing a little cooking. I don't know about you, but even though I want to prepare something good I don't want to spend a lot of time in the kitchen (after spending all day on the slopes). I also want something easy to do so I can assign Jim some tasks (that he can't screw up even if he has a beer in his hand). And I don't want to go to the grocery store every ski day.

I've had quite a few comments about the Brewmaster Pizza recipe we had in our January 26 blog. If you like that recipe you might be interested in more of the same – easy recipes you can prepare quickly with basic ingredients. Over the years I've accumulated a lot of these and they're archived online on a web page called [Annie's Mountain Kitchen](#).

[COOL ON THE CALENDAR](#)

March 14: Freestyle Camp: [Chestnut Mountain, IL](#) and its Freestyle Accredited Coaches are hosting a Freestyle Camp on March 14 from 1-4pm focusing on personal improvement in the park and pipe for all levels of riders (skiers and snowboarders). Cost is \ \$30. For more information or to register please contact Rob Hupperich at skischool@chestnutmtn.com or (815) 777-1320 ext. (480).

April 25: Name Your Own Ski Run: Want to have a ski run named after you (or a ski buddy)? You can do just that at [Crystal Mountain, MI](#). The Crystal Mountain slope, currently designated "N-11," is being auctioned off by the Michigan Legacy Art Park in an online auction at www.NameTheSlope.com and will culminate with a final round of 'live' bidding at Crystal Mountain on Saturday, April 25th. Online bidders are invited to participate, either in-person or via proxy, at the 'live' bidding event, which has been spirited in the past. Proceeds go to the Michigan Legacy Art Park, an outdoor sculpture park located on 30-acres of land at Crystal Mountain Resort. Legacy Art Park, a non-profit organization, contains more than 40 major works of art along 1.6 miles of hiking trails that wind through a 30-acre preserve of wooded hills. The Art Park is a unique cultural and recreational destination. www.michlegacyartpark.org.

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