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MIDWEST SKI UPDATE -- 2/23/09



By Jim and Ann Neff

Wow , what a difference a week makes! Last week's thaw gave way to some huge snow dumps and real honest-to-goodness powder skiing returned to many sections of the Midwest.

We took advantage of the freshies on Friday by trekking over to Shanty Creek Resort in Bellaire, MI ([www.shantycreek.com](http://www.shantycreek.com)) to ski the Schuss Mountain slopes with our old buddy Steve Kershner. Steve is the Director of Skiing at Shanty Creek and the president of the Michigan Snow sports Industries Association and is always happy to have an excuse to "work," especially on a powder day with bluebird skies. It took some arm twisting but we cajoled him into taking some runs with us. Maybe the 8 inches of new fluff had something to do with it too.



We had not skied the Schuss Mountain slopes for a couple of years, so a re-acquaintance was long overdue. Ann remarked how we always comment about what a neat layout they have here. Three chairs on the front side and two on the back side, all color coded. The runs fan out so every member of a family or group can find a comfortable or challenging way down and then reassemble at the same lift.

An example of this came into play for our threesome when we rode the yellow chair on the front side. Steve pointed his tele skis into a stash of untouched powder along the edge of Schuss' steepest run, Kingdom Come. Ann really likes the pitch of King's Canyon, a blue separated from Kingdom Come by a line of trees, so she peeled off into that canyon. I made a beeline for a narrow black diamond chute bracketed by trees called Sarajevo, chock full of fresh and perfect for quick turns. Then we all meshed at the base of the chair, smiles so wide we risked getting sunburned teeth.



We ranged over to the back side for some blue cruisers off the red chair, like Sally's Alley and Red Hot , and Steve pointed us toward a couple of small glades where the powder was untouched. Then we returned to the front, this time slamming down the four blacks on the southern end of the mountain. We ended at Ivan's, a nifty sports bar at the base of the lifts, for a snack and to watch Sportscenter on the huge TV screen above the bar (the thing must be a billboard in the off season).

Before Steve left us he gave us a great insider tip. Shanty Creek's other mountain, the Summit Slopes, is open only on weekends, which begins Friday at 4:30 pm. That means all the powder that falls during the week just accumulates. If you catch it right, the groomers often leave the left side of the black chair untouched for Friday night skiers.

We had a wonderful time at Schuss and we returned to our Cadillac, MI base on Friday night. By Sunday morning another 18 inches had fallen with another 8 inches on the way. It looks like the coming week will be primo!

HECK OF A DEAL:

INDIANHEAD MOUNTAIN - Wakefield, MI -- Snofari Spring Break Specials beginning March 1 -- 3 nights for 2 in village chalets and trailsides. Call 1.800.3INDIAN or go to [www.indianheadmtn.com](http://www.indianheadmtn.com). We like this resort's set-up because the lodging is at the

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top of the mountain so you get first tracks every day without having to ride a lift first.

SHANTY CREEK – Bellaire, MI – Early Season Pass Sale from March 2 – April 1. Buy a 2009-2010 season pass and ski the rest of this season and all next season for \$198. [www.shantycreek.com](http://www.shantycreek.com).

COOL ON THE CALENDAR:

2/28 – 3/1: GRAND RAPIDS RAIL JAM – Downtown Grand Rapids, MI -- This is a really cool, a first annual event in the center of one of the biggest cities in the Midwest. The B.O.B., known for holding many events in the city of Grand Rapids, is a 4-story converted warehouse with multiple nightclubs, restaurants, lounges and a comedy club all under one roof. We've hit the B.O.B. (Big Old Building) before concerts and Grand Rapids Griffins hockey games at the Van Andel Auditorium.

For this event they're hoping to lure thousands of spectators as snow boarders and skiers have a chance to rock the rails in The B.O.B.'s surrounding parking lots. A 30 foot high ramp will be constructed and snow piles prodded into perfect position for this three day family-friendly event. Spectators can enjoy music, food, riders, and raffle prizes with the surrounding downtown skyline as the backdrop.

The Rail Jam is slated to begin with preliminary runs on the 27th, and continue through the weekend with prizes being awarded in many different categories for riders of all skill levels. Sponsors will provide lots of swag and free giveaways, the grill will be fired up, and music will be cranking.

This jam is open to all riders of all skill levels. To register for the rail jam or for more information, visit [www.thebob.com/railjam.html](http://www.thebob.com/railjam.html). All ages are welcome and the admission is free.

3/1-15: GIANTS RIDGE, MN -- SAVE BIG ON SUNDAY NIGHTS -- Bringing 2 cans of food on Sunday nights and get a \$10 lift ticket and \$10 ski rental (snow board rental - \$16). from 4-8 PM. A donation of two canned food items must be made at Giants Ridge upon purchase of ticket. [www.giantsridge.com](http://www.giantsridge.com).

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