

Early winter pleases area ski resorts

Resort operators note more snow is present than in last two years

BY JIM THOMAS
Correspondent

Let it snow!
Let it snow!
Let it snow!
That's what management and staff at Dagmar and Lakeridge Resorts are saying as they head towards the best ski season ever.

Both multiple recreation sites are located on Durham Road 30 in the Town of Uxbridge.

"Excellent," says Kyle McClymont, assistant operations manager at Dagmar in describing the current 24-inch base. "But," he adds, "after the two inclement seasons, anything's an improvement."

All southern Ontario resorts suffered through unusually mild and almost snowless winters in 1998 and 1999.

But this one is better — one of the best says Craig MacDonald of Lakeridge.

Their seven tows have been operating steadily since early December.

Still, despite assistance from Mother Nature, both Dagmar and Lakeridge lean heavily on snow-making machines.

"Natural snow is great, but once it packs, it needs help," says Kyle.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Kevin Jarvis (left) and Derek MacKenzie, both 12 years of age, took advantage of the abundance of snow by venturing to nearby Dagmar Resort on Lakeridge Road in Durham to tackle one of the hills on their snowboards. They take a run down the hill on their snowboards at nearby Dagmar Resort on Lakeridge Road in Durham.

Thanks to snow-makers, giving them the jump on even March 'break, Kyle expects 100,000 skiers to click through the turnstiles. Snowboarding and snowtubing

are big at Lakeridge — and growing. "Snowtubing's a totally different market," explains Craig, "it's a family affair."

Kyle says snowboarding's the fastest growing winter sport in Ontario.

Dagmar also offers groomed trails for cross-country ski enthusiasts. Ski schools are huge at both resorts. Children as young as three can be enrolled.

Employment opportunities establishes Dagmar and Lakeridge as two of the largest work providers in Durham Region with more than 300 full and part-time staffers at each. Both Kyle and Craig reside on site.

"I snowmobile to work every morning," laughs Craig.

He envisions Lakeridge becoming a year-round resort with day camps and wedding receptions already planned this summer. Ten key people will be retained to assist.

Conditions during holiday periods in December and March can make or break a season, both men agree. This is when students and families flock to the slopes. And this is when interest is highest.

"We could keep going till May," says Craig, "but by then people have turned to grass-cutting and gardening. Right now, skiing, snowboarding and snowtubing's the thing."

Both resorts are cashing in on the enthusiasm — and the snow.

With Christmas past, management and staff are now dreaming of — a white Easter.

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