

Ski conditions decent despite scarcity of snow



It's as though the trail of snow leads to the top of Pyramid Peak. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – Perfect corduroy. Slightly crusty powder. Hard pack. Soft, pillowy snow. Dirt and twigs.

Ski conditions are so variable right now in the greater Lake Tahoe area that it depends on the run, not just the ski resort.

Sierra-at-Tahoe on Monday was a mixed bag, with mostly pleasurable moments. And considering the mountain was devoid of the masses that were here during the weekend, it meant wide-open runs, no lift lines, and no waiting for a cocktail.



Fog covers Lake Tahoe on Jan. 29 as seen from the 360 Smokehouse at Sierra. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Lower Main had been transformed into a race course for high school teams, with the public side a mogul lover's dream.

As with most seasons when Mother Nature is remiss at providing ample white stuff, the groomers and snowmakers can save a season.



Skiers assess the terrain on Beaver where coverage is lacking a bit. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

The groomers are being put into overdrive right now while an inversion hangs over the area. It means temps at lake level are colder than they are on the slopes. Snowmaking requires a certain temperature; it hasn't dropped low enough the past few nights for the guns to be fired up.

It wasn't until last week that the West Bowl area of Sierra opened; the back side is also open. This is super late in the season for these areas to be accessible.



Time to shed layers at West Bowl in the warm temps. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

All resorts in the region were able to open more terrain after last week's dump. The problem, though, is the forecast is dry through at least Valentine's Day. The love from the snow god's just hasn't been here this season for the resorts, which are coming off a record snowfall a year ago.

Going down Dogwood off the West Bowl chair it was near perfect conditions. There is no indication there is a lack of snow. But then when the trail merges onto Beaver it's another world. A lot of brown snow can be found here. Still, it's manageable. No rocks could be seen.



Skiing in closed areas is never a good idea. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Upper Powderhorn was super – plenty of snow (all white) – and nicely groomed.

Sierra does an excellent job of posting signs about conditions ahead. Pay attention.

One yahoo decided to duck under the roped off area of Clipper that said “closed.” Observing from the chairlift, he was in way over his head. These are the people that end up unnecessarily putting ski patrollers’ lives at risk.



Nearly the entire mountain at Sierra is open for skiing/snowboarding. Photo Copyright 2018 Carolyn E. Wright

Tree skiing is always risky; it's even more so when there isn't ample snow. And closed, means closed. Those powder stashes aren't worth it.

Considering February and March are two of Tahoe's better months for skiing, it's possible plenty of powder days are still to be had this season.