



For the week of February 27 - March 5, 2002

## Features

# Air it out at Soldier Mountain

## Ski resort's terrain park pleases

By **GREG STAHL**  
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While Sun Valley Co. continues to delay on implementation of a ski and snowboard terrain park on Bald Mountain, Soldier Mountain north of Fairfield has built an impressive assortment of rolls, jumps and playable snow features.

And though there are about a dozen table-top jumps, rail slides and rolling terrain features either completed or in the works, Soldier Mountain Ski Patroller Adam Humbach called this year's park "a stepping stone."

Next year Humbach, who has coordinated much of the effort, said the small Fairfield ski area will start earlier and, instead of making the large jumps completely from snow, will set up hay bales that can later be covered.

That, he said, should cut down on construction time.

The Sun Valley Snowboard Team has taken notice.

Two weeks ago, two van loads of Sun Valley Snowboard Team members returned from Soldier giving it a certain nod of approval. From kids who train in Park City, Jackson Hole, Mammoth Mountain and the homes of other renowned terrain parks, that's quite an accolade.

"Those kids came back and basically said they want to go back every weekend for the rest of the season," Sun Valley Snowboard Team Coach Andy Gilbert said. "They (Soldier Mountain's management) are willing to try new things down there, and that's great."

By the end of the season, the ski area plans to have an intermediate terrain park to compliment the already finished, massive terrain features, Soldier Mountain Manager Charlie Marolf said. Next year, she added, the park will become even more of a focal point for the resort's management.



Soldier Mountain ski resort near Fairfield has worked this year to construct an impressive terrain park. From rail slides to table-top jumps, snowboarders and skiers will probably find terrain features to play on. *Express photo by Willy Cook*

"We've had a great year this year," Marolf said. "It's awesome. I really think the terrain park has brought a lot of people over."

Though the park certainly increases the chance for injuries, Soldier's record is relatively clean so far, Humbach said. Broken wrists are the most common type of injury, but wrist guards and helmets are easy preventative measures.

"If we don't provide obstacles for them, they're going to make them someplace else," Humbach said. "This organizes it. The kids stage at the top of the run, and they use good communication before going."



Young snowboarders stage at the top of a run, while a friend takes off down the slope.  
*Express photo by Willy Cook*

Back in the Wood River Valley, where Sun Valley Co. has not yet experimented with a terrain park and canned a half pipe after one season on Dollar Mountain, Gilbert said he's had to be creative about training methods and ways to keep his snowboard team interested.

"Anything we can do out of the ordinary is great for them," he said. "We've gone over to Dollar and built jumps. We've gone to Elkhorn and built jumps. We have to do a lot of creative coaching to keep them occupied."

Earlier in the winter, Park City Mountain Resort in Utah offered free lift tickets to the Sun Valley snowboarders to train in the Olympic half pipe. They've trained in Jackson Hole's pipe, too.

The lack of local facilities has an effect, he said.

To illustrate the point, he referred to local snowboarder Wyatt Caldwell, who used to regularly compete with, and sometimes beat, Olympic silver medalist Danny Kass. Gilbert said he believes Caldwell could have kept better pace with Kass if he could have trained as much.

Caldwell now lives and trains in Mammoth.