

# Northwest Ski Challenge:

## David Schor's Diary

### 2007-2008

This contest issued a challenge to all to ride every resort in any of three states. I decided that I would do better, and ride every resort in all of three states. The diary of this season, capping three years of ski challenges, is chronicled herein.

The descriptions that follow were my impressions at the time that I visited – my development as a snowboarder over the course of the adventure has had an impact the focus of my narrative.

All the photographs included are my own, taken over the course of my travels. I hope that you enjoy reading about the ski challenges as much as I enjoyed completing them...

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2007

## Northwest Ski Challenge

I have heard through strictly unofficial channels that there will be a Northwest Ski Challenge for the 2007-2008 ski season. This will encompass all three of the State challenges - Ski Oregon, Ski Washington, and now Ski Idaho. Accordingly, I am considering a run at the first trifecta, expanding my initial Idaho project to a full-scale season of insanity. In light of this ambition, I may put off joining a PACRAT team in order to leave my schedule flexible enough to make the 9 or more separate trips that will be required to complete the challenge(s).

I officially kicked off my attempt at the Northwest Ski Challenge today by picking up my Fusion Pass and spending a morning carving turns on the re-opened Palmer Glacier. Conditions were slightly icy in the early morning, but after a few laps things softened up nicely, just enough to make carving comfortable.

I was trying out a new board, and a new stance, on somewhat exposed terrain, and overall it went very well. The new board seems solid so far, and I put my first few scratches into the p-tex with the help of the rocks at the exit from the Palmer lift house (thanks Timberline!). Otherwise my turns were feeling very good - although I think I am about due for a lesson once the coverage makes more terrain available. I need a bit of technical assistance with turns (for racing) and I would love to have a guided tour of how to make the most of the terrain park (and some motivation to practice riding switch).

Word is that the new Jeff Flood lift is almost ready for service, just in time for a little change in the weather scheduled for early November.

POSTED AT 6:50 PM

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2007

## Meadows, Timberline

Today I decided to head around to Mt. Hood Meadows, just to see how they looked for opening day. Not very impressive, but at least they had two lifts turning for the junkies. I did a few laps on Buttercup, but the line for Easy Rider was so long, I just bagged it and drove over to Timberline. Turns out they had a lot of Pucci runs open for business, so I made a fool of myself on the lower mountain for the rest of the morning. There were plenty of rocks to dodge, but the powder was still free of ice, and it was a nice day for riding weather-wise.

When I headed back down, I witnessed an SUV being pulled out of the ditch barely 100yards up the road from Hwy 26. The road was a bit icy, but that's why we drive slow. More adventures tomorrow...

POSTED AT 5:50 PM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2007

## Mt. Bachelor

I woke up early to make the drive to Mt. Bachelor today, and I was rewarded with light, dry snow and partially overcast skies. An absolutely beautiful day to be on the mountain, although the cover is a little thin. Only Pine Marten and the bunny hill were running today, but there was enough to keep me busy all morning. I'm taking a break for lunch and a board tune, and then I will probably be on my way. Three hours straight of turns is a pretty good workout, and the rocks are doing a number on my new board, so I think calling it a day is prudent. I'll post some video from today when I have a chance. I might have to visit Bachelor again before the season is through...



POSTED AT 11:40 AM

**Saturday, December 01, 2007**

## **Mount Baker**

Today marked my return to Mount Baker, a little more than a year since my last visit, and with a similar snowpack and familiar lift system I was cruising the mountain - so happily, in fact, that aside from a quick stop to replace a worn out toe binding bracket (\$10 and 10 minutes), I made no stops for the whole day. I actually got a later start than I wanted; I slept in the car and did not hear my alarm, and by the time I pulled into the parking lot and made it into line, there was about a fifteen minute wait to get a ticket.

Of course, once I was on the lift, I remembered how much fun Baker is, especially when it is snowing. This was a great powder day at Baker, even though the base was light. There was fresh feather-light powder all day, and blankets of snow so broad that you could nab fresh tracks all morning. Even in the afternoon, the tracks were filling back in, and I finally had to quit when the only chair up was to the parking lot. I posted a video at [youtube](#) of a run from the top of Chair 1, taken with the helmet cam.

A great start to the Ski Washington Challenge for 2007-2008!



posted @ 7:59 PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2007

## Cooper Spur

Thanks to some early season powder, Cooper Spur was my destination of choice for today. I brought along Boringfish, a good friend of mine who is still mastering the basics of snowboarding. It was an amazing powder day, and the snow came down all afternoon. We got a late start, enjoying a leisurely breakfast, and got to the hill a little after noon. From the snowy drive up, we could tell there would be plenty of fresh powder - but I was actually surprised by the accumulation. It made for a somewhat difficult day for Boringfish, as getting up in such deep snow poses challenges, and I found some spots where the drifts were deeper than the length of my arm. Overall, it made for a memorable day of snowboarding, and a nice mellow afternoon after the long drive up and back to Mount Baker.



POSTED AT 5:53 PM

**Saturday, December 08, 2007**

## **49 Degrees North**

My memories of Forty Nine Degrees North are vivid, and I recall a day of good visibility and groomers in the morning, followed by epic trees and powder in the afternoon. The weather did not follow last year's pattern, but it was a beautiful sunny day, and the groomers were certainly the place to be. Off the trails was a large frozen mass, although in spots there was blown powder to be poached - otherwise the best place to be was in the few spots that got some sunshine. Due to the season, and the orientation of the mountain, very little of the hill received any sunlight all day, despite the clear skies. Still, there was plenty of corduroy and even some loose dry powder, a reminder of the superiority of the snow in this region, and foreshadowing my return to the region later this month, when I will visit northern Idaho's ski areas.



posted @ **4:06 PM**

**Sunday, December 09, 2007**

## **Mount Spokane**

Another fine day for snowboarding in Washington today, and I found myself at Mount Spokane. Their usual \$39 ticket was discounted to only \$15, as they are running only chairs 3 and 4. However, the runs they opened were groomed very well, with only a few icy spots, and plenty of loose snow and corduroy on top to glide through. They even had some rails set in the terrain park, although as usual, I elected to use the ramps as jumps, and skip the rails themselves. By the early afternoon it began to snow, and I determined that I had made the best of the day, and packed up to hit the road for the long drive to Portland. With snow falling, it seemed prudent to get on my way before dark, so I am stopped at Starbucks charging the computer and drinking a Mocha. That about sums it up for this weekend, keep an eye out for photos and videos as I have the chance to put them together.



posted @ **2:00 PM**



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2007

## Spout Springs

Today was an adventure, or more correctly, both an adventure and a misadventure. I started the day with a rather silly mistake. After spending the night in the car, upon waking up and removing myself from the vehicle, I promptly locked my keys inside. Needless to say, not how I wanted to greet the morning.

It was just after 7:30am, and although my wallet and keys were securely locked inside the car, I was thankfully wearing my coat, which included gloves and a cell phone in the pockets. Long story made short, I was on the road about 9:15am, and made it in time to start snowboarding Spout Springs at 10:30am.

It was nothing less than an ideal opening day from my perspective - all the trails track-free, and four to ten inches of light dry powder on top. I overheard that the main lift was not running until 10:15, and judging by the lack of tracks on the main run, that was true. I started by doing laps under the chair, just making the happiest powder turns, a great reward for the trials of the earlier morning. Eventually, as the groomed run was becoming tracked, I made my way off piste and enjoyed fresh tracks for the entire remainder of the day.

There is a wonderful gully on the main face that nobody else had attempted, so I made three laps through the area myself, cruising between bushes and trees, before I saw another snowboarder spoon my tracks. After that, I made my way along the ridge, toward the outer runs, where there were only the tracks of the ski patrol. I found entire runs with no evidence of traffic, and carved with wild abandon, on the groomed runs, and then deeper into powder on the sides. It truly was a great day to have first tracks, and they were there to be had for the whole day. I even snapped a

photo of a run with only my tracks defacing the otherwise pristine slope.



I finally decided I had better get on my way around 3:30, and packed into the car for the drive back to Pendleton, and on to La Grande. Tomorrow I will need all my energy for Anthony Lakes, another single lift ridge, where I hope to find more powder to poach.

POSTED AT 3:57 PM



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16,  
2007

## Anthony Lakes

I spent today at beautiful Anthony Lakes, where I found stashes of light, dry powder, as well as a wonderful terrain park for turning - the natural result of small trees buried to their tops. I started the day on the groomed runs, cruising the smooth corduroy until I felt comfortable with conditions - once I had established that the snow was in very good shape, I ventured off the sides of the

trails, and eventually began to hunt for snow in the trees as well. On either side of the ridge, there are ample fields of powder with your choice of foliage, moguls, steepness and snow depth. I tended toward the deeper snow and along the fringes of the foliage myself. Although I would have liked some fresh powder during the day, the conditions were very good until the afternoon, when high winds began to cause stoppages of the sole chair lift.

Overall, I can highly recommend Anthony Lakes for the lack of lift lines, quality of snow, and variety of terrain. I would say this hill has something for just about everybody.

POSTED AT 3:50 PM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2007

## Skibowl

After work, I nabbed the husband of a co-worker, and spirited him to Skibowl for some night boarding. We arrived at the mountain around 6pm, and found the snow coming down, and plenty on the ground. It was lighter and drier snow than Skibowl usually receives, making for an ideal day to visit. After a few laps on the lower bowl, we crossed over to spend the remainder of the evening at Multorpor. Over the course of the evening, I saw him go from tentative turns to confident cruising, and even captured a bit of the action via helmet cam. It was my first chance to try using the helmet cam as a chase cam, and I thought I did okay. I'll make sure to add the video when I have some time for editing.

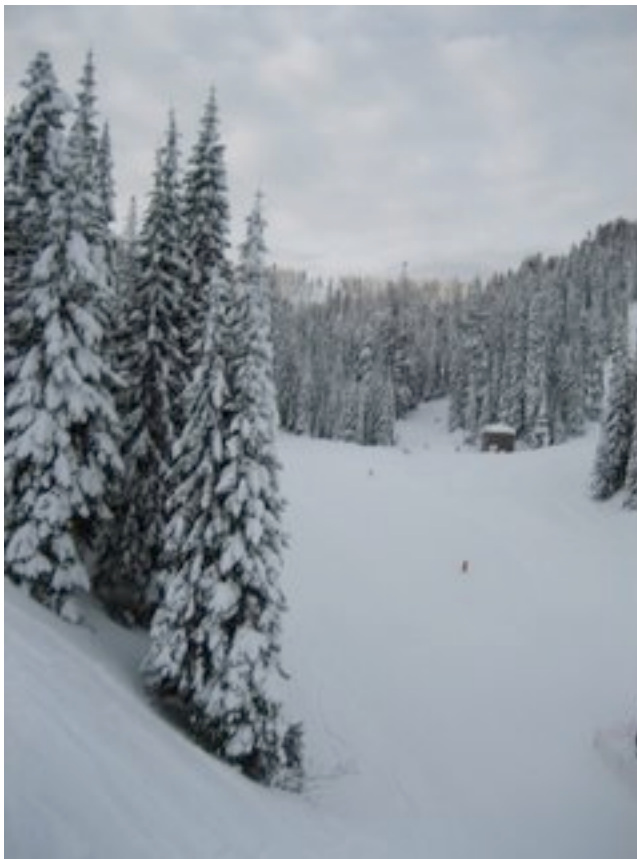


POSTED AT 11:55 PM

**Saturday, December 22, 2007**

## **Bluewood**

Bluewood was tons of fun on my last visit, and I was somewhat worried that their snowpack would limit my explorations this year. My fears were completely unfounded - I spent the day enjoying endless powder turns in the trees, with fresh snow falling most of the day, and only a moderate crowd. The snow in eastern Washington is especially dry, and the layout of Bluewood spreads the skiers out across the hill, sparing the powder from too much concentrated traffic. But the thing that makes the area truly unique and special is the epic tree skiing. Almost every bit of forest here is skiable, perfectly gladed for those who enjoy ripping it up in the woods. I found myself eschewing the groomed runs in favor of knee-deep powder in the forest. Finally, after hours of rapid laps, I called it a day and started on the road to Wenatchee - and was still dreaming of powder turns in the trees when I curled up in the car for the night.



posted @ **3:56 PM**



**Sunday, December 23,  
2007**

### **Mission Ridge**

Mission Ridge was in pretty good shape today, and I was there to enjoy it from the start. I had the first spot in the parking lot, and scored first chair on the Liberator Express as well, marking the start of a very nice day indeed at Mission. Although it was a bit windy, the lifts kept turning well all day, and I split my time between the groomers, the powder along side them, and the steeps off the ridge. Cover was very thin along the ridge, probably due to phenomenally

windy conditions, but I was at least able to hit my favorite powder run from last year off the top. There is an interesting phenomenon I observed, whereby the freshly fallen snow drifted into wave-like piles on top of the groomed slopes, creating a very odd effect when sliding over the intermittent powder and groom.

Mission Ridge is a large area, but the locals are friendly, and I struck up conversations with a number of folks on the lifts and in the lodge. Altogether, this was a great visit, and I was impressed by the customer service - when I was purchasing my ticket, the fellow at the window noted that I had a season pass from another mountain, and arranged a discounted ticket for me (\$35). I didn't expect that at all, and it was a nice surprise to have some extra cash for lunch. Glad I did, because lunch was very tasty, and a pretty good deal to boot.

posted @ **3:58 PM**





**Monday, December 24,  
2007**

## **Crystal Mountain**

Crystal Mountain was one area that I had a very disappointing visit to last season, when I made the trip too early in the year and found rain and rocks with only the lower mountain open. This year was the polar opposite - a perfect fresh powder dump, a brand new lift, and every chair running all day long.

This time, I headed to the top, riding the High Campbell chair to access the southern bowl, where I

traversed to find incredible powder - and experienced my first true face-shots of powder. Plumes of the fine white stuff enveloped me as I turned cleanly down the face, and it was a most exhilarating feeling to be cutting fresh tracks on such a perfect slope, with the trees spaced just right, and the snow flying.

Unfortunately the sheer volume of snow blocked the lens on my helmet cam, leaving me with no permanent record of the turns - but my memory is vivid.

After cruising Campbell, and a few laps in Green Valley, I made my way to the Northway traverse, and boot-packed up the ridge, only to find a helpful ski patroller at the top advising folks to cut back away from the north bowl, due to somewhat thin cover. She gave us the goods, and described the ideal line to take off the nose of the ridge, and down through some well spaced and untracked trees to the bottom. More powder turns in tighter trees, and then a convoluted runout led to the bottom of the chairlift, the new Northway double which was on its third day of operation.

A quick run back to the car (parked in the front row), and I was on the road again, headed south to Oregon, and half-way through the Washington challenge to boot.

posted @ **9:22 PM**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2007

## Hoodoo

The tubing hill was where we started the day, and we had a very good morning with short lines and fast lanes. After a few laps we were inspired, and grabbed a double-tube to go for a ride - but we were told we could not share a tube, due to my advanced age/size. Instead, we found we could ride the double-tube solo, and it allowed for a much more comfortable ride than the standard round tube. This would be our weapon of choice for the remainder of our tubing all day. Eventually, we decided we should take a break, and headed back to the lodge for lunch.

You might think I was being silly not to be snowboarding, but I was very much enjoying the tubing, and after three straight days of powder turns in Washington, I needed a little rest (I also was developing a cold/flu). Of course, even then I would normally have been working hard to get my dollar worth out of the lift ticket - but in this case, the ticket cost me only \$15, thanks to a member of Mt. High snowsports club, so getting my dollar worth meant about ten runs in the afternoon, and then back to tubing until we were beat.

It was a very nice day at Hoodoo, and there was such a small crowd that the powder was in good shape all day, even without the Hodag lift running. I did miss riding the back side of Hoodoo, as it has some great runs for powder days, but I contented myself with the deep powder to skiers right of Ed's chair, where I found many fresh lines even at 2pm. All-in-all, another great day on the slopes - and we even saw Santa at the tubing hill. Merry Christmas!

POSTED AT 3:24 PM



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2007

## Cottonwood

It turned out that I arrived on opening day at Cottonwood Butte, and the conditions were basically perfect. Three to four feet of untouched powder everywhere, except for the pristine groomers freshly pressed at dawn. I had never used a T-bar style lift before, but I was so eager to get started, I actually made the mistake of driving down the access road before it had been plowed. I did quite well, and made it to the ski area - but I got stuck when I had to stop for the snow plow, and had to put on chains for about 100 yards of driving. It turns out that on a powder-covered road, the Civic can actually float.

Once I got parked properly, I went in to see how the operation was set up. It was before 9am, and opening was scheduled for 10am, so I crawled back into the car and changed into my gear, watching as the locals began to arrive for the morning. After a sufficient mass had gathered, I made my way back to the ticket counter to begin the challenge proper.

I took a moment to watch and observe at the base of the lift, watching others load before taking the plunge. A single called for a partner, and I hopped up and volunteered - and amazingly, I managed to ride the T-bar to the top with no trouble. From there, I followed the crowd to the right, and followed the groomer down the face of the hill, observing the banks of powder to each side of the trail. I tried another groomer for my second run, taking a left at the top of the lift, and found myself stuck on a skate-out traverse. Comfortable that the conditions were awesome, and eager to hit the powder, my third run I went right at the top, and then cut straight down the face of the hill, following some fresh tracks through the three feet of fluff.

I continued to chase the powder from all angles, until I eventually found a spot too flat, and had to hike out. Lunch time. A quick burger at the lodge had me refueled for another 90 minutes of T-bar and powder punishment, at which point I made the call to head to my next stop. The after-lunch rush was a deciding factor, and I simply felt I had see the hill, and should be on my way in time to see the next hill in daylight.



POSTED AT 1:40 PM



## Snowhaven

I arrived at Snowhaven around 2:30pm, in time to see the hill in daylight, and I went straight to business. I opted for the combo-marathon ticket, a

\$20 special allowing unlimited lift access for skiing and tubing. Seeking to rest a little after the drive, I suited up and headed for a few runs on the tubing hill. I was suitably impressed with the size and speed of the hill, but also surprised at the freedom and fun I found.

Unlike the rope-retracted type at Cottonwood, Snowhaven has the traditional hard-bodied hydraulic T-bar - but the skills of riding are largely transferrable. I had no trouble riding the lift to the top, and found myself surprised at the amount of untouched powder remaining so late in the afternoon.

I cruised all the dimensions of the small hill, and satisfied that I had made the most of the boarding possibilities, made my way back to the tubing hill. It was a great relaxation after a long day of T-bar riding to simply sit back and slide up on my back, and then slide down on my front. I had a quick dinner of sausage and fries, did laps until I was ready to hit the road, and finally packed it in around 6:30. 90 minutes later I found a small roadside hotel on the way to my next destination, and checked in for the night.

POSTED AT 6:55 PM

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2007



## Bald Mountain

Bald Mountain is another small T-bar served area, out at the remote end of the Gold Rush Scenic Byway, north of Pierce, ID. This gem of a family ski

area is nestled on a peak, with a mid-mountain lodge and beginner tow, and situated with ridge access at the top providing a very wide swath of terrain. Again, it was destined to be a powder day, with about a foot or two loose on top with another two feet or more of base. Steeper than the previous two, Bald Mountain provided plenty of challenge, with great powder, tight trees, and an excellent face below the upper lift house with fresh turns all day.

I followed some friendly locals to find the powder stashes, and even watched some backwoods cliff jumpers brave a 20 foot leap over rocks and into powder. It was clear in the morning, and snowed lightly in the afternoon, making for a very nice snow day. By the end, I was getting a bit tired, and finally had my first unscheduled dismount from the T-bar - so I decided to call it a day. After three more runs in deep powder, I fell again, and really did call it a day. On to bigger things...

POSTED AT 3:06 PM

MONDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2007

## Schweitzer

Folks in the northern Idaho and eastern Washington area seem mesmerized by Schweitzer. The quality of the snow, the facilities, and the sheer size of the mountain (2900 acres) make it the number one destination for skiers and snowboarders from all around the region. Recent improvements to the lift system have brought Schweitzer to the forefront of modern tech, providing efficient access to most of the mountain (with the notable exception of the over-burdened double serving the lower parking areas), with a new six-pack on the outback side, and a quad and triple combination replacing an aging double on the front. The snow today was day-old powder, but with plenty of groomers, and such dry powder, the chop was minimal.

I began my day with a quick ride up the Basin Express, where I shared the chair with a friendly local who gave some helpful advice on where to point my board, pointing out some groomed chutes on the left of the Lakeview Triple. I did a quick warm-up lap on the Basin chair, and then up to the top. There was just a wisp of cloud at the top, and the day was otherwise bluebird, with beautiful skies and only enough cloud to keep things comfortable. I traversed down to a single-diamond chute called "K-Mac's", where I found dry powder off to the sides, and a very nicely groomed central section. I split my time between the two, and then buzzed through the "Stomping Grounds" terrain park to hit a few small jumps on my way back down.

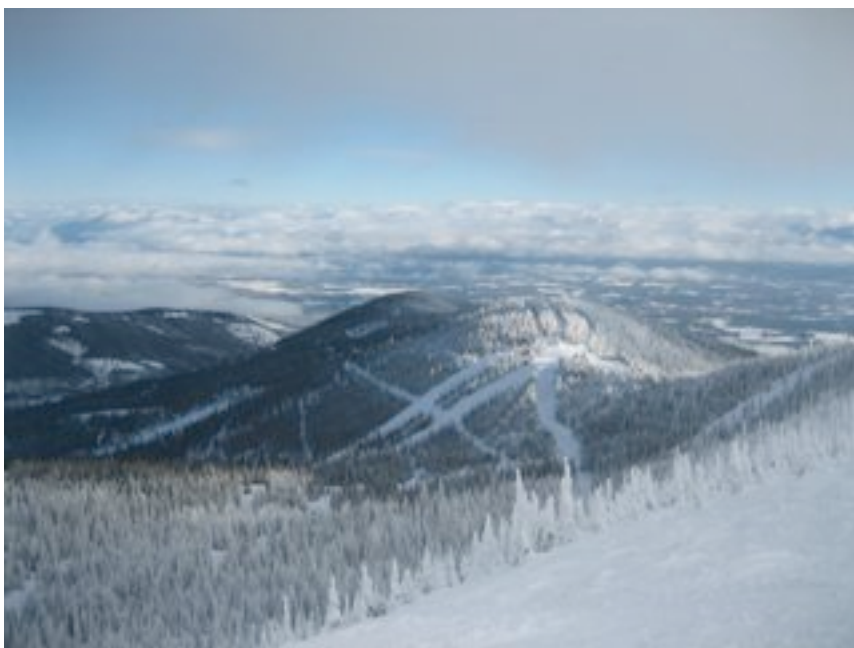
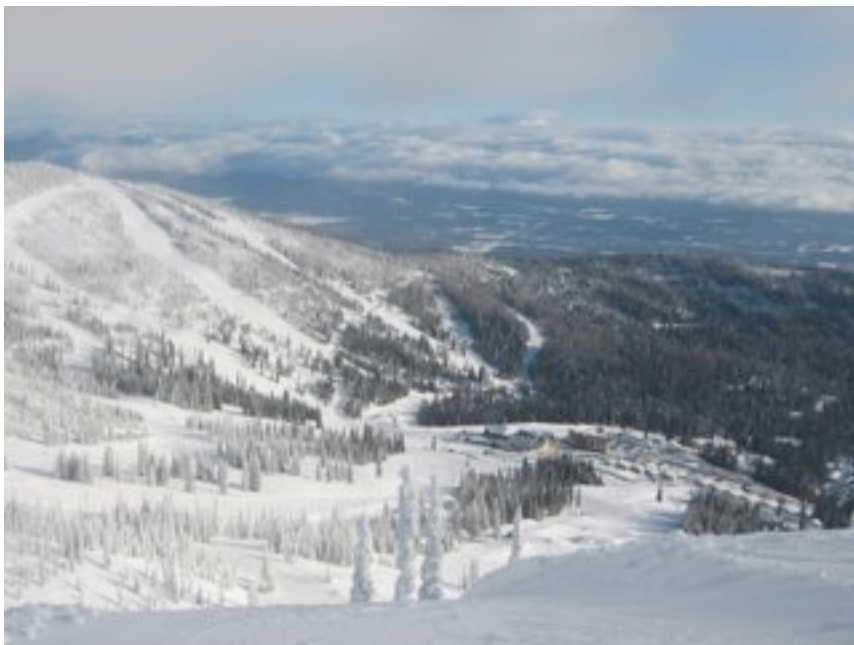
My next run from the top of Lakeview I cut through some trees below the ridge, and then crossed over to the other side for more trees on my way to the "Great Escape" quad. This lift provided access to some wonderful tree

runs on the front side, but I left those until later in the day, intent on becoming familiar with the outback bowl. With no hesitation, other than to snap some photos, I dove into Whiplash, a double-black thigh-burner, and then made the run-out to the Snow Ghost chair.

From there, I caught the ridge and rode the T-bar to the far corner of the Outback, cutting through the trees all the way down along the school-themed side of the bowl, and to a lunch stop at the Outback Inn. After lunch, I rode Stella for a few laps, enjoying the blue cruisers and trees to both sides of the six-pack, before crossing back to the front side to do laps on the Great Escape quad, and then making my way back to the South Bowl chutes, dropping in at letter "F" and cutting across through the trees to untouched stashes below the ridge line.

I finished up the day with a few more tree runs off the Great Escape, and then made my way back to the lodge, where I grabbed a mocha and my powerbook to make some blogging happen for my devoted readers. I hope all who are reading the blog enjoy - and please be patient as I am working hard to get the photos up here very soon. Probably will have more time for that in the next two to three days, so keep your eyes peeled for updates. Sorry, but no video so far in Idaho - technical difficulties involving a frozen camera being the culprit. I'll keep working on it.

Also.... Happy New Year! Keep watching Ski Idaho, Ski Oregon and Ski Washington for 2008 - the trifecta is still in progress, and the revolution will not be televised - it will be broadcast via the web.





POSTED AT 4:22 PM



TUESDAY, JANUARY 1, 2008

## Lookout Pass

Another bluebird day in northern Idaho, and I find myself at the edge of the state, parked at the base of the Idaho side of Lookout Pass, planning my first turns in Montana territory too. Lookout has the most convenient access to the freeway I know of in Idaho, basically a private exit with a lot right next to the ramp, and a lift from just above the lot straight to the top.

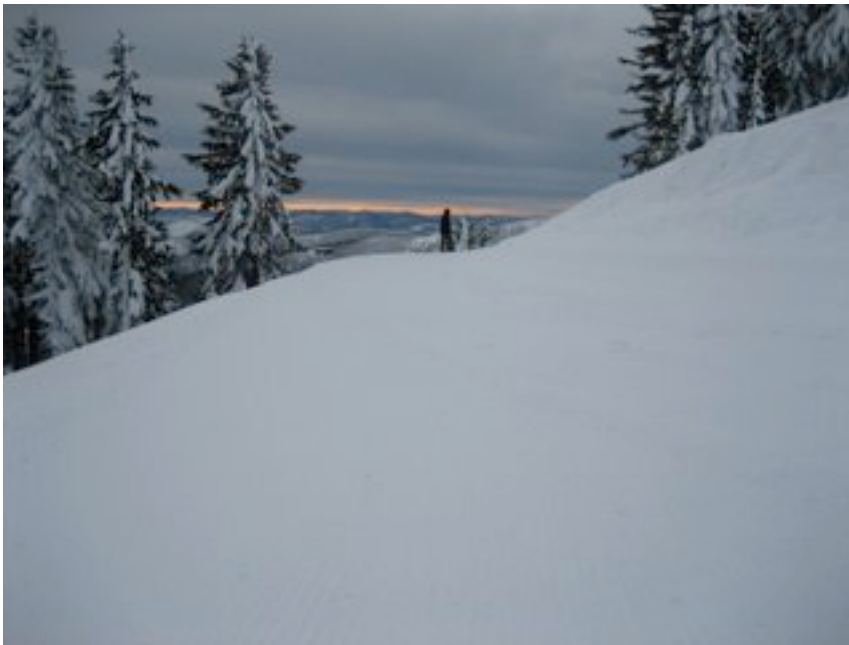
Only a week before I arrived, Lookout opened their third chairlift, adding a significant amount of intermediate and expert terrain - this terrain is still developing, and the trees do not appear to have been thinned this season. However, there are five or six new cleared trails, and they are excellent.

Apparently this was the first good weather day at Lookout in about two weeks - just my luck. As advertised, Lookout had great snow, and plenty of it, with only a few areas of thin cover in this relatively early part of the season. In the trees, there was ample untouched powder, which kept me busy most of the afternoon. I think Lookout has the most skiable trees I have seen anywhere - most of the woods are very friendly to riding, with your choice of slopes from very flat to moderately steep.

Lookout lacks any extreme terrain that I could see, but has enough to keep most folks content for a day. You will probably ride until the last chair, or nearly so, because the slopes are all just right for cruising. The only thing that might wear a person out would be the terrain park - it is a wacky one, unlike any I had seen before (video at youtube shortly).



POSTED AT 4:09 PM



WEDNESDAY,  
JANUARY 2,  
2008

## Silver Mountain

Silver Mountain  
is accessible only  
by gondola,  
which runs from  
the base area in  
Kellogg about

three miles up the hill to the lodge on the mountain. The ride is, like any lift ride, weather dependent. Today it was a very windy day, so the ride was slightly slower than usual, and it was about 30 minutes from load to unload. It still got me to the top before the chairs were open, so I checked out the lodge, and planned a cinnamon roll break for later.

I made my way down to the chair, and took a ride to the top of Kellogg Peak - and after a run on the groomers, I took the plunge into the North Face glades. I was amazed at the great snow conditions in the trees, and surprised to find so much powder untracked after a night without snow and a holiday weekend. Other parts of the hill did show some wear, but in the trees, and where the bushes were exposed, plenty of goods were on display.

I gazed longingly at the stashes below Wardner Peak, but the traverse and climb were more than I could handle on my sore knee, so I stuck with the trees below the ridge, zigzagging my way to powder stashes throughout.

POSTED AT 3:51 PM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 2008

## Little Ski Hill

Just north of McCall, there is a small hill with a T-bar, run by the McCall ski club. The area has very limited hours, operating mostly in the evenings - today it was from about 3:30 to 8:30, but they open earlier on the weekend. Opening so late preserves territory not under lights, which apparently sees very light traffic.

My only complaint would be the lack of a discernible boundary (maybe I just missed it?) on the far side of the T-bar - on my second off-piste run, I ended up boarding all the way to the road below the ski area, and hiked back along a snowmobile track (it looked as if others had done the same). That said, it was nice to have a backcountry style experience on a small hill, and I cruised powder until the rope went up, announcing "night ski".

The grooming was very well done, and there was a race training course set up in the early afternoon, with lines of little skiers waiting turns and racing back to the base of the T-bar. I enjoyed the wide-open slopes, and found the quality grooming and gentle slope made for the perfect opportunity to practice riding switch, so I spent a few runs just riding switch and spinning, throwing in a few little jumps. I even landed my first 180 - yeah, not much, but it's a start.

Presaging another epic day to come, snow began to fall around 6pm. I decided to save some strength for the powder in the morning, and packed up around 7 o'clock. Three and half hours is usually a good time for a rest break anyway, and I needed to get into town to situate myself for the evening - the snow was still great, and I was having a good time up to the last moment.

After my last run, I spent another twenty minutes reviewing the historical

photos in the lodge, with classic skiing newspapers and pictures of the founders of Idaho's ski hills. This Little Ski Hill has been around for seventy years, and shows no signs of slowing down. Apparently it has produced a few Olympians and National Champions over the years - and from what I saw, there are at least a few runs that could get you to near-Olympic speeds - some snowboarders had made a very nice jump at the bottom of one, but I wasn't feeling so adventurous, given the hike out.



POSTED AT 7:54 PM

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2008

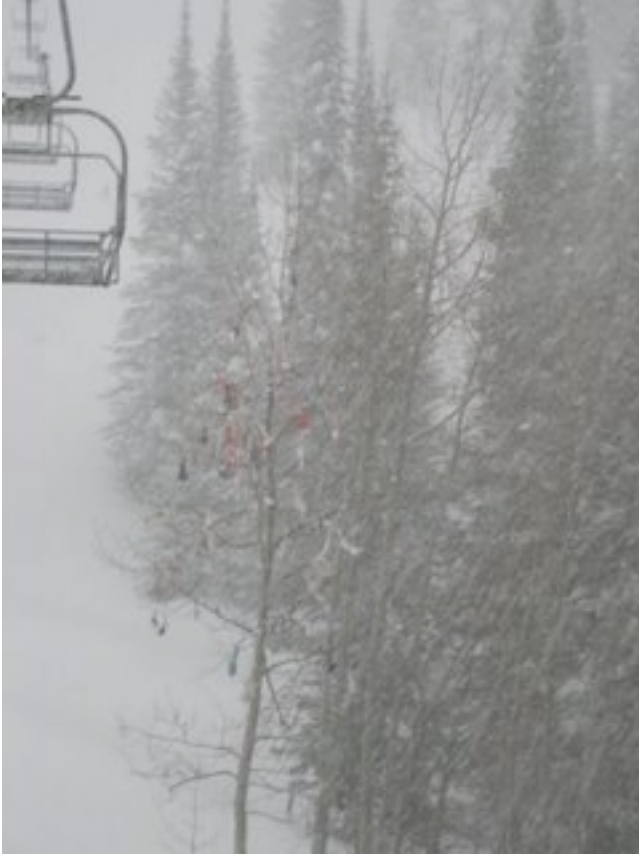
## Brundage

I arrived early at Brundage, in time to survey the lodge, and learn my way around the facilities. News of my arrival preceded me, and I was greeted by the snow reporter for Brundage, who sent me off to take a run on my own in Hidden Valley, and then met me at the lift for my second run, and proceeded to give me a fresh tracks tour of the mountain. I had a great time with the fresh powder on top of groomed, about three inches of very light and dry snow which was ideal for turning with speed.

It was a beautiful morning, just a little windy, and once I knew my way around the lift system, I started mining for powder. At Brundage, I found it to be a very easy task - and as the day went on, heavy snow developed, and the whole mountain quickly became a powder playground. I especially enjoyed the new Lakeview area, which has some wonderful glades and also some splendid groomers. The area known as Mexico also was very nice - it held shocking amounts of powder, with nary a track to be found.

As the morning went on, the snow continued to pile up, and I started to run laps through the terrain park in between powder runs just to give myself a little rest. The hint of snow provided by the Little Ski Hill the previous night became a raucous assault of powder at Brundage, and made this one great powder day to remember. The layout at Brundage is very nice, and most of the runs require very little runout, which is especially appreciated on a powder day.

One of Brundage's landmarks can be seen below. In case you are having trouble discerning - this is a tree with festive ornamentation consisting of undergarments.



POSTED AT 4:27 PM

SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, 2008

## Tamarack

Tamarack provided an example of a mixed blessing. It was snowing hard, with a load of fresh powder - but the wind and visibility prevented summit access, and stopped all backcountry riding as well. Instead of a scheduled cat ski trip, I joined a first tracks group - which turned out to be possibly the best snowboarding experience I have had to date. In spite of the weather, I followed our guide to powder stashed all over the lower mountain.

The blanket of white was deep and soft, and we cut lines through it all as part of a photo session - it was a blast to be on the hill before the crowds, farming turns with a crew of experienced guides and guests. I was having such a good time, and the conditions were so good, that I found myself nearly overtaking the guide at times.

By the end of the guided riding, I was familiar with the main runs on the hill, and started to branch out to areas farther afield as the day progressed. Later I ran into a gentleman from the morning's group, and we did some laps on the Wildwood chair, racing from powder stash to powder stash on our way back to lunch.

After lunch, it was time for trees, and I made my way along the boundaries where the trees were well-spaced for cruising. Once I had worn myself out, I walked back to the lodge for a massage. After a week on the slopes, it was wonderful to have some tension released, and I gathered myself for the drive ahead.





POSTED AT 5:48 PM

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2008



## Soldier Mountain

It was a serious powder day at Soldier Mountain today, and I was lucky enough to get first tracks down the liftline.

Visibility was very poor for the first hour or so, but then the clouds burned off to reveal pristine white runs all over the hill. Many of the best powder stashes required either a little hike, or a long runout, and this preserved the best snow for those willing to do a little work. It was nice to see folks being courteous enough to farm their turns a little as well.

I got a little greedy, and ended up chasing some fine powder out of bounds, followed by a healthy bootpack to get back to the ridge. Some of the best runs required some climbing, but I found a lot of untracked powder on the back side of the ridge (Dare Ya'), as well as through the trees on the front (Drop In). Overall, there was a light crowd for a weekend, which made for very nice conditions for the whole day.

One thing Soldier cannot offer is significant steeps - most of the ski area is very gradual in slope, very good for cruising, but nothing here is heart-stopping. However, on a powder day, the open slopes provide plenty of room for turns, and the dual-ridge access spreads the skiers well across the terrain.

POSTED AT 4:04 PM



MONDAY,  
JANUARY 7,  
2008

## Sun Valley

There is little I could say about Sun Valley that has not been said before, and probably more eloquently. This

is a posh resort if ever I have seen one, and everything is done well. Despite less than perfect weather, and equipment malfunction, I found Sun Valley a very nice place for riding - there is a very good range of terrain, the grooming is generally very good, and there are ample runs to keep a person busy for days.

Unfortunately for me, Sun Valley still caters primarily to the skiing public, and when I found myself with a broken binding strap two hours into my day, the repair shop at the base area directed me to a snowboard shop in Ketchum. Apparently Sun Valley does not carry any Burton equipment or parts. After a detour into town, I resumed my day on the hill, doing laps in the lesser-used corners of the ski area, seeking and destroying powder pockets and smooth corduroy.

I grabbed lunch on Seattle Ridge, did some laps on the wonderfully long Warm Springs chair, and eventually wore myself out with moguls and called it a day.

POSTED AT 5:08 PM



TUESDAY,  
JANUARY 8, 2008

## Kelly Canyon

Kelly Canyon is a relatively small hill, served by a set of fixed double chairs. Their weekday operations begin at 12:30pm, and shortly thereafter they have a

lesson session for local youngsters, who crowd the slope by the rope tow, and do laps on the shorter chair run above the tow. The big kids were riding the summit lift, which was the main lift serving the hill today. There is also another lift that reaches a little farther up the hill to access the back bowl, but today this lift was not turning.

I had another very nice powder day, and wasted no time ripping fresh tracks all over the hill, from the terrain park to the face, and all the way around the powder-filled areas to skier's right. It was a windy and low visibility day, but the turns were very nice, and although there were plenty of people on the hill, most were occupied in lessons at the base area, leaving abundant fresh tracks for those heading to the top of the hill.

Although the cruising on the lower mountain was great, and there were even some well-placed jumps which I greatly enjoyed, I had an urge to see what I was missing on the powder chair runs. I nabbed an off-duty employee, and we hiked to the top for a run of fresh tracks around the backside of the hill. It was a perfect finale for a fine day of cruising.

POSTED AT 4:35 PM



WEDNESDAY,  
JANUARY 9,  
2008

## Pebble Creek

Fortune was smiling on me today, as I found myself in a powder playground at Pebble Creek.

This little treasure is located just south of Pocatello, barely

a thirty minute drive from town, and is well-loved by locals for the quality of terrain and easy access. I was concerned about the report of an 11 inch base, but I found that the coverage on the hill was actually not too bad, and the fresh powder was fantastic.

The folks at Pebble Creek were also kind enough to provide me with a personal tour of the slopes, and I discovered that with a little traversing, there were quite a few runs, and most were reasonably steep. I enjoyed a few runs beyond the ropes as well, which I have learned is standard practice in Idaho. Unlike Oregon ski areas, Idaho areas have very liberal open boundary policies, allowing unparalleled backcountry access.

The pitches at Pebble Creek are very consistent, and steep enough to satisfy my need for speed, but what really made this a great day was the abundant powder - and locals who were more than happy to show off the goods. I never lacked for company, and always had a chance to chat on the lift, as well as a point in the right direction.

With the amount of backcountry terrain around Pebble Creek, there is certainly something for everyone, and as the coverage improves, the steeper pitches will only become more and more enjoyable. In bounds or out, Pebble offers slopes for all skill levels, and the locals couldn't be more friendly.

POSTED AT 4:49 PM



THURSDAY,  
JANUARY 10,  
2008

## Pomerelle

I had heard  
before I arrived  
that Pomerelle  
was very friendly  
for beginner  
skiers and riders.  
The day before  
my arrival, the

area was closed - 26 inches of snow had closed the road, and it took all day and night to clear the blockage. Anticipating ample fresh powder, and plenty of pristine groomers, my father and I set out for the base area, at an elevation around 8,000 feet.

We arrived early, and located the critical service areas for food and rentals. I set out for a lap in the powder while dad checked out some gear to begin his day on the slopes. He elected to add a private lesson along with his rental, so I spent the morning exploring the gentle rolling slopes, and charting trails through the powder-rich trees.

Once the lesson was done, we grabbed a bite to eat before heading out to try a run together on the lower chair. We made our way down the slope, and all the way down successfully, but after three hours on the board, dad was done - I took off for a few more hours of turns, fresh powder for the whole day, and plenty of fun cruising. Nothing at Pomerelle was steep enough to cause me any worry, so I roamed the mountain from one end to the other.

POSTED AT 4:19 PM





FRIDAY,  
JANUARY 11,  
2008

## Magic Mountain

It was a dream-like  
experience driving  
the snow-covered  
roads to Magic  
Mountain, where I  
found myself

comforted by a family friendly hill, with days of fresh snow accumulation awaiting me. The hill was open the previous day, but there were few tracks, and it snowed overnight and through the morning filling most of them (and some of mine).

A fixed double is the workhorse at Magic, and reaches to just below the ridgeline of the hill, protected from the wind. Two easy runs frame the valley between, where powder accumulates in soft pillows. There is a nice pitch to the face below the chair, and the liftline provides a powder-hound's paradise, while those in search of more open runs head out along the ridge to any of a series of chutes down from the ridgeline.

Farther down, there are cliffs to beware of below, and rails set up for jibbing along the ridge. I found so much powder and wonderful cruising here, I continued to ride until the lift operators had to turn me away. This is a fine hill for exploring, and holds enough stashes to last for days after powder stops falling.

POSTED AT 4:35 PM





SATURDAY, JANUARY 12,  
2008

## Bogus Basin

My tour of Idaho came to a close at Bogus Basin on an especially busy Saturday. I grabbed my ticket at the ticket office in town

to avoid any lines on the hill, and found the drive a little slow, but not unbearable. I suited up and headed to the slopes, and started with a tour of the hill, taking a series of runs clockwise around the hill until I returned to the base area for lunch.

After a bite to eat, I continued to explore the backside of the hill, and found every run very inviting, and nothing particularly steep or problematic. I had a blast seeking out powder in the trees, and the groomers held up quite nicely through the day. The layout of the hill, and heavy crowds, meant that the base area lifts had lines most of the day - but the lifts on the other slopes were moving very smoothly, and the lines all were very orderly.

I could hardly hope to see all of Bogus Basin in one day, but from the exploration I did accomplish, I found the hill an enjoyable cruise, with some great sections to interest most any rider. Aside from the large crowds due to Boise's proximity, there is little to complain about at Bogus - despite the name.

As a tribute to my final day in Idaho, I thought it fitting to visit the run at Bogus known as "Last Chance" - a fine back diamond that held wonderful powder, and proved once again that Idaho has some of the finest snow around.

POSTED AT 4:48 PM

# **Saturday, January 19, 2008**

## **Hurricane Ridge**

Today was a snow day at Hurricane Ridge, but I missed by just a little on the timing. It appears that the Poma lift will not be open until tomorrow - so once again I spent the day on the rope tow. Hearsay indicated that today was inspection day for the Poma lift - but I wasn't really waiting for it to open anyway. The rope tow provided me a good workout, and there was fresh snow all day.

Hurricane Ridge is a small hill, but the real action is the backcountry. There is a great deal of terrain available along the ridge for those willing to hike back to the top, and the tracks of skiers and boarders were very visible. I was not in the mood for that much activity, still recovering from my Idaho marathon, and contemplating the resources needed to fully exploit Stevens Pass tomorrow.

Still, this is a great hill for cruising, and by noon most folks are worn out from the tow, so the line is gone and you can do laps until you drop. I made it to about 1:30 before my hands called it a day. On to another hill...



posted @ **1:57 PM**

## **Sunday, January 20, 2008**

### **Stevens Pass**

It turned out to be a beautiful day at Stevens Pass today, partially overcast, but with excellent visibility. There was a nice dusting of fresh snow overnight, and all the lifts were running today, so I made a break for the backside to explore the runs that were off-limits on my last visit.

The backside of the ridge at Stevens provides a great sustained pitch, and has huge potential on powder days. There were still many choice lines to be turned, but there was also a fair amount of crusty/icy snow, which made for a less-than-perfect day off piste. Nevertheless, I made a number of laps on the backside, exploring the trees and hunting for powder stashes.

Once I was warmed up, I decided to check out some of the "Double Diamond" territory on the front side of the ridge. Signs clearly indicate that this is expert terrain, with unmarked cliffs and other obstacles - consider yourself warned. The terrain is extremely steep, and heavily forested, but there were plenty of small clearings and powder shots in the trees, so I did a few laps here as well. I would advise anyone exploring this area for the first time to proceed very slowly, or take a local as a guide.

There were fresh tracks to be had in the Double Diamond area all afternoon, and no crowds, but eventually I had the urge to see how the front side was doing, and made my way down to the base area for some less extreme riding. The grooming was very good, and even late into the afternoon I found untracked corduroy along the edges of the trails.

Finally my legs started to remind me of the time, and I packed it in so I could make the drive back to Portland before the Seattle-bound crowd made the road too slow. The drive into town went quite smoothly, so I stopped to post my blog from the Trabant Chai Lounge in the University district. This has become my regular blog and coffee stop since I learned last season that it was founded by a high school classmate - and it has been repeatedly voted the best coffee shop in Seattle, too.

The Ski Area list is growing shorter week by week, and I foresee only two more weekends before I complete my planned itinerary for Washington. Stay tuned for updates as I wrap up another Ski Challenge for 2008.



posted @ **4:11 PM**



**Saturday,  
January 26,  
2008**

## **White Pass**

Today I made my way to White Pass, and was rewarded with an easy drive, followed by fresh snow all day long. The cold temperatures over

the last week kept the slopes in very good condition, and with fresh snow falling, it was a great day to be riding. I spent the morning checking out all the groomers, and then ran into some folks from **Mountain High** around noon.

I did a couple of laps with my club-mates, and they showed me some runs I had not yet discovered, which led me into new territory for the afternoon. I really came to appreciate the relative lack of crowds, and found plenty of fresh tracks all day due to the ongoing snowfall.

Last year a number of runs were closed due to lack of coverage when I arrived, and some were off-limits due to deep powder. The base was much more mature on this visit, and the mountain was 100% open. I had a chance to explore the cliff areas that were closed on my last visit, as well as some of the outer runs off Holiday that were too deep to ride when I came to White Pass last year.

This is a great little ski area, with the advantage of being farther from major cities than most others in the cascades, which keeps the crowds in check. I found challenge in the mogul fields and trees, and enjoyed the very well groomed cruisers and packed powder off-piste. It was a great day to be at White Pass.

posted @ **3:44 PM**

## **Sunday, January 27, 2008**

### **The Summit at Snoqualmie**

My trip to The Summit at Snoqualmie turned out to be well-timed, as I found fresh powder in abundance. I started from Summit Central, where I did a few laps off the ridge through the deep powder off the trails. I rode the Triple 60 chair for a few laps of fluff, then braved the lift line at the Central Express for a quick ride to scope the terrain park. I rode the powder along the rope line, carving deep turns right down the hill as I watched the locals enjoying the ample jibbing opportunities provided in "Central Park".

Not being a big fan of rail riding, I moved on to the east part of Summit Central, and a triple chair that serves some of the finest slopes at the Summit. I did a few laps in the area before curiosity got the best of me and I took the "I-90" crossover to Summit East. It turns out that you need a very large amount of speed for this trail, or you can plan on some skating - and there is no warning sign, so consider this your final notice.

After making the long trek to Summit East, I found a double chair with some crowding issues, and only did a few laps before beginning the trek back to Central. Having tired of the lines at Summit East, I checked the time, and realized I should get to Alpental while I still could do a couple of laps on the Edelweiss chair. I rode the crossover back (again, long flat trail) to Central, took the lift to the top and then rode straight down to the bottom to catch the shuttle.

After arriving at Alpental, I took a ride up Armstrong to find that the Edelweiss chair had a twenty minute line. I elected to do a few laps on the lower mountain before getting in line. The lower mountain was in pretty good shape for the afternoon, but soon I had the urge to get to the top, so I made my way into line and began the slow waddle toward the summit.

Twenty minutes later I was whisked away up the hill, into clouds that were just starting to break up. My timing was very good as the weather finally broke in time for me to enjoy a couple of runs. I took my first around the ridge and down a chute on the Edelweiss side, and then took the plunge on Upper International for my second run.

I had never had the chance to ride the back part of Alpental, and I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of space and the quality of the terrain. I made quick work of the bowl, and then skirted my way through powder to the area known as Snake Dance. Here the trail runs into a gladed area of steep trees, where the snow had held up very well through the day, and I found plenty of fresh lines through the trees. I remembered Alpental as a special place, and this visit only reinforced my memory.



posted @ **3:47 PM**



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2008

## Mt. Ashland

I had a great day at Mount Ashland today, although Ariel was shut down for the day due to high winds. This was my second ever visit to Mount Ashland, and on my first it was a bluebird, groomer day. Today's conditions were the polar opposite of my last visit, with extremely high winds and deep snow blanketing the hill. The main

chair in service today was the Windsor chair, which provided access to the entire lower mountain, including many runs through extremely well spaced trees which were not in my repertoire when I first came here two years ago.

Although the winds were very strong in the parking lot, the ski runs on the lower part of Mount Ashland are very well shielded from the winds by stands of trees between the trails - and of course the runs in the trees are even more well protected from wind. The powder was deep today, and fluffy enough for rooster tails down the lift line. I had a great time testing conditions all over the available terrain, traversing to the Ariel chair line and the trees beyond, and down each trail across the face to the boundary on the parking lot side above the lodge.

After checking out the hill, I found the powder to be in good shape all over, so I kept going straight through lunch time, enjoying a complete lack of any lines while the majority went in to warm up. I finally decided to take a break at two o'clock, and as the weather began to deteriorate decided to hit the road for the long drive to Lakeview.

POSTED AT 4:28 PM



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2008

## Warner Canyon

It was a beautiful day to be at Warner Canyon. Although the drive from Ashland via Klamath Falls to Lakeview was somewhat harrowing due to blizzard conditions, there was very little traffic, and I made it in good time to get a room for the night. I even had the good fortune to find a parking spot that was covered.

When I rose in the morning, the town was coated in a half foot more snow, but my car was barely dusted. I tossed my bags in the back and made a beeline for Warner, just fifteen minutes away. I arrived to find the lot characteristically empty, and counted no more than 25 cars in the lot all day (including snow plows).

With the slopes essentially empty, and almost a foot of fresh snow on top, I enjoyed the powder hound's dream of a deserted mountain of virgin white slopes under bluebird skies (with light snow flurries!). There were only about a dozen riders making the trek to the ungroomed runs, which left fresh tracks enough to last all day long. Every run was in fantastic shape, and I rode every trail, from one boundary to the other.

Although boasting less than 800 vertical feet, Warner benefits from a complete lack of crowds, and a fairly wide footprint that spreads riders laterally across the hill. The long drive from any significant population centers keeps Warner a private playground for locals most of the season. You could bring a group here (or come by yourself), and it would basically be like having a private mountain.



My "Warner Smile"...

POSTED AT 2:25 PM



**Saturday,  
February 09,  
2008**

## **Loup Loup**

The drive from Wenatchee was good and there was very little traffic; I found ice and snow only on the access road. I started my morning with breakfast at the

Red Lion, but could not resist a maple bar at the lodge before the lifts started turning.

Once I was properly ticketed and fed, and the lifts were turning, I scored fourth chair, and had the pleasure of touring some nice grooming all around, and decent snow free from any freeze-thaw.

I was very pleased that the snow was in such good shape after Friday; untracked snow remained in spots, in the trees especially. I was also surprised at the number of cars on the hill, and the lack of a line even with a mostly full parking lot. The Loup's main lift serves a ridge that can really spread the traffic around, making any crowds disappear.

Today was a picture perfect Bluebird day, with excellent cruising on all the groomed runs, powder on the rest of the hill, and no lines. No wonder the locals are so happy.

posted @ **4:42 PM**

**Sunday, February 10, 2008**

## **Leavenworth Ski Hill**

I had a great morning at Leavenworth, riding the tow, and found the hill nicely groomed on the lower part. I did laps there until the top was opened, and did a few more laps practicing switch riding and small jumps, and turning to switch on both sides.

I'm not used to the work of holding on to the rope tow, and after my hands gave out I retired to doing laps on the tubes. The beauty of the play all day plan is evident today, as there is no line for the tubes - I get my fill of the tube by lunch time, and examine the construction of the tubing run on my way to the lodge.

This year the banked turns consist of berms made of hay bales with a snow covering, providing a nice thrill, and improved containment compared to the previous season.



posted @ 12:47 PM

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2008

## Willamette Pass

Today I finally returned to the ski area that started this whole grand adventure two years, two months and five days ago. In that time I have gone from a novice toying with the idea of snowboarding to a dedicated powder hunter capable of riding most trails. On this absolutely beautiful spring-like day, I made the rounds at Willamette Pass, exploring all the trails that were beyond my ability on my previous visit (aside from RTS, which remained shaded, and was simply too icy to be worthwhile).

Although the trails were quite icy before ten, once the sun had a chance to get above the ridge, the groomed runs grew smooth and fast. I took it easy to start, re-familiarizing myself with the layout of the blue trails, and waiting for the sun to warm the steeps before hitting the harder and steeper trails. My patience was rewarded, as the snow began to improve, and I found myself enjoying a little spring snow in February.

It was a great pleasure to come back to Willamette, where I first really caught the snowboarding bug. I revisited some of the tree runs I knew from my previous visit, and found many new ones farther up the slope as well. Willamette is quite close to Portland and to Bend, but not competing directly with Mount Hood and Mount Bachelor. Eugene is really the major market for Willamette, and it shows in the relative lack of a crowd. Even with races on the hill, I found the lift line moved so fast that folks rarely filled the six pack. On the back side, there simply was no line.

After trying all the other trails on the hill, I finally decided to celebrate my good fortune in completing a tour of all three states this season by tackling the lift line at Willamette Pass. This run was so daunting when I first saw it in 2005, that I could hardly imagine why I would even want to try it.

My perspective has changed, and today I decided to enjoy the softening snow through the mogul field and along the edge of the trail, and rode all the way down the lift line. I thought it quite fitting that the final trail in my tour was "Success".



POSTED AT 3:49 PM