

On the Sidelines

The Rocky descent un-Vailed

Will Cooper
Staff Writer

I peered out from the gondola, past the mixed trio of other skiers facing me, onto the already golden, glistening slopes of Vail, Colorado. My second day of skiing looked to be clear, but icy due to the recent scarcity of snow in the valley. The conditions certainly weren't ideal, but I still barely managed to keep from pressing my face against the lift's windows to examine the slopes anyway.

Eventually, our party came to the top, at Eagle's Nest Lodge, after the thirteen-and-a-half odd minutes of steady ascent. We clumsily shuffled out of the gondola, clunked away from the lift-house and slapped down our skis. Poles in hand, each of us began the routine albeit clumsy task of kicking the snow free of our boots and clicking into our bindings.

After a few enthusiastic hops in my skis to ensure that they were attached properly, I flicked my poles down into the snow, gave an energetic push and began to descend.

Coming down Owl's Roost catwalk, I found myself engaging in an effort much more comparable to cross-country skiing than the downhill variety. Nevertheless, I found it to be a beneficial warm-up as I made my way gradually to the Avanti lift. My sites were set on Mid-Vail, a hub of ski lifts comparable to Chicago O'Hare. I finished the easy transition down to the lift and soon found myself at the top of Avanti.

I began to descend on The Meadows, a green run that offers a wide accommodating route to Mid-Vail. This route is also almost a catwalk, with only a few moguls. I had only skied for a few minutes so far, however I was thirsty for some excitement and quickly navigated the steepest and most direct

route. The Meadows bottoms out just above Mid-Vail offering a variety of alternatives.

The first black-diamonds on my route were located here. Just to my left, South Look Ma, run of the International Mogul Competition held every year at Vail, beckoned me with its drop directly down to Mid-Vail. I skied to the top of the precipice to have a look at it. The wall of moguls below me intimidated me immediately and unquestionably. I decided to cheat it, coming across the corner and instead swung my course onto Powerline, a blue run with some treacherous terrain and an ample supply of bumps.

With my first taste of excitement for the day still in my mouth, I waited for the still meager line at the Mountaintop lift to be gradually carried away by the continually ascending and descending quad-chairs. Mountaintop lift empties out on the summit, spitting its passengers out at the most central point of the mountain, where they can catch their breath in the thin air and admire the view at 11,250 feet. On days after fresh snow, people generally head back to the thousands of acres of bowls on the other side of the mountain. There had been little snow recently and temperatures were not causing the ice to yield, so I begin to descend into the "Northwoods" area of runs.

I began down Christmas, which is only a green, but I had a more exciting course in mind. About 500 yards down the trail it hooks left around back down to the Mountaintop lift, but on the right lies Prima, one of only seven double-black diamonds at Vail.

On a lift the day before, I had heard about so-called "PPL's"—three runs consisting of Prima, Pronto and Log Chute, all black. Evidently, some skiers like to brag about how many "PPL's" they did in a day. Needless to say, I was curious.

I slowly slid up to the terrace, known as "Prima", and looked between the hanging tips of my skis, at the seemingly endless path of moguls, at the drop-offs scattered throughout, down past towards the ant-like line of people at the Northwoods lift where, seemingly, I would fall directly to my end at any second.

As I began my uneasy descent, in a wide zigzag pattern, I looked uneasily to my right, where a skier, who surely had logged several dozen more PPL's than I, weaved straight down the hellish run. I continued down, whipping my skis around as quickly as possible in an effort to avoid pointing them down the hill and thus instantly attaining "terminal" velocity.

In a fashion far less skillful than Tommy Moe's Olympic run, I eventually worked my way down through Pronto and onto its wash-out at the Northwoods lift.

I skied into the singles line, took off my gloves, unzipped my jacket and wiped the sweat from my hands as I breathed a sigh of relief and smiled from ear to ear.

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Flying Pucks

Dan Boulden
Guest Writer

The Monarchs' season has drawn to a close after the team lost a 2-3 series to the Raleigh Ice Caps. Greensboro played a great year, and just caught some tough breaks. They missed the regular-season championship by two points and ended up third in the tournament because of a games-won rule. Early on in the season, it looked as though the Monarchs were going to sweep the division, and then Hampton Roads came out of nowhere to emerge as the new leader, and the Ice Caps never slowed down, either.

This has been one of the oddest playoffs for the Monarchs. In their first game of the opening round, they were playing the Charlotte Checkers and trailed 4-0 halfway through the second period. Greensboro somehow brought the score back to even by the end of the third period, sending the game into a 20-minute overtime. After a heated battle to score, with many great saves by both goaltenders, Greensboro duffed a shot that slid very slowly through a defenseman,

through the goalie's legs and just barely over the goal line. The puck was moving so slowly that it never even reached the back of the net before it stopped.

The next night, Charlotte did not allow the Monarchs to come back, and thus sent the set into a third game. The Monarchs then came on strong winning 5-3 in the Checkers Arena. This sent Greensboro on to the next round of the playoffs and sent Charlotte home until next season.

The second set was against Raleigh, and the first two games were played on the Ice Caps' ice. Amazingly the Monarchs took both games in Raleigh, putting themselves up 2-0 in the best three-out-of-five series. Then tragedy struck on the home ice: the Monarchs lost their two home games, tying the series at 2-2. Raleigh then was able to hold their own at home, and ended the Monarchs' season.

So, next year, be sure to come out to a Monarchs game and catch all the action. If you are interested in purchasing season tickets for next season, call 852-6170. And remember, "Watch out for flying pucks!"

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