

SKIING PROGRESS IN MICHIGAN

By EDITH W. GILBERT

HARBOR SPRINGS, Mich. —The first stage of a projected \$10 million ski development was opened recently near this Lower Peninsula town, about 50 miles south of the Straits of Mackinac. It includes two triple chairlifts, said to be the first anywhere, with a capacity of 3,600 skiers an hour.

The new development underscores the fact that northern Michigan, once known only as a summer resort area, now attracts sports enthusiasts and vacationists on a year-round basis. Winter sports, in fact, have grown phenomenally in this region.

As an example, the new ski facilities at Harbor Springs are an offshoot of the 15-year-old Boyne Mountain Lodge operation at nearby Boyne Falls. Boyne Mountain opened with one double chairlift and a main building accommodating 30 overnight guests.

Today, Boyne Mountain can house 400 guests "on the slopes" and the facility boasts snow-making machines, five chairlifts, T-bar and J-bar lifts and a rope tow. About 100,000 skiers a year, from as far away as Mexico and South America, are drawn to Boyne Falls by the project's extensive and superbly groomed slopes.

Tickets Interchangeable

The Harbor Springs area is about a 30-minute drive north from Boyne Mountain, via U.S. 131 to Petoskey and then along U.S. 31 and State Route 131 to Boyne Highlands, as the new development is called. Because both facilities are under the same management, all ski tickets are interchangeable.

Unlike Boyne Mountain, which is known for its advanced slopes and open-faced terrain, the Highlands area has a variety of sheltered trails. Seven free-form runs, each 100 feet wide, wind down through the wooded slopes to the new stone-and-timber ski lodge.

Near the entrance to the lodge is an old waterwheel. During the summer months, it will

Initial Stage of a Huge Development Opened —Triple Chairlifts

be put to work circulating spring water through the building's air-conditioning system. In addition to the 70 rooms already completed, 100 more are scheduled for completion by next spring. At present, dining facilities accommodate 450 persons.

The new triple chairlift should reduce appreciably the often tiresome business of waiting in line for a lift to the top of the slopes. Couples load from the right, and single skiers from the left.

Company on Runs

The design of Boyne Highland's slopes permits novice and advanced skiers to make the runs together. According to James Dilworth, area project manager, the layout provides "plenty of challenges for the advanced skier — along the steeper side, where there are some sharp drop-offs—and the beginner can tackle the gentler center slope."

The area's permanent ski school and racing course are supervised by Othmar Schneider, who won the men's slalom event for Austria in the 1952 Olympics. In the summer, Mr. Schneider directs a ski school in Portillo, Chile. The Austrian, or reverse shoulder technique, is the only method taught at Boyne. There are about 30 certified instructors.

Most skiers arrive by car. It is just 999 miles from Manhattan to Boyne Falls. A new freeway, Interstate 75, has cut the driving time from Detroit to less than five hours. A number of ski clubs, mainly from the Midwest, come by chartered buses, and there are generally 15 or 20 such group arrivals every weekend. Individuals can charter special buses from Chicago, 340 miles away, for a round-trip fare of \$15.

There is no longer any train service to the area, but North Central Airlines has two flights

a day into Pellston, 15 minutes by car from the Highlands. The airline recently announced that any group of 10 or more skiers will receive a discount of 20 per cent on each ticket from Detroit or Chicago. Private planes, often as many as 30 on winter weekends, use the year-round facilities at the nearby Harbor Springs or Boyne Mountain airports.

Budget-minded skiers can find accommodations in the surrounding area for as little as \$15 for a weekend. This usually includes Friday and Saturday night lodging, plus breakfast and dinner on Saturday and breakfast Sunday morning. Lift tickets cost \$11 for the two-day weekend. Special ski-week package arrangements for five days (Monday through Friday) range from \$90 to \$145.

The package price generally includes lift tickets, ski instruction and use of the heated outdoor pool. Ski equipment can be rented for \$5 a day. For those who decide to drop in on the spur of the moment, there are several excellent specialty shops that stock everything a skier might need.

Program for Young

At Boyne Mountain, skiing parents can enroll their offspring—age 6 or older—in a special children's activity program at a cost of \$7.50 for a five-day period. The daily program consists of four hours of ski instruction, and lunch and dinner with the instructors in the lodge. After-dinner entertainment ranges from movies to sleigh rides.

The healthy annual snowfall in this area is bolstered by the prevailing westerly winds that blow snow inland from Lake Michigan. This section of the state is roughly comparable to the snow belt around Buffalo.

A stringent safety code, enacted in February, 1962, and operating through the State Labor Department, protects Michigan skiers. The Michigan State Lift Safety Commission is responsible for inspection of all mechanical skilifts. This inspection is patterned after the American Standards Code designed by registered engineers.