

Plenty of snow to keep skiers happy at Sierra

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – A good midmorning parking space and no problem finding two Adirondack chairs at West Bowl on a Saturday in February. It must be the winter of 2011-12.

With all the kvetching about the dismal snowpack, skiers and boarders are staying away from the slopes. That was our good fortune Feb. 4. No lift lines, no beer lines, great seats to bask in the sun. Even better, the snow on Dogwood at Sierra-at-Tahoe was exceptional – and not just because our expectations were so low. It really was great skiing.



A warm, sunny day Feb. 4 has people relaxing at West Bowl. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The rest of the resort – of which 80 percent is open – was pretty good. While we didn't hit every run, we got in a good sampling. Lower Main is slick on spots – but that isn't unusual. And no moguls made me smile all the way down.

Upper Powderhorn is a bit gnarly. For someone who learned to

ski in California, I called it icy. For Sue, who learned to ski on the true blue ice of Vermont, she calls it hard pack.

Watching her zip down the run I needed binoculars to see her at the bottom. She's just that much better and faster than me in these conditions.

But once off the upper part, the rest of the way down Powderhorn was fun for both of us. (In my book, ice, or whatever one calls it, is not fun.)

Beaver is fine to navigate, but it's weird to see some flora popping up through the snow. But that's better than dirt or rocks.

No rocks were visible on any run, but a few parts are getting thin. Signage is good to warn people.

Groomers are doing a bang-up job of servicing the runs.

Grandview lodge is open for drinks, but not food. Steve Hemphill, spokesman for the resort, said the lack of visitors doesn't make it economically viable to have the restaurant open.

Because the lift by the same name did not open until well into the season, it was a while before anyone realized a pipe had burst at Grandview lodge. Repairs are still being made.

Baja Grill is serving up its Mexican specialties Friday-Saturday-Sunday. Until riders figure out the slopes are worth visiting, the resort can't justify keeping the West Bowl eatery open seven days a week.

With a chance of snow Monday night and a 30 percent chance on Tuesday, there may be a couple powder days to plan for this week.

