

Late-season powder day provides fun on the slopes

By Kathryn Reed

Mother Nature played a bit of a joke on Lake Tahoe with April Fools' Day being one of the best ski days of the season. She must be laughing, knowing that it will be in the 50s for the next two days.

Ski season in Tahoe has been spastic at best.



Sue Wood makes fresh tracks April 1 at Heavenly. Photos/Kathryn Reed

For Dan Barker, his first day on skis this season was Sunday.

"I drove through in January to Vegas and the skis never came out of the truck," Barker said as he rode up the Sky chairlift at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

He and his son, Sean (who worked at Heavenly two seasons ago), came down from Poulsbo, Wash., to get more than a week of

skiing in.

With Heavenly receiving between 1 and 1½ feet of snow, there was plenty for the duo to schuss through. Most resorts in the greater Lake Tahoe area sent out alerts Sunday morning about having received nearly 18 inches of white stuff overnight.

But it wasn't all fun Sunday. Kirkwood Mountain Resort had an inbounds avalanche on the back side of Vista. No one was injured, but the lifts closed in the afternoon in order to secure the mountain.

“(Sunday) was challenging with rising temps and the new snow,” the resort posted on its Facebook page.

Even the resort's website says, “Kirkwood is a Class A (most dangerous) avalanche area. Our Ski Patrol Team works tirelessly to ensure the resort is safe to ski. Please observe and respect our ski area and avalanche closure boundaries.”

A March 17 inbound avi at Kirkwood sent one person to Barton Memorial Hospital.

With the fluctuating temperatures and more snow forecast for the end of the week, slopes will be unstable. The Sierra Avalanche Center rates the danger each day.

At Homewood Mountain Resort a power outage was the issue. It meant no skiing. But think of all that untracked powder that will be available today.

While at lake level people were shoveling upwards of a foot of snow in the morning, by the afternoon it was hard to know there were blizzard conditions 24 hours earlier.

Despite all the freshies, the lift lines mid-morning and into the afternoon at Heavenly were minimal. The line for fries at Tamarack Lodge about 1pm was non-existent.

People seem to have moved onto other activities just as the

snow on the slopes has become so inviting.

While last year it was “the winter that would never end”, this year it’s “the winter that never quite was”.

Another phrase often used in the basin, “If you don’t like the weather, wait five minutes, it will change” seems so appropriate. Part of Sunday was like a blizzard at Heavenly Mountain Resort, while later in the day the sunscreen needed to be applied.

Conditions on the mountain are all over the board. Awesome powder off the Galaxy chairlift had everyone in the trees whooping it up. The sketchy conditions on Liz’s provoked four-letter words. Slick spots were disconcerting, especially as it continued to snow. Later in the day slushy spots slowed everyone down.

It’s been that kind of season for skiers and snowboarders in Lake Tahoe – from one extreme to the other, with little consistency.

All the resorts finally have plenty of coverage – but only a few weeks are left before the lifts stop spinning until next season. Mid-April is the normal closing time. But plenty of events still fill the calendar – just check out your resort of choice to see what will be taking place in the coming weeks.

And while the ski season is just about over, the season for deals on next year’s season pass is well under way. This is the time of year to lock in the best rate on next year’s pass.

But, really, maybe it’s time to admit it’s the season to see if there is air in the bike tires.

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