

Editorial: Vail era begins in Utah

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Just like that, more than half the economic muscle in Utah's ski industry falls under one corporation, and it's from Colorado.

To anyone who has followed the ski industry in the American West, Vail Resorts' purchase of Park City Mountain Resort is the marriage of '60s children. Stretch pants and cable bindings were de rigueur when Vail opened in 1962 and Park City in 1963, and both featured enclosed gondolas to carry skiers. That was a more upscale experience than the chairlifts at Alta and Aspen, the pioneering ski areas that made Vail and Park City possible. The older ski areas remained skiing's high temples, but the upstarts eventually became bigger businesses.

Vail and Park City fueled a half century of competition between Colorado and Utah's ski industry, a back and forth that saw Colorado gain, then give up, the Winter Olympic Games in 1976, and Utah succeed in hosting the 2002 Games. Colorado has always had more resorts and more skiers, but no one now questions Utah's place among top ski destinations. Vail, regardless of its roots, was already invested in Utah's success with its stake in the Canyons, and now it brings the leverage and exposure of 12 ski resorts stretching from Lake Tahoe to Michigan.

In the end, PCMR's seller, Powdr Corp., had to bite the bullet, and it was a bitter taste to lose control of a ski resort like Park City Mountain Resort over a missed lease renewal. But the Cumming family that owns Powdr recognized that carrying on the bloody battle was harmful to everyone.

Instead, Powdr exited with honor, including making the preservation of current employees' jobs a contingency of the deal.

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