

The rage in Farmington

Winter sportsters take to cross-country skiing

By CORINNE ABATT
 Whatever the cause, interest in inexpensive, close-to-home sports—ice skating, bicycling, jogging, hiking—is rising. The most recent sport to enjoy rising popularity is cross-country skiing.

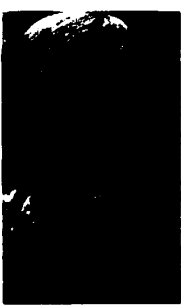
Outside hiking and tenting, cross-country enthusiasts contend there are few sports more conducive to family enjoyment than this European import. The two owners of The Benchmark in Farmington Hills, Emil Hutton and Chuck Spriggs, like many area sporting goods stores, are ready for the onslaught of cross-country skiers. Hutton and Spriggs both happen to be cross-country addicts and they are

working with the Farmington Area Recreation Commission on a cross-country ski program which will start early next year. "The largest number of our customers for cross-country equipment are in the 45-65 age bracket," Hutton says. The necessary equipment, boots, skis, poles and bindings costs between \$80 and \$130. "It would be hard to spend over \$100 even if you tried," Hutton remarks.



Emil Hutton, small knapsack at his waist which can be worn either front or back, demonstrates the use of cross-country poles of bamboo. In front are the narrower skis used in the sport. (Staff photo)

Each of these items, however, differs from downhill skiing equipment. The boots, either low or over the ankle, are little more than sturdy hiking shoes with a toe shaped to fasten in the toe binding. There is no heel fastening as in downhill equipment. The cross-country skier strides over flat terrain and the loose heel allows greater freedom of movement. The skis are longer and narrower, either wooden or man-made material. All are made or treated to help forward movement and retard backward slides. Beginners often use those which have a fish scale design on the bottom which stays smooth with forward motion and gets scratchy if moved the wrong way.



Recreation programmer Dave Justus will teach cross-country skiing. (Staff photo)

Others have strips of mohair which do essentially the same thing. "These," Hutton explains, "are built like a polar bear paw. A polar

bear has unidirectional hair on his feet to help him walk up the hill and not slide back."

Cross-country skis are also constructed in varying degrees of stiffness to aid the forward motion. Bamboo poles with curved points are another aid to the skier, giving resilience as they are put into the snow and bend to move the skier along.

Dave Justus, recreation programmer who is planning the Farmington program, says about the sport, "It is a little more strenuous than downhill skiing, there is more activity involved and it is easier to learn."

Downhill skiers will have little trouble adapting to cross-country techniques once they get used to the difference in the equipment.

According to Justus, novices will want to learn to snowplow, side-step (actually a turn) and traverse. The latter, Justus explains, is going down hill diagonally to slow speed and avoid crashing into woods and trees.

"Cross-country can get tricky," Justus says, "especially if you are on narrow trails with lots of trees."

Cross-country trails, according to the regulars, are getting easier find. Justus will probably take his classes to Maybury Park on Eight Mile, west of Northville, and to Kensington Park, Kensington, he says, has many fine trails, but those who wish to rent cross-country equipment there should plan to arrive before 8:30 a.m. on weekends.

Jeff Farland, recreation supervisor who plans to accompany the Farmington area classes, says many public golf courses are open to cross-country skiers and many of the downhill ski areas are opening cross-country trails.

"What's nice about cross-country," Justus says, "is that older people can get involved. My wife and I ski at Kensington and we take our wine and cheese and Thermos of coffee in our rucksacks and just enjoy the solitude and the beauty of the land."

Farland adds, "Cross-country skiing is less competitive than downhill. It's relaxing and seems to put you back in touch with the environment."

Both say they have seen whole families, youngsters through grandparents out on the cross-country trails.

All who have tried it have one word of advice for newcomers to the sport—do some conditioning before

venturing out—stretching and bending, jogging, any of the exercises prescribed for downhill skiers.

There are books available on cross-country skiing and one magazine now on the newsstands lists trails in all parts of the country.



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Auditions scheduled

Annual auditions for the Southfield Repertory Theatre's Children's season will be held Monday and Tuesday evening, Nov. 3 and 4. The auditions for the professional adult company are open to the talented public. The requirements are simple: talent, energy and hard work. Those who

plan audition should be prepared with a ten minute piece in any area of drama, although classical dramatic or humorous materials are recommended. Bring a resume to the audition. The acting and technical jobs are paid positions with the company.

All roles for the following shows are available: "Puss in Boots" by Madge Miller, "Dracula's Treasure" by Dudley Saunders, "The Tinseltown Bird" by Mary Melwood, and a musical revue—"Yankee Doodle" by Aurand Harris.

Auditions will be by appointment only beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Southfield Civic Center in the Parks and Recreation Center, 2000 Evergreen Road, Southfield. To arrange for an appointment call Ralph Valaita, producing director at the Southfield Repertory Theatre, 17896 Warwick Road, Detroit.

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