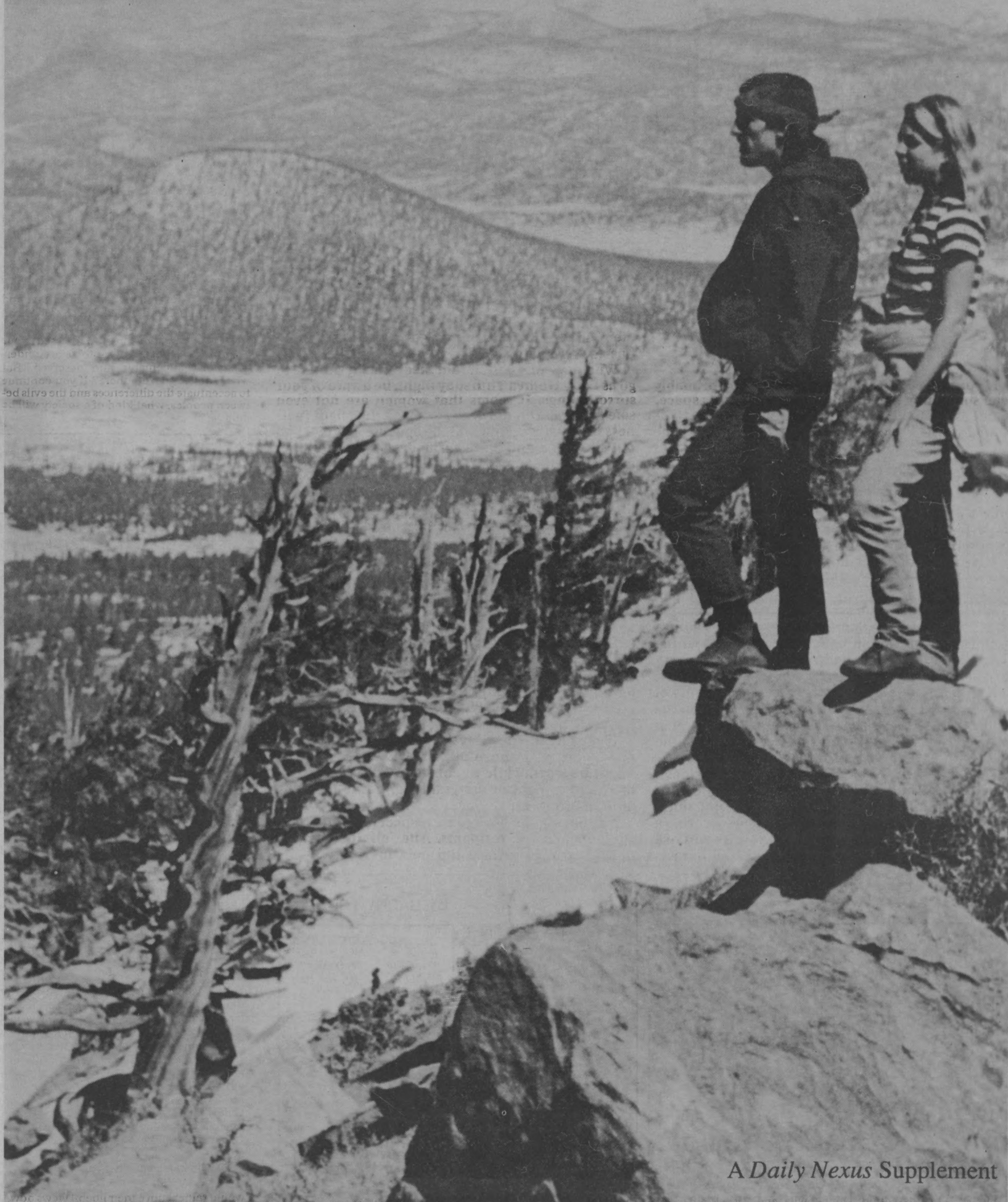


Winter Sports '91-'92

"A Special Look Back..."



A Daily Nexus Supplement

Hockey on the Farm Pond Brings Winter's Prime Feelings

By Maxwell C. Donnelly

It's a lot like surfing. Only warmer.

That is to say, it's an addiction of sorts, an affliction of the wallet, a boon to the spirit.

It's about standing on the center of a farm pond, a foot-thick layer of crystal beneath your feet, just breathing the painfully crisp air. The trees bronze, grass rosy yellow on the hills, which cast back the gentle crack of stick on puck, the rasp of razor-sharp blades biting into the ice, accommodating flight.

Growing up on skates, playing on the carpet in the basement with a tennis ball, trying to skate on the linoleum in the kitchen and thus receiving one's first five-minute major penalty. Going out with the parents, waiting impatiently while they check the ice with a stick, testing for depth. Then that first terrible time, despite protective measures, when the ice just suddenly collapses under you. A whole new respect for this medium upon which you fly, under which you drown.

Two boots as goal posts, two sticks as goalies, two-on-two with your friends 'til

the sun finally sets and turns your rink into a quiet expanse of blackness, waiting for the voices and skates.

Hockey is a spiritual event. That sounds ironic, in light of the commonly accepted public perspective of the game. But the fights and mayhem which more and more detract from the professional game are merely a trait of competition gone awry at an intense level of play. They are an example of aberration become tactic. They mar the real beauty of the game — the hours of play on a farm pond or stream somewhere far from the noise and confusion.

To say the fighting is the game of hockey is like saying the salaries and Astro-Turf are the game of baseball. It ignores the entire tradition, the passion which drives the loyal out there every day, which drives me to L.A. once a week to get that two-hour fix in a pickup game.

Countless Saturday mornings in years past, waking at 6:30 and stumbling down to the rink to open it for hockey practice, the lockers cold and the ice freshly resurfaced, like a huge piece of inviting glass.

Steam rising thick from the heads and shoulders of teammates lining the bench between shifts, the heat of their exertions visible in the air so cold as to be tangible, thin and hard, and knowing the sun's just rising and the pond will be fresh and clean beneath the trees in the hills after school.

Taking a pass even as you accelerate around a defender and into open ice. Taking flight and knowing that for the next fraction of a mo-

ment nothing exists but you and the goalie, reacting noiselessly in a time frame suddenly slowed by the perfection of a body acting without conscious impulse.

A catharsis, a taste of the profound.

It is an escape, not just from the restraints and frustrations of earthbound existence, but from oneself.

People and pucks moving so fast that conscious commands are lost in a flurry of action and reaction, an entire team moving within this flow of unconscious volition. And when it comes

together, and the puck shuttles effortlessly from your frame of perfection into a teammate's and on to another's in a swirl of unplanned but perfectly choreographed motion, there is no feeling quite like it on earth.

This is it. The same feeling which drives the hardy out of bed at five in the a.m. to hit Jalama if the waves are right. The sense of sudden detachment, as everything simply operates on its own time and the wave slows and the mind quickens and you just can't breathe because you don't even have to. It doesn't last long. It lasts

forever. The sense is short — a millisecond, perhaps — but the experience is infinite. It draws you again and again. It's a bit like an orgasm, in layman's terms. Definitely more ethereal.

Hockey is all this. But what hockey is most of all is my dad unlacing my skates and my mom rubbing the circulation back into cold-numbed feet as the air stills around us and the sun sinks behind those pink hills and darkening trees which forever bound the scope of my fondest childhood memories. And knowing that somehow it will always be there, no matter the season.

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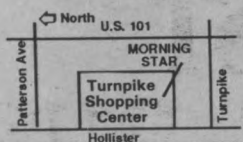
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Ideal Time for Surfing in SB

By Alex Salkever
and Dan Hildale

The days are getting shorter and the water is getting colder. The last south swell has long since died out off the coast of Baja. It's time to start setting your alarm clocks 'cause the winter surf season is about to start. And oh, what a difference there is for us up here in Santa Barbara.

First of all, there are actually real waves. The big winter storm systems come barreling down the California coast from the Gulf of Alaska. All summer and spring, the south swells which bring waves up from the South Pacific to California are screened out of the Santa Barbara Channel by the Channel Islands. In two words: lake, big lake.

Only in the winter with a northwesterly or westerly swell do the long point breaks — Cojo's, Rincon, Campus Point, Devereux — start to fire up. Well, at least this is what it's supposed to be like. In actuality, even northwest swells often hit all other points on the California coast except for our fine little piece of real estate here. It takes just the right combination of jet stream location, swell direction and prevailing wind direction to bring waves to the Gold Coast.

"Wait a second," you are all saying out there, "I thought UCSB was the biggest surf school in all of California?" Well, if you go to UCSB and you want to surf in the summer time you better get some wheels. The closest break to the south is Backside Rincon and that doesn't even catch south swells that well. Otherwise, it's a drive down to Ventura into hyper-crowded surf spots where generally, longboarders rule the water.

To the north, you must drive about an hour to get to Jalama County Beach Park, a pristine spot which has gotten noticeably more crowded in the past couple of years. But Jalama catches those south storms and gives wave-starved Santa Barbarans plenty

of juice to spare. But even up here it is not like real summer surfing because, due to this spot's location north of Point Conception, the water is always cold.

Winter in Santa Barbara is another matter, especially this year with the experts predicting that the mystical El Niño will roar into our hemisphere sometime around January. But keep your fingers crossed because they have been saying that for the last two years. For those of you out there who do not understand what an impending El Niño means, imagine utter chaos raging on the California coastline. Remember 1983 when half of Malibu ended up in the Pacific and every pier from San Diego to Santa Cruz got trashed, smashed and mutilated?

Even without El Niño and acts of God, the winter in Santa Barbara is undoubtedly the best time for surf. If and when the swells from up north slip through the window of opportunity, beach and point breaks right in our back yard at UCSB offer several different types of waves.

Campus Point starts off with a screaming barrel and then breaks off into several fun sections of slower waves. Devereux Point provides slower, longer rides with typical walls filled with opportunities for long cutbacks and large turns. But watch out for huge crowds and large chunks of floating tar.

Sands Beach is a quirky beach break which closes out with any real size and is best on a medium swell, with many peaks and moving sections. Finally, there is Depressions, which for the last few years has been pretty depressing. Depressions is a fast hollow beach break verging on a shore break which can sometimes give fun sections but don't expect long rides. And once every blue moon, I.V. Reef breaks. You'll know it when you see it.

So pray for surf and maybe this winter will be a good one. If not, there are always those other wonderful indoor sports.



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Football, Basketball Battle for Right

Like Others, Football Has Its Season

By Josh Elliott

It's funny how every big sport in America brings with it images of seasons, of different times of the year. For me, basketball is always a springtime "March Madness" set of memories. School's always winding to a close, and every year I get worse and worse at picking the Final Four — heck, last year, I had UCLA. In the pros, my beloved Lakers are usually clinching the Western Division right around late April or early May, and I can sit back and wait for Magic and James and Vlade to bring me another world championship (thanks a lot, Michael).

Baseball, of course, is summer, just as summer is baseball. I think that's one of the big reasons baseball is so darned popular, why it's truly the national pastime. You learn to love sports as children, and, as children, we're all at our very happiest during summer, when we can feel free to run up and down the block with our buddies all day and go to the beach on Saturdays and listen to Vin or Harry on the ol' transistor (or, for me, on the ol' black-and-white that my parents let me keep in my room so they wouldn't have to deal with me during those long, 12-day Dodger road trips).

Baseball is leisurely, relaxed, laid-back sport at its best, which means you can do almost anything else but watch or listen to the ballgame (whether you're in attendance or not) and still enjoy the game immensely. Yeah, baseball is definitely a summer thing.

Hockey, based on its lack of a network television contract and any sort of real identity in this country despite the fact that it is actually pretty exciting to watch even if its executive leadership is absolutely the worst in professional sports, doesn't qualify as a big sport and thus it has no significant tie to any season whatsoever, in my opinion.

Which brings me to the present, as last weekend's freezing winds so illustrate — winter sports. And, really, there is only one real sport that brings in all the aspects of any good winter.

Football. Football, you see, is what winter is all about, archetypally and otherwise. I mean, think about whipping, bone-chilling winds. Think about blustery snowstorms. Think about frost

and ice and dreary, ugly days. Think about all these things, throw in some naked drunks and funny-looking umbrellas and you've got Lambeau Field in Green Bay on most any Sunday. Football and snow, for most of the country, go hand in hand. Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, Philly, even Denver — all cities that have played some of their greatest games on some of the most wonderfully miserable days in the dead of winter.

College football is no different. The swirling, dark, snow-laden clouds suffocating the skies above Notre Dame Stadium. Brent Musberger, clad in his fedora, mittens and grey overcoat, booming out on the potential greatness of the day's game, about how it's such "great football weather." 100,000 insane fans packed into Wolverine Stadium in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to watch winter's favorite hobby played in conditions about as conducive to sports as is snowboarding in Bali. I grew up with these images on the tube every Saturday, albeit back in L.A., where you only know it's winter because you have to lay out an extra 15 minutes

to get that deep Coppertone tan.

For me, these pictures have defined the game of football since I was a kid. The harshness of winter seems a perfect spouse to the violence and toughness of the game and the men who play it. Not that women have no place here.

Football in winter?

Yeah, I remember this one time, right after a big rain and sleet storm, a bunch of the kids from my block went over to the local junior high in our old hand-me-downs for a classic game of mud football. I didn't want the girls to play, but they'd made a big stink about it so they came along. On the first drive, Mike McGurk threw me a pass in the right flat, and I turned to find his sister Christine (we called her "Goo") coming at me, full speed ahead. And I remember laughing to myself at the absurdity of it all as she stuck her shoulder into my gut, sticking me so hard that I was then sure that I didn't want to play with the girls. Football in the winter? Yeah, those were the days alright.

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Basketballs Dribble as Winter Rolls in

By Jonathan Okanes

Winter means a lot of things. Rainy days, cold air. Christmas, Hanukkah. New Year's Eve drinking, New Year's Day hangover.

But for all of us level-headed, health-oriented humans, it means hoards and hoards of the game of basketball.

That's probably why God decided to make winter the season with the worst weather — who needs to go outside anyhow when there's basketball on TV? When I think of winter, I hear the sound of Dick Vitale's highly irregular voice wailing in the background.

Really, who could ask for more? ESPN would most likely agree — that network probably looks forward to winter as much as I do. What, with college basketball junkies all over impatiently clamoring for the onslaught of over 200 broadcasts of mankind's best accomplishment, ESPN and the winter are a match made in heaven.

There's something about the cool, crisp air that we're

experiencing even now that evokes thoughts of fast breaks and perfect swishes in me. It's a reminder of my earlier childhood on winter mornings, when I would take to the front driveway to practice my shooting touch. You'd have to blow your hands after every shot to shake off the cold, but it didn't matter. We're talking about basketball here.

If you couldn't shake off the cold, you might as well pack it in and go catch some Vitale. You see, at times, the winter and basketball combination has its drawbacks — especially out on the driveway. If it got too cold, a strange thing would happen to my shooting — basically, it would collapse. You see, there seemed to be a direct correlation between the chill factor in the air and the quality of my shooting — the colder it became, the more horrible my shooting became. There's a strange

sensation that one begins to feel in his or her hands when it becomes too cold — the hands begin to freeze up in such a way that seems to be directly opposed to

handling a basketball.

That's why playing basketball in a real gym has always been one of those little things for me. You know how everyone has those trivial things that make them pretty happy — seemingly more happy than the thing probably should — well, for me it's playing basketball inside a real gym.

Not that I come from some arctic land where hardwood floors and glass backboards are a foreign concept, it's just that I will probably never get over running up and down a gym floor with a basketball in my hand.

When I think about it, this weird obsession I have for indoor basketball may be a direct result of my experiences playing during those cold mornings out on my driveway. There are certainly differences in sensations between the two experiences. While on the driveway the smell of nearby pine trees and smoke from nearby fireplaces permeates play, the indoor basketball player experiences the almost euphoric smell of the glorious hardwood floor.

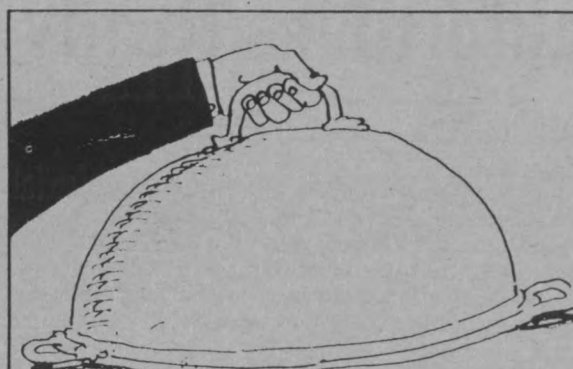
Outdoors one hears the sounds of cars that are having trouble starting, while

on a gym floor the player hears the sound that is almost iconic to the game of basketball itself — simply called "the squeal", for the high-pitched sound that occurs as everyone's basketball shoes thrash around the floor.

If we basketball junkies could have it our way, winter life would come down to two activities — playing basketball and watching basketball. If you can't hear the sound of squealing shoes, than the next best thing has to be the sounds of a televised college basketball game — the constant, and I mean *constant*, roar of the crowd, the voice of Vitale in the background (or in his case, foreground) — it all is equivocal to the winter season for me.

Basketball is a strange phenomenon. When you think about it, the ultimate goal of the game is pretty simple — put the ball through the hoop. In fact, I once heard a comedienne poke fun at that concept — she said, "Basketball. There's an exciting game: 'Wow, another one went through the hoop.'" I've often wondered how it took me prisoner.

Basketball is a fast-paced game with constant changing momentum and emotion, and it's the game's mystique that allows the cues of winter to elicit thoughts of the sport.



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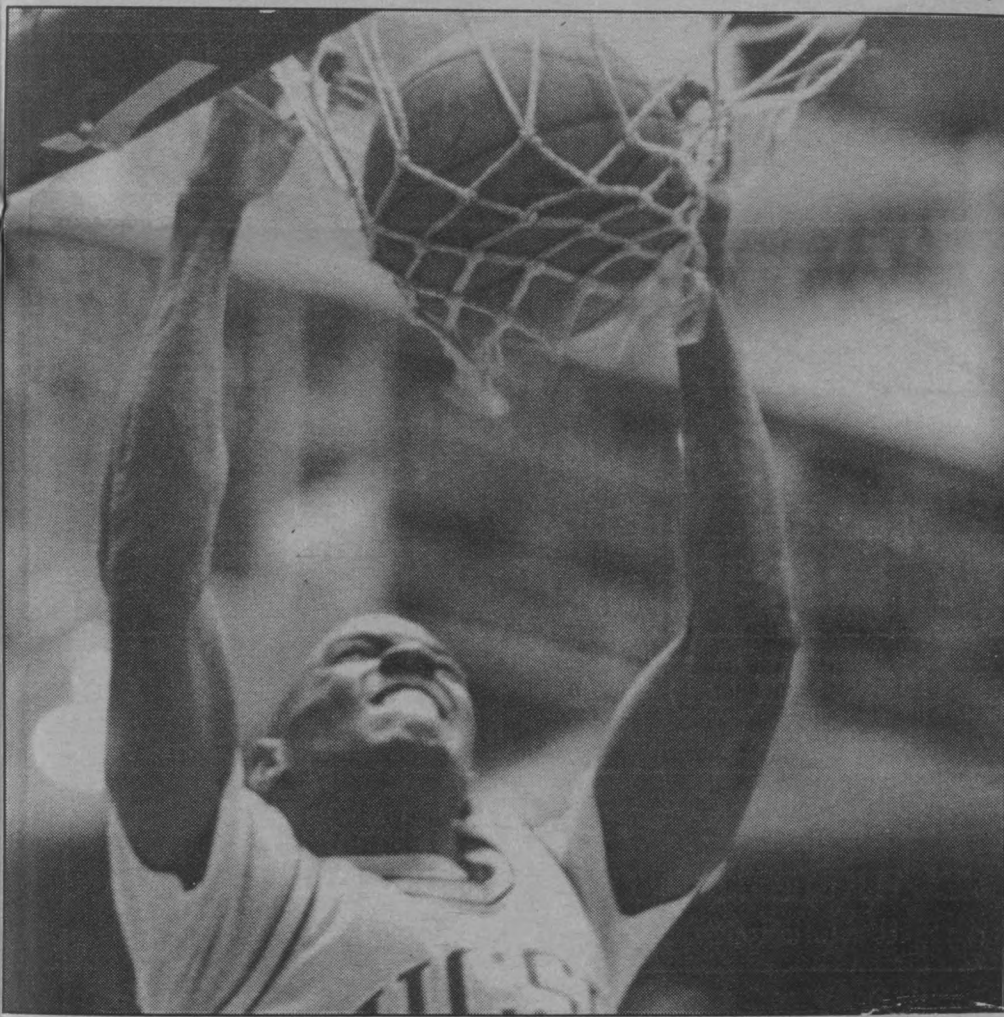
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Californians Really Have No Idea What Winter Is All About

By Andrew Paul

Winter in California? There's no such thing. California is beaches, surfing, bikinis, palm trees, sunbathing, "Valley" talk and all that stuff. You see, where I'm from, winter is not just a season. It's more than just a climate, but, in fact, it's as much apart of American culture as baseball and apple pie.

Winter is building a snowman. And not just building a

snowman, but learning the art of it from Dad. First and foremost, there must be heavy snow, which means when you take a clump of it in your hand it doesn't melt, but instead, forms into the perfect snowball.

Then there is the rolling of the snowballs — three to be exact, each slightly smaller than the previous one, each stacked on top of the other, and with Dad's help, of course.

Now the real fun begins. To make this snowman into a 'Frosty' look-alike, collect several buttons from Mom's sewing basket for eyes and a mouth, a carrot for the nose, a couple of sticks for the arms, and best of all, a scarf and one of Dad's old hats to top him off.

Winter is hot chocolate with marshmallows, made by Mom.

Winter is sledding down a hill in the park. And not just hopping on a sled and flying down the hill, but learning the art of it from Dad. There are a few positions to choose from, like sitting upright, lying down and lying on your back. Once all three of these have been mastered, more unique positions can be attempted.

The goal, though, is still to get to the bottom of the hill faster than anyone has ever done before. It doesn't matter if your face turns numb, or if it means hopping over jumps or other kids in your way, it's speed that is most important.

Winter is school being cancelled due to snow days. Winter is spending half that day shoveling the driveway. But do not miss the point, nothing compares to shoveling the driveway. You see, this is considered by some as physical labor, which in turn means rewards (i.e. hot chocolate and marshmallows). And, between you and me, for some reason I loved it.

It's a game. Especially when the snow is piled up to the top of your head, the driveway becomes a challenge. Make your way from the garage to the street or you're trapped.

Winter is cuddling up to a fire blazing in the fireplace.

Winter is kicked off on Thanksgiving. The Lions and Cowboys on television in their annual NFL football games, a big turkey dinner with all the family, and all the while, the season's first snowfall lands on the roof.

Winter is ice skating on a frozen lake. Not a rink, but a lake. Outdoors in the freezing temperatures, with four layers of clothes — thermals, winter coats, gloves, scarf, ski hat, two pairs of socks and, of course, the ice skates.

It's skating over to a section of that lake that nobody has yet to skate on and write things on the ice with the imprints you leave behind. Then eventually falling down and getting extremely soaked, but still getting back up and skating along only to fall once again.

Winter is a real White Christmas, or Hanukkah if you prefer. With real snow, ice and even icicles.

Winter is making a snow angel in the sand.

Winter is a snowball fight with friends, making forts and hiding out behind them. And then packing a snowball extra-hard for revenge after one smacks you right in the face.

Winter is New Year's Eve with a Fahrenheit temperature of one degree.

Winter is New Year's Day, watching college football on television all day long with the family, and afterward going outside in the warmed-up temperature of 20 degrees and throwing the pigskin around with your uncle, Grandpa and Dad. Then imitating your favorite players who make those diving catches in the end zone, by flying, face-first, into the snow.

Winter is cold. Winter is ice. Winter is snow.

Winter is growing up in New Jersey.

Winter is not in California.

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A One-Time-Only Trip to the Slopes

By Brian Banks

There is a point in every young man's life when he should not listen to his mother. Mine came rather early, in the fall of my freshman year of high school. Her request was simple enough — sign up for the school's weekend ski trip and learn the slopes.

A lifelong fan of staying indoors, watching television and eating salted Bavarian pretzels, I did not exactly warm up to the idea. My only previous experience with skiing had been watching the Agony of Defeat guy on "Wide World of Sports" get a serious butt burn down 300 yards of snow. Not a good first impression.

I relented. I contested. I did not want to go. I began a list of things I would rather do that weekend than spend time in Mammoth. I would have preferred to show my grandmother how to set her VCR again than go skiing. Even the fact that my best friend was going did not sway me. I flat out refused to go. Everyone else in my family was on my side. The only opposition came from my mother.

So I was off to Mammoth. My best friend, Mike, was there, but he only served to remind me of the things I'd be missing at home. The bus carrying 60 students arrived in Mammoth late Friday night, too late to do any skiing. So far, so good. Friday had passed and I hadn't been on the slopes. Now if I could just find a way to skip Saturday and Sunday, I'd be in business.

No such luck. We were supposed to wake up early Saturday morning and hit the slopes. Not that any of us actually slept. When a large group of kids get together, there is some law which requires a group of 11 of them to keep the rest of the cabin awake with stories about farts, cheerios and dead singers. Even the most narcoleptic kid would have been searching for some Nytol to help him get some Zzzzzzs.

We left for Mammoth Mountain at 6 a.m. Normally, I don't like to go outside before the newspaper arrives, but I realized I would have to make some concessions. I was dressed in my ski clothes, which were very similar to my normal clothes except that the first layer of clothing was skintight and the second was extra-puffy. My mother didn't want to buy me a ski wardrobe for what would probably be my only time on the slopes, so she found some friend's friend of a friend of hers to loan me his.

You really don't know what's gross until you've found empty gum wrappers in the jacket pocket of a person you don't know but whose clothes you are now wearing. I think that sums up that episode.

Neither Mike nor I had ever skied before, so we joined a small group of kids who needed a lesson. There were six of us, and our instructor closely resembled the warden from those "women behind bars" flicks of the '70s. She made us walk up a six-foot hill with our skis off, and then ski down it. We did it a couple of times, but I had a feeling that there was a little more I should know.

No time for that, she told me. We were on our way up the lift, about to ski down Mammoth's easiest slope. I had questions to ask, things I needed to know. What do I do when the lift is over? The instructor was three chairs in front, and could not hear a word. It was just Mike and me. He suggested that perhaps we just ski right off the lift. What a loon, I thought.

The lift ended, and Mike just skied down the hill. I, on the other hand, fell on my face. This was the first time I realized that the instructor had left something out in our lesson. I had no idea how to get up. As the other first-timers made their way down the hill, I layed in the snow thinking of the things I could be doing back home. The instructor came up again, I guess she had heard a rumor that some 6'3" 250-pound lug was stuck in the snow. She tried to show me how to get up, some system using one pole to prop myself up. But I couldn't get the hang of it, and she was getting increasingly frustrated. She left and her parting words still ring in my ears.

"I'll send someone else ..."

An hour later, someone else came. It was the man who had organized the trip, also one of my school teachers. He helped me out of the snow (by this time I had been lying in the snow so long skiing passersby thought I was a new mogul on the slope) and showed an easy way to get up. He took off my skis, told me to stand and then put them back on. The man was a genius.

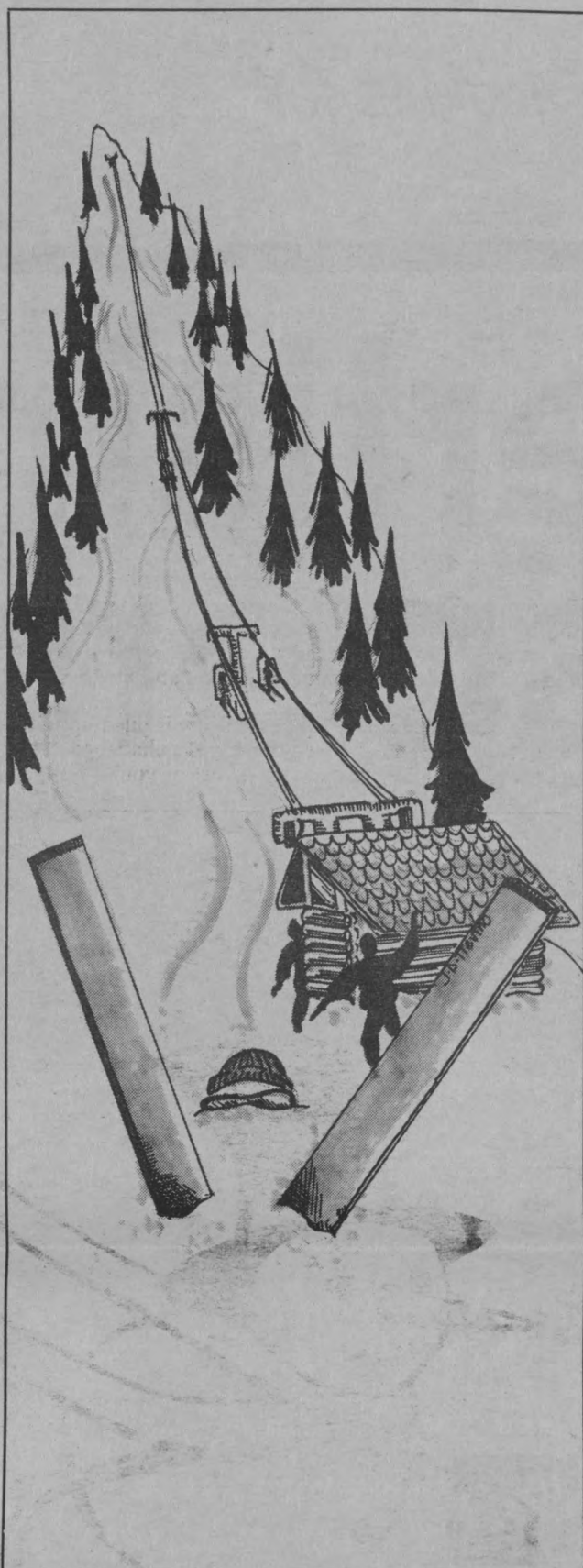
By this time, Mike was making his sixth trip up the lift. He showed me how to "snowplow" down the hill, a method of turning the skis inward that I thought would lead to complete decimation of my ankles. Actually, it proved quite effective. I got down the hill, and Mike talked me into doing it again.

For the rest of the day, my friend and I snowplowed down the easy slope, though I could never get the hang of skiing right off the lift. I would simply throw my body down to the ground, take off my skis, get up and put them on again. Then I was ready.

I was exhausted Saturday night, but did not expect to get any sleep. Sure enough, the late-night conversation had turned to the much-more-important subject of Mexican broths, and I was kept awake.

Sunday was better, with Mike and I continuing to go up and down the easy slope. We'd race down, then pretend the lift up was the Peoplemover at Disneyland. This was skiing, I thought;—getting down the hill as fast as I could and then pretending I was somewhere else. I could handle that.

I haven't been back to Mammoth since, though my friends are planning a trip this Thanksgiving. I think I'll just get a fake cast, a large hot beverage and sit by the fireplace at the lodge. My mother says that if I'm not going to ski, it's pointless to go. But I don't listen to her anymore.



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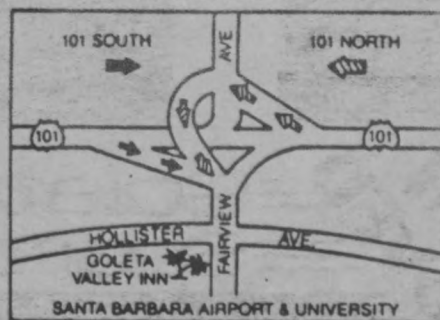
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