

End of Season Report 2023

This document will cover a season summary and our operational direction for the 2024 season.

Season Summary

Preseason and staffing-

The preseason set up was ok given the late start Gareth and I had. All compliance was complete in good time. Mechanical and maintenance of the field was lacking throughout the summer, and we played a catch-up game with this.

Throughout the season a large number of returners made life easy. Recruitment was a long game, but numbers of people returning went through the roof. The hardest positions to fill became shuttle, and an experienced kitchen hand.

Snowmaking began in June. Very little snow was made due to warm temps. Inversion layers seemed to be the trend, with cold temps in town but warm temps on the field.

Very little natural snow.

July-

Season started with a leak in out diesel lines, making us scramble for a way to fill the generators. Snowmaking during this time was hard work, with marginal conditions. Planned open day target of the 1st of July was not met, just too little snow, with a lack of manmade snow. The first major snowmaking window was also wasted due to a failed water pump on the 300 generator. Creative thinking occurred, and we were able to source a small genny while the 300 got fixed.

Staff training occurred on the 5th-7th, with 2 cleaning days the 8th-9th to help staff pay the bills. The first day of the season was on the 15th to limited terrain (learners and intermate). The strategy during this time was to only open on weekends to conserve the snow until the school groups showed up. Forecasts continued to be dry, and snow from storms would just blow away, so snowmaking was the only real way to get to the top. Thanks to a deep high later in the month we opened tower 4 on the T-Bar on the 29th.

Through this bit of the season, we lost 2 staff, but I was amazed at how many stuck with us. We kept it as a skeleton crew to keep sustainable and reduce loss.

August-

August was finally when we were able to get enough snow made to get to the top, which happened on the 3rd. Early in August (8th-10th) we lost the tensioning system on the t bar, giving us limited terrain for 1 day and closing for another 2 days. One of these days was a storm day with about 20 cm, allowing us to open planets and out east. We had a few more storms, but most only produced a few cm. This changed later in august, with the biggest storm of the season (about 25cm) fell wet and ended in rain. This was the best possible thing that could have happened because it locked all the snow in place, and it finally able to open the west bowl, open on the 27th.

The lack of natural snow made for very good numbers on the weekends and dead weekdays. Bigger school groups started coming during August, which helped greatly with profitability during the weekdays, but without them it would have been another story.

We hired a few staff to ease the load in mid August. This helped greatly with covering breaks and the overall function of the field.

September-

Lots of sunny days and a severe lack of snow meant our snowpack slowly faded away. Weekend numbers started to fade as the month progressed. Snow towards the end of the season fell very wet or with rain, and warmer than average temps and a thin snowpack disappeared quickly. Temps got as high as 11 degrees the second to last week. Slush cup was run, and we had a good turnout for the event, but the total numbers for the last days were a bit disappointing. We timed our closing day perfectly.

Key dates

Opening day- July 15th

Days operating- 46

Days closed – 18

Closing day- October 16th

Opened 2 weeks late

Closed 2 weeks early

2024- Direction and Goals

Staff sustainability- We tried Tom's numbers and learned a lot about functioning on reduced staff. While we got through, great weather meant giving people time off became difficult in some departments without reducing capacity, particularly in ski school and patrol. Staff sickness played a role as well. Late season snowmaking became more difficult due to not having enough operations to do it sustainably more than a night. Separate document will cover departments in depth

Early season risk- Having so many staff on, being on limited terrain, and not having schools to carry us through the week in the beginning meant that we needed to close during the weekdays so as to not go backwards. Having a staggered start with staff, starting with a skeleton crew and adding more staff once school booking ramp up would mean less risk and responsibility to pay staff. More in separate report.

Snowmaking throughout the season- With such low snow in 2023, and that trend looking to become the norm, snowmaking will be a major need during future seasons. Having a dependable siphon to refill the tarn is also key.

Maintenance- Lack of maintenance in the 2022-2023 summer was felt hard during the season. Developing a very rigid maintenance schedule will be critical going forwards.

R&M priority list- Please see dedicated document Gareth has made for our discussed R&M priorities, and where we think the best use of operational capex lies

Diesel accounting and delivery- Early season started with a leak which took out our fuel delivery system. Later in the season a leak was discovered by looking at purchase records vs actuals. A full dive into our diesel delivery and recordkeeping will be a priority. Replacement pipes, digital meters and reporting to be considered.

New streams of revenue- Sightseers- Becoming a massive market, with people coming up every day of the week, and jammed packed on weekends. Busloads full. We offer them a safe road, and an avalanche-controlled place to play, so finding a way to get more money off them would be big for Rainbow. Huge upside here. Tubing/sledding- Ski patrol had their hands full with policing toboggans this year. Looking into tubing up the mountain, or having a snow play area down in the lower car park (Like how Porters does) would be a gamechanger. Accommodation- Another potential revenue add. Lots of upside potential here

The Health and Safety of our staff, members, and customers will continue to be one of our top priorities. This season we tried daily meetings instead of bigger H&S specific meetings. While we found some success here, biweekly or monthly meetings would still have been beneficial. Health and safety manuals and department training manuals are blurred and need to be reviewed. More specific and targeted training in departments can also be tweaked and worked on to have more substantial records. Finally, reporting of incidents was good but not always written down. Exploring digital H&S software would make reporting more transparent between departments and the committee as well.

Sustainability- Continuing the goal to be carbon neutral this summer. Look into ways to reduce waste up the hill in cafe. Anything to help with a green image.

POS system- Intouch has been an issue all season. Exploring options to rebuild or move systems could increase reporting accuracy.

Staff contracts- Update contracts for casual staff to be more beneficial for rainbow

Personal note:

I would like to say a huge thank you to the committee, members, and partners. The overwhelming generosity and passion displayed by the community towards Rainbow has truly amazed me. Being a part of this operation is an absolute honor. Thank you all for your patience this season as Gareth and I grew into our roles. I look forward to all the challenges and rewards of another season. This time, hopefully with a bit more snow. Thank you all for a great season.

Andrew Malcolm- Mountain Manager