

Aspen Proves Claim As Top Sports Center

By DICK SMITH

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Aspen took its place beside the country's finest winter sports areas yesterday after a two-day introduction in matchless weather that left some 1500 visitors breathless and the old mining town with a new heart.

The last of the week-enders left yesterday morning on the Denver & Rio Grande special; they looked at the slopes covered with five inches of new-fallen snow and climbed reluctantly into the train whose arrival marked the opening of festivities and whose departure rang down the curtain.

From every standpoint the dedication of the new winter sports mecca was a thumping success. On Saturday, Gov.-elect W. Lee Knous, Mayor Gene Robinson of Aspen and promoter Walter Paepcke of Chicago started the wheels rolling at the dedication of the 15,000-foot chair-lift—the longest in the world.

Afterwards Colorado's unsung ski champions — Barney McLean, Gordon Wren, Steve Knowlton, Jerry Hiatt, Johnny Litchfield and Percy Rideout—came down off the Magnifico Cutoff run in a dazzling burst of speed that sprayed powdery snow into the sun, and the keynote was struck.

Skiers got the thrill of their lives on the tricky expert runs off the mountain and non-skiers got the feel of it all riding the chair-lift to Ajax Peak. Highlight of the week-end was the dedication atop Ajax at the Sun Deck, where Aspenites who served in the 10th Mountain Division presented a commemorative plaque to their old division artillery commander, Col. David L. Ruffner.

Refuge Hut Plans

Plans for a 10th Mountain Division Refuge Hut to be built next summer in Montezuma Basin were also unveiled at the ceremony attended by Gen. Jacob Devers, army ground forces commander.

From a purely skiing standpoint the thrill of the week-end was the twin jump performed Sunday morning by Gordon Wren and Barney McLean. They came down the 60-meter jump run and sailed off in perfectly timed unison to a jump of 185 feet.

Spectators were also treated to the top-notch skiing of Georgette Thiollere, French woman champion, who has whipped most of the men in Europe and done likewise

to a number of our best skiers since she came over in the fall.

Aspen's bars served as an effective counterpoise in the evening to the rugged skiing. A dance on Saturday night and a fashion show with lots of raucous color were the main sundown events that tied in with the gatherings at the Jerome Hotel and the legendary Red Onion.

Walter Paepcke, the backer of the year-round sports development summed it all up Sunday night when he said, "This town has struck it again. But it won't be a short meteoric life like the last one."