

Vail ski area again No. 1 on continent

Post 9-13-2000 P. 1C

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With Blue Sky Basin in its back pocket, Vail has again regained its spot as king of the hills.

Without even putting shovel to dirt on the many new plans designed to carry Vail back to its coveted spot at the top of the ski industry, Vail is back at No. 1.

Readers of Ski Magazine voted Vail as the best resort in North America in the magazine's annual "Top 60 Resort Guide."

The opening of the much-touted Blue Sky Basin was one of the main reasons Vail beat out its arch-rival Whistler/Blackcomb in British Columbia, which last year knocked Vail from its long-held perch as Numero Uno. This year, Whistler/Blackcomb fell to third, behind Deer Valley in Utah.

"We've improved in 12 of 16 categories" voted on by Ski Magazine readers," said

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Go to www.denverpost.com for Ski Magazine's lists of:

- The best-rated resorts overall.
- The best resorts based on value, apres-ski, snow quality, grooming and 10 other criteria.
- The best resorts, by geography.

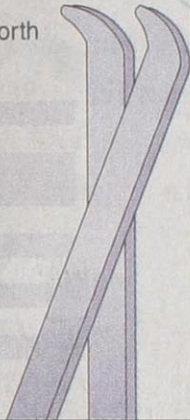
Kristin Yantis, Vail's spokeswoman. "That includes terrain and challenge. We directly attribute that to Blue Sky Basin."

Last month, Colorado Ski Country USA, the trade group that represents 25 of Colorado's 26 ski areas announced it had lured Whistler/Blackcomb's marketing guru, David Perry, as its leader. Now, Vail has pushed that resort from the top spot, and six of the top 10 resorts in the magazine's

Ski resorts' top dogs

The top 10 resorts in North America, according to Ski Magazine:

1. Vail
2. Deer Valley, Utah
3. Whistler/Blackcomb, British Columbia
4. Sun Valley, Idaho
5. Aspen
6. Snowmass
7. Beaver Creek
8. Keystone
9. Park City, Utah
10. Breckenridge



poll are in Colorado.

Tuesday was a busy day for public relations folks at Colorado's top ski areas. A flurry of news releases hit the wires by late afternoon, shortly after Ski Magazine announced the top 10 list. But being polite Coloradans, the resort spokespeople chose to toot their own resorts' horn. Nary a word mentioned those Canadians up north.

"We'll leave that for the hockey teams," Yantis said.