

10-2009

## Recreation Revolution: Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre

Liberty University

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj\\_2009\\_oct](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_oct)

---

### Recommended Citation

Liberty University, "Recreation Revolution: Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre" (2009). *October/November 2009*. 8.

[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj\\_2009\\_oct/8](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lj_2009_oct/8)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2009 at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in October/November 2009 by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).



## Recreation Revolution: Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre

October 01, 2009 | Eric Brown



Universities worldwide lay claim to some of the most innovative indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. Liberty University's latest attraction is more than just innovative — it is unprecedented. Located atop LU's pristine mountain property, the Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre is the first snowless ski park of its kind in North America. Defying seasonal change, this modern-day marvel offers skiing, snowboarding and tubing year-round.

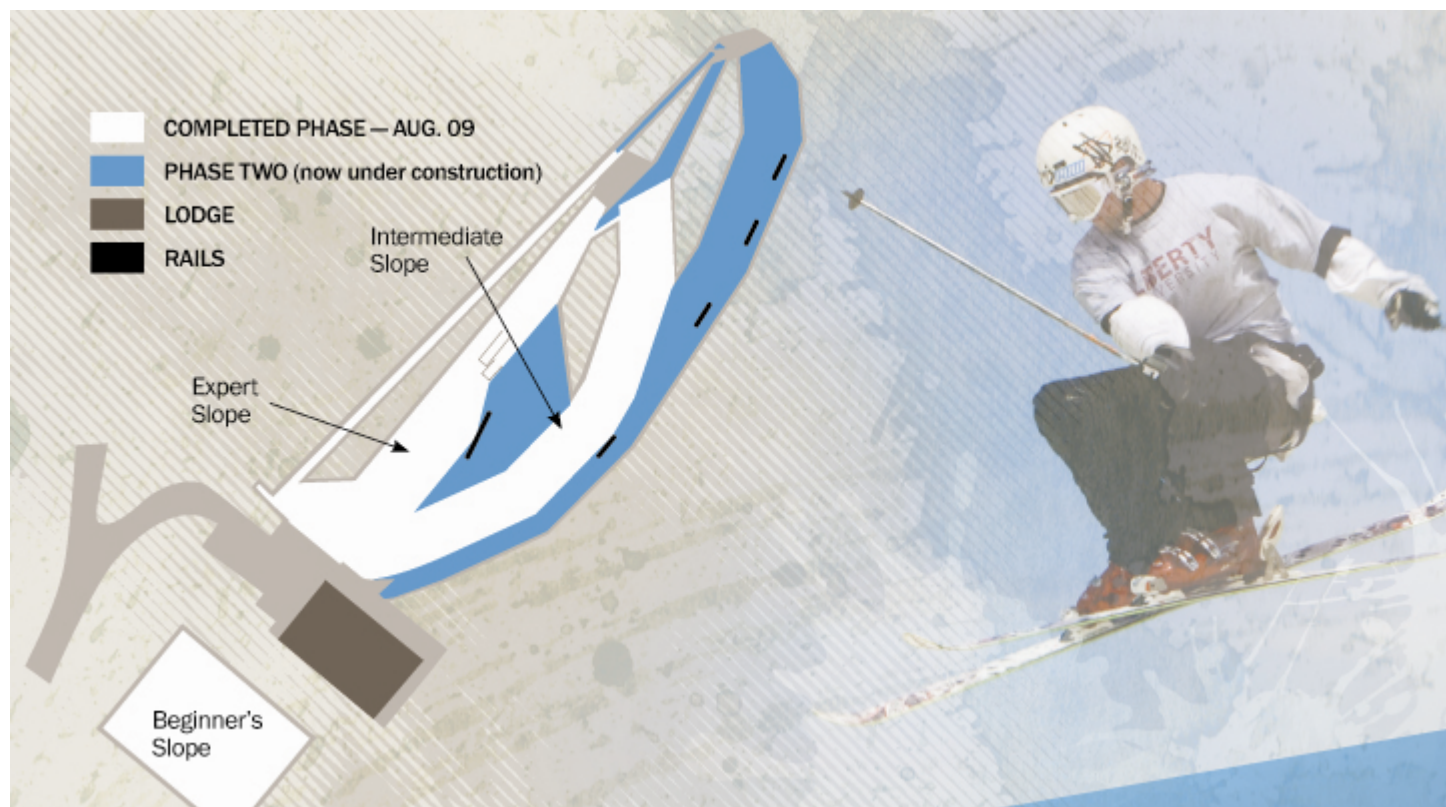
Since debuting in August, LMSC has garnered attention from national media, including The Discovery Channel and ABC News, creating a huge buzz within the snow sports industry. Comprised of two 500-foot runs, advanced freestyle features, a beginner's slope and a full-service rental lodge, the high-tech facility ultimately gives LU students a more well-rounded college experience.

The idea of bringing year-round snow sports to Liberty originated four years ago when university officials began looking at ways to utilize one specific God-given asset.

“A lot of universities have golf courses and other elaborate recreational facilities, but we are unique in that we have a mountain on campus,” said Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. “And so we looked for ways to use the mountain that would enhance the educational experience with a park-like facility providing everything from a quiet retreat overlooking the city to a wide variety of outdoor recreation.”

Falwell, Jr. said one of the purposes of building the LMSC was to help incorporate the mountain into the campus.

“Even for non-skiers, the mountain offers unparalleled views of the city and Blue Ridge Mountains during the day and the city lights at night,” he said. “The LMSC, including the lodge, is intended to be a retreat for students where they can enjoy the beautiful views that our campus offers.”



Upon determining that a ski slope with natural or even artificial snow would only be used for 40 to 50 days per year due to Lynchburg's warm climate, the university explored the option of synthetic surfaces. After an extensive search, Lee Beaumont, LU's director of auxiliary services, came across a groundbreaking terrain technology that was safe and efficient.

"We wanted something that the general rider and families could use," Beaumont said. "Snowflex seemed to fit the bill."

Based out of the U.K., Snowflex is a multi-layer material designed to simulate the slip and grip effects of snow. Invented in 1993 by Briton Engineering's Brian Thomas, Snowflex is coupled with a patented misting system, giving riders maximum speed and edge control for turning. The surface's synthetic properties never change shape, making it easier for aspiring freestylers to sharpen their techniques at a faster rate.



After nearly 20 years of seeing his fellow countrymen injured on other synthetic surfaces, Thomas, a mechanical engineer, felt led to develop a technology that would reduce injuries and provide riders with an exhilarating experience.

"I thought either I've got to get out of this industry or try and solve the problem," he said. "And like a sucker, I went for it."

Thomas certainly has no regrets now. Since inventing Snowflex, Briton Engineering has designed and built approximately 30 facilities in England, Hong Kong, Spain, Scotland, France, Lebanon and Denmark.

Building upon the knowledge gained from constructing slopes in Europe and Asia, Thomas and his team have designed a facility at Liberty that is being labeled by some within the snow sports industry as the best yet.

"This Snowflex centre here is incredible," said James Woods, a professional skier from Britain. "I have been to so many Snowflex centres before, and this one I would say is definitely the best."




“The features are really good,” added Jamie Nicholls, a pro snowboarder sponsored by Red Bull, Salomon and Quiksilver. “I think if every one was built like this it would go really far in the U.S.”


The features Nicholls speaks of include a cornice drop at the top of the main slope, three big-air jumps, two grind rails and an 11-foot-high quarter pipe. While these elements are designed for expert riders, beginners can become acquainted with the surface by visiting the beginner’s slope first. After mastering turns and basic maneuvers, they can transition to the intermediate run.

“[Riders] can start from the very beginning with no experience whatsoever, and in a year or two, they can become experts,” said Thomas. “And that’s no exaggeration.”


### FREESTYLE FEATURES



**CORNICE DROP**  
Starting at the top of the main slope, the cornice drop gives riders the sensation of leaping off the side of a snow-capped mountain. Here, skiers and snowboarders are able to obtain the initial burst of speed needed to catch big air on the slope’s kickers.



**JUMPS**  
Freestylers can choose their level of hang time wisely with LMSC’s trio of kickers. The slope’s rollover tabletop allows riders to start small, before executing tail grabs and spin tricks on the 3-foot kicker. A freestyler’s best friend, the 6-foot jump is perfect for landing more complex maneuvers such as front flips, rodeo fives and 720s.



**QUARTER PIPE**  
The excitement doesn’t end with the landing. LMSC’s 11-foot-high quarter pipe is the ultimate freestyle finale, allowing riders to cap their run off with an alley oop, mctwist or big frontside air.

**GRIND RAILS**  
Taking a ride on the intermediate side? Spice up the run with a tailpress or boardslide on LMSC’s grind rails.

LMSC’s current layout is only a portion of the finished product. Within the next month or so, the facility will increase its skiable area by 30,000 square feet and feature two tubing runs leading into a quarter pipe, a magic carpet lift and a rail park. An outdoor amphitheater with an incredible view of the region and a capacity of 400 to 500 people, adjacent to the beginner slope, is also available for outdoor dramas, concerts, classes and student gatherings.

“We’re proud to be the only university in the world with its own Snowflex ski slope,” Falwell said. “Snowflex is good, clean fun — an appropriate recreational alternative for Christian young people. We’re happy for what it will do for Liberty University and the whole community.”



For more information, photos and exciting videos about LMSC, visit [Liberty.edu/snowflex](http://Liberty.edu/snowflex)

## GRAND OPENING

The Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre made its official public debut on Saturday, Aug. 29, at a grand opening ceremony.

About 3,000 members of the Liberty community and general public, as well as local and national media, gathered to witness this unprecedented attraction. The dedication began with an opening prayer from Christian Snowboarder JJ Johnson and remarks from Chancellor Jerry Falwell, Jr. and Brian Thomas of Briton Engineering, the inventor of Snowflex.

Falwell, Jr. noted that the project was the last major building announcement made by LU's founder, Dr. Jerry Falwell, Sr.

Falwell, Jr. and Lee Beaumont, Director of Auxiliary Services at LU, had introduced the Snowflex concept to Falwell, Sr. in 2004 and had been encouraging him to move forward with the project. Falwell, Sr. often stated that he believed in using every available means to reach every available person and was known for using out of the ordinary techniques to attract students to LU. Falwell, Sr. had embraced the Snowflex idea by 2007.



“A day before he died, we rode up here, and I asked him, ‘Are you sure you want to build this ski slope?’ He said, ‘Absolutely. Look at how these kids are enjoying this mountain. That’s what we should be using it for,’” Falwell, Jr. recalled.

The chancellor also introduced two important donors: Jay Stein, the Arizona businessman whose contributions to LU helped make the Snowflex park a reality, and Dr. Al Barrick, a longtime Liberty supporter and friend of Falwell, Sr. who donated his wildlife trophy collection to Liberty, now displayed in the new Barrick-Falwell Lodge at LMSC.

State and city officials were also on hand, including Sen. Steve Newman, Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling, Tamra Talmadge-Anderson of the Virginia Tourism Authority and Lynchburg mayor Joan Foster.

“This is a great day for Virginia, and it’s a great day for Liberty,” Bolling said. “The Snowflex Centre will undoubtedly attract winter sports enthusiasts from around the country to Lynchburg and Liberty University, and I am honored to be a part of the dedication of this wonderful facility.”

As university officials and distinguished guests cut the ceremonial ribbon, skydiver Jim McCormick kicked off the snow sports action as he leapt from an airplane onto the main slope and skied downhill. Twenty-four pro skiers and snowboarders from the U.S. and U.K. put on an amazing aerial display, wowing the crowd with big-air stunts and high-flying maneuvers. Following the freestyle frenzy, the slope opened to students and the public.

## **BARRICK-FALWELL LODGE**



When not on the slopes, visitors to LMSC can relax inside the Barrick-Falwell Lodge. Named in honor of longtime Liberty supporter Dr. Al Barrick (pictured below with wife Fran) and Dr. Jerry Falwell, Sr., the lodge exudes the look and feel of a mountain chalet. A full-service rental shop operates on the lower level, while the upstairs is decorated with beautiful wildlife trophies hunted by Barrick during his 50-plus years of big-game expeditions. Approximately 2,500 square feet of decking surrounds the lodge, giving visitors a scenic, panoramic view of Liberty's campus and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The lodge is also equipped with wireless Internet, enabling students to stay connected.

"Dr. Barrick's family asked that we name the lodge not just in his honor, but also in honor of my father," Chancellor Falwell said. "He and Dr. Barrick were close friends and they believed in the vision of Liberty University and training Champions for Christ."

"It couldn't be a better venue for displaying my wildlife collection," Barrick said. "I've been blessed over the years, so now I hope that this would bless people in a certain way."

## **SKI & SNOWBOARD CLUB**

The emergence of the Liberty Mountain Snowflex Centre has led to the start of a new skiing and snowboarding club at LU. Members will compete in the United States Collegiate Ski & Snowboard Association's Southeast conference against the likes of Duke University, the University of North Carolina, Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia. With the opening of LMSC, this year will mark the first season the conference has had a freestyle division.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for our athletes," said Laura Sullivan, USCSA's executive director. "For LU to be able to [build the Snowflex Centre], I think that is really amazing. We'd be fools not to look at this."



LU's club consists of beginners and experienced athletes with about 10-15 of the best riders comprising a competition team. Competitions will be held at Virginia resorts, such as Massanutten and Wintergreen, with two of the biggest events slated to take place at LMSC.

Eric Hegreness, the club's coach, expressed excitement for the upcoming season: "I have seen some pro-level tricks on the slopes, and I am very excited to see what is going to come out of the Liberty woodwork and out into the spotlight as [students] compete for the university."