

GPS East

Horseshoe Resort, Ontario

RENOVATIONS AND UPGRADES ON AND OFF THE HILL

By Chris K O'Connell

Kyle Johnston locked and loaded.
Reid photo



DNA > VERTICAL: 94 metres > LIFTS: 6 including 1 Quad > RUNS: 25

It may come as a surprise to those out West and to those a few hundred kilometres to the East in Quebec that despite Ontario's challenges on the vertical front, the area north of Toronto still services the country's largest skier population. And with choices ranging from small, family-owned and friendly hills to the mega-big-box resorts and private mountains that dot the Niagara Escarpment, the competition for your ski time and dollars has never been more fierce.

Purchased by hotel and resort real estate company

Skyline International Development in 2007, Horseshoe Resort has been stepping up its offerings on almost all fronts since the ownership change, resulting in renovations and upgrades to off-hill amenities as well as a welcome push to the on-hill offerings, including a renewed interest in the park and pipe freestyle arena.

With 25 runs serviced by six lifts that wrap their way through its namesake horseshoe-shaped valley, the resort has been a staple for those picking up the sport, racers taking advantage of a

well-developed gate-bashing culture, and more recently freestyle skiers and snowboarders that can bank on Horseshoe being one of the first in the area to open each season with a rideable park.

That park program has undergone a striking revamp in recent years, and investment in infrastructure has now built up a stable of almost two-dozen park features scattered across the resort's two dedicated park runs. In addition to the standard box and rail fare, a custom stair set, 16' x 24' wallride, and repur-

posed would-be resort-junk-like lift towers have been installed, creating one of the most unique freestyle programs in the province.

With a push to bring more youth-oriented events to the hill and continued investment from the parent company, Horseshoe is breathing new life once again into a resort scene that has grown stagnant in recent years. With any luck, Horseshoe's leadership will not only provide world-class facilities to all comers, but it will push other resorts to step up their games as well.