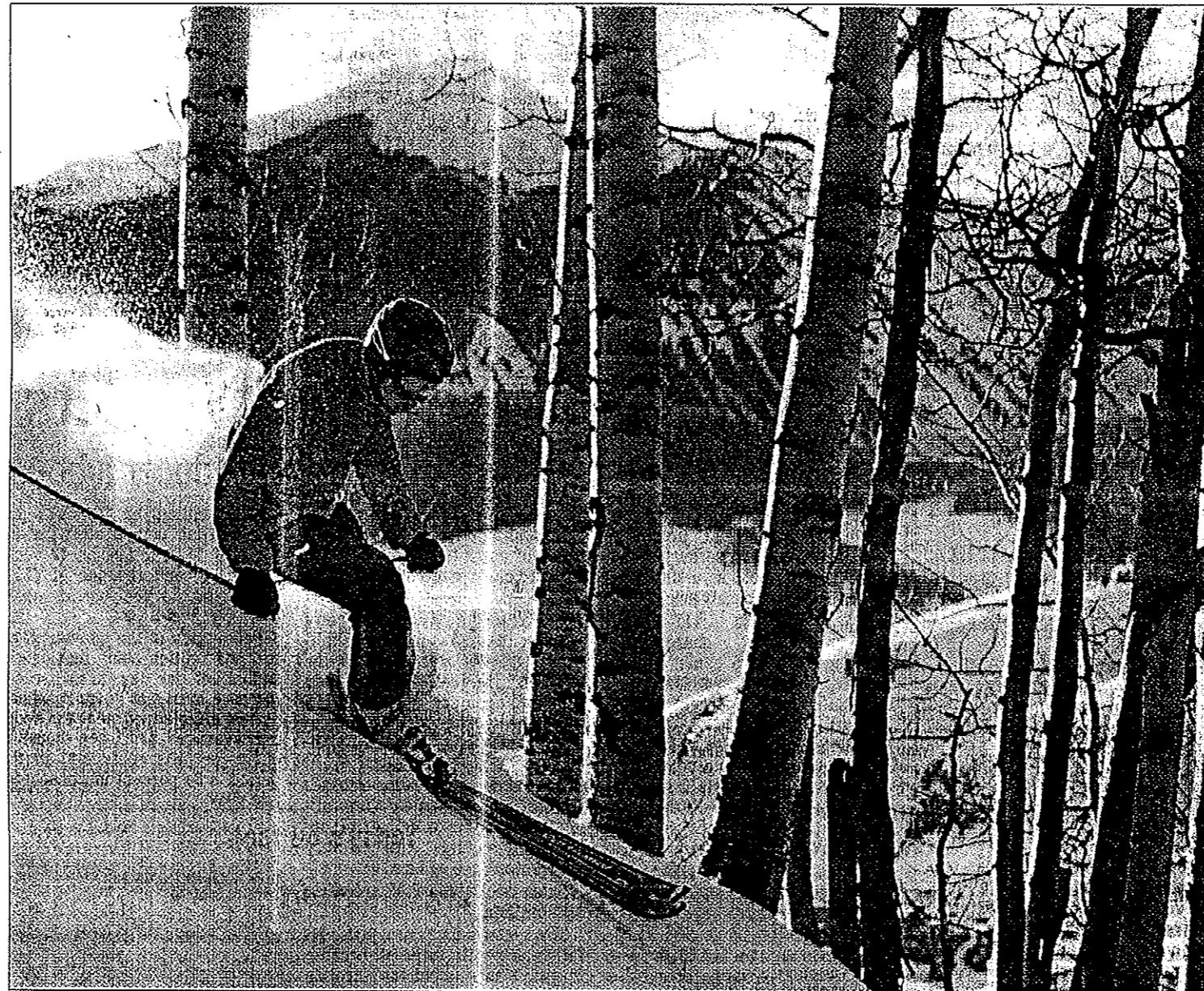


Vt. developer buys Crested Butte



Denver Post file photo

A skier in January enjoys the powder at Crested Butte Mountain, the struggling ski area that was purchased by Vermont developer Tim Mueller. Mueller and his wife Diane's previous efforts to enter the Colorado market, via Steamboat and Winter Park, were unsuccessful.

Mueller bests ex-NFL star

By Jason Blevins
Denver Post Business Writer

Vermont resort developer Tim Mueller has finally found a piece of Colorado.

He bested former Dallas Cowboy Roger Staubach's real estate investment company in the race to buy Crested Butte Mountain ski area.

Details of the purchase were not revealed Wednesday, but a short-lived bid by a local community group to buy the area reported that it needed to raise \$52 million.

Tim and Diane Mueller tried unsuccessfully to revive a massive ski-area project outside Steamboat in the late 1990s, and their attempts to develop Winter Park in 2001 were denied.

Now the couple who transformed Vermont's Okemo ski area from a humble hummock to the second busiest in New England are buying the struggling Gunnison County ski hill known for its expert skiing and funky vibe.

"Crested Butte has so much potential," said Tim Mueller, whose Triple Peaks investment group announced it had signed a letter of intent with Crested Butte owner Edward Callaway. "The previous owners have done a great job, but it needs to take the next step."

Mueller's purchase marks the end of an era for Crested Butte, which had been owned by the Walton-Callaway clan since 1970. Ralph Walton and Bo Callaway are ski industry pioneers lauded for forging the model for ski-area ownership, but as the industry changed, their model wilted.

Corporately owned areas have eclipsed the family-owned, 1,058-acre Crested Butte hill. In 33 years, the Callaway-Walton team invested \$100 million in the mountain, about the same amount invest-



Mueller: He and wife hope to recreate success in Colorado.

Hard times put skiing expansion back on the table

By Jason Blevins
Denver Post Business Writer

Local opposition to expansion plans nearly crippled Crested Butte Mountain's previous owners.

But after three debilitating seasons that left the resort gasping and local communities tightening their belts, the possibility of expanding skiing onto nearby Snodgrass Mountain is back on the

table.

"There's been a warming to the concept," resort owner Edward Callaway said. On Wednesday, he announced the sale of his family's ski area to Vermont resort developers Tim and Diane Mueller.

Expanding skiing onto 417 acres on Snodgrass Mountain and developing the 143 acres — dubbed North Bend or North Village — at the base of the mountain were ma-

major considerations in the financial potential of the ski area, Tim Mueller said.

"We think that it's a doable expansion, and we will be pursuing it," he said.

The prospect of igniting local tempers over Snodgrass in the mid-1990s derailed a previous buyer. Dallas-based Phoenix Property Co. cited Snodgrass complications when it dropped plans to buy

the financially strapped ski area.

But local hearts are warming to skiing on Snodgrass — six years of steady declines can do that.

"When the ski area wasn't doing well and having all those financial problems, we saw how that affects our whole economy, and it made us realize we have to diversify and we have to help the ski area. It's not us against them,"

SEE SNODGRASS ON 8C

SEE BUTTE ON 8C