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A MELTING ART FORM

As a sales representative you're probably expecting me to tell you about the low river levels and the way the drought is affecting urea prices, and how you should all buy up as much fertilizer as you can to avoid the huge price increases this year!

Well I won't be doom and gloom in this article. I would however like to talk about how the mild winters have had an impact on something I enjoy in the winter months.

Most of us enjoy taking some time in the winter to hit the slopes or jump on a sled to take our minds off the stressful summer we've just gone through. I myself enjoy sculpting snow! Did I just say sculpting snow? Yes, sculpting snow. I'm not talking about building a snow man in my front yard, but something more. For the past 13 years I've sculpted snow professionally in Illinois on both the State and National levels. I've also done a few exhibition pieces along the way. However, the mild winters have hurt the competitions and events that draw tourists from all over the state and bring thousands of dollars to the local businesses. The State of Illinois competition held at Sinnissippi Park in Rockford. It is one of the few events that rely on natural snowfall in order to build these snow blocks that sculptors use for their craft. This event has been cancelled twice and postponed 3 times in the past 10 years!

How Does it Work?

Most competitions start from an 8'x 8' x 10' block that is filled and packed with either manmade

or natural snow that is wrapped in a tarp to protect it from the sun. From there our team of three (The Kilted Snow Weasels) have a certain amount of time to sculpt. In a regular competition we will start on a Wednesday morning and sculpt until ten o'clock on Saturday to create our masterpiece. We can only use hand tools; this includes shovels, buck saws, chisels, and many other homemade tools for our craft. The first three days are used to get the block down to the general shape for our predetermined sculpture. On Friday evening we will start really sculpting and work all through the night until judging begins adding detail and finishing touches. A typical sculpture takes around 50 man-hours and many shots of 5 Hour Energy!

If you have not been out to see a snow sculpting competition, I encourage you to do so. It is a great family activity to get out and enjoy the outdoors in winter. So next time your kids think they have the best snowman in town, bring them out and show them a true work of art made of snow! For more information visit: www.ilsnowsculpting.com, www.navy pier.com/snowdays, www.usnationals.org, www.kiltedsnowweasels.com @



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