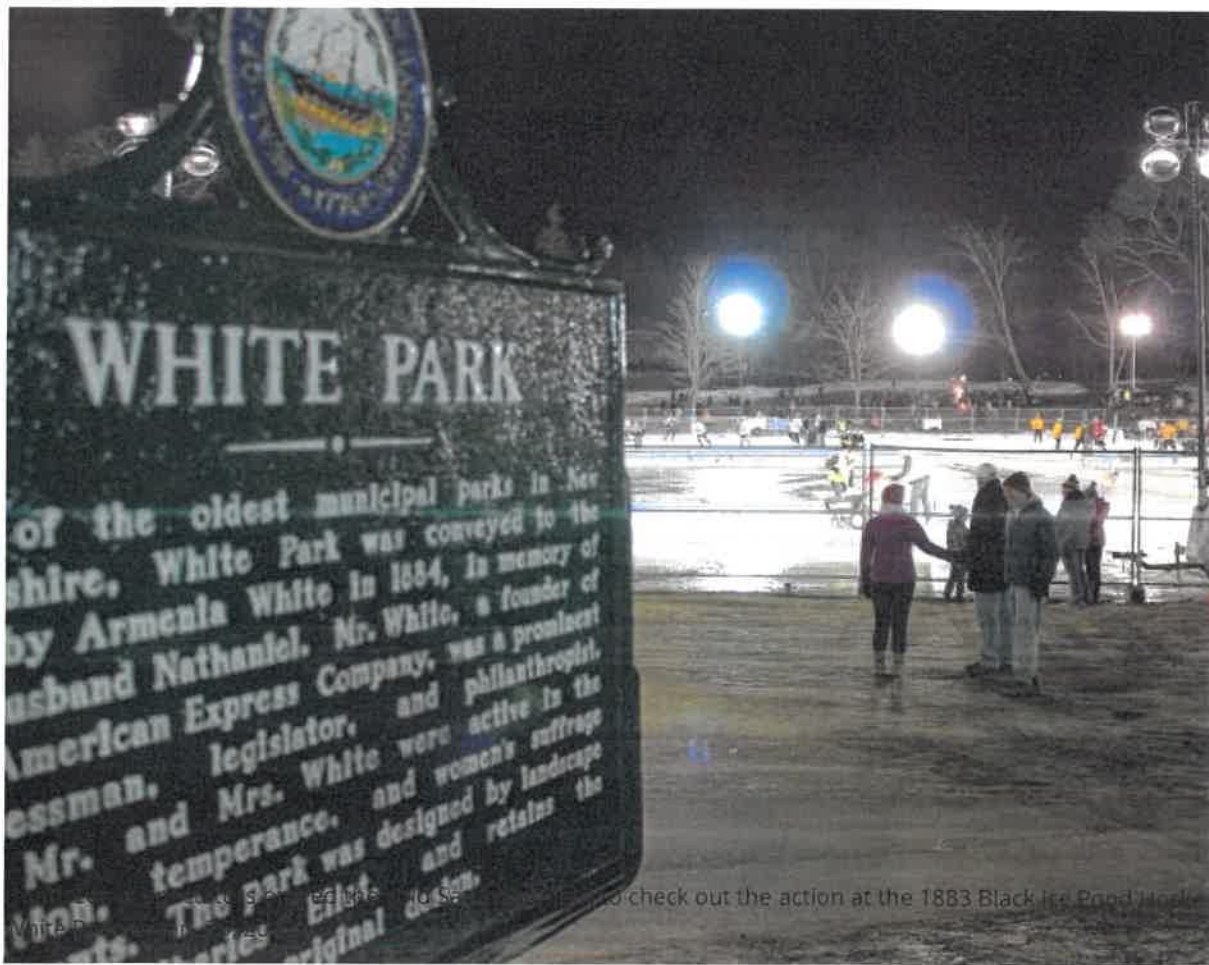


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Concord's Black Ice Championship set to go on as scheduled



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Monitor staff

For once, you can thank politics and the freezing cold weather.

Concord's 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championships will happen on schedule this year, after organizers wanted to postpone the tournament due to warm weather earlier this month.

But rescheduling for the weekend of Feb. 7 proved problematic because it's the weekend before the New Hampshire primary, when candidates, supporters and journalists flood the state for the mammoth political contest on Feb. 11.



<https://connatix.com>

"There are NO HOTELS in the state," tournament organizer Chris Brown said in an email after postponing and then moving the tournament back to its original date. The frigid temperatures all week also played a critical role, safely solidifying the ice at White Park.

In past years, weather has canceled or delayed the late-January tournaments, where 95 teams and close to 700 hockey players compete every year.

Parks and Recreation Director David Gill said ice skating at White Park has been open less than five days this winter because of warm weather and snow removal challenges.

"In 'normal' years the pond at White Park is open around Jan 1," Gill wrote in an email Tuesday. "However, weather this year has been up and down and on the warm side."

But in the last few days, cold weather arrived to allow the tournament to go on as scheduled, Gill said.

City staff was able to remove snow from Saturday's storm by Monday and begin flooding the pond to prepare for the tournament. Gill said parks and recreation employees will remove snow and flood the pond's surface as long as weather permits.

Thursday will be the first day of skating for Black Ice this week. On Wednesday night at 5:30 p.m., there will be a welcome reception at Buffalo Wild Wings.

Gill said organizers will continue to watch conditions – he said the pond is skateable if temperatures are 10 degrees or below at night and in the 30s during the day.

Pond games begin Thursday night at 6 p.m. with Concord Capitals, New England Wildcats, New Hampshire Avalanche and the New Hampshire Junior Monarchs. There will be more pond hockey games on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

In 2018, and at least two other times in the events' history, the Black Ice had to be moved to February because of weather challenges. Unpredictable weather is built into the Black Ice contingency plans. Gill said a backup date – always two weeks later – is advertised along with the original date.

Last year, tournaments were not postponed, but two days of competition had to be canceled because of balmy weather.

Historically, temperatures during the Black Ice weekend have been up and down the thermometer. The weather hovered around – and sometimes dipped below – zero degrees during the 2013 and 2014 tournaments. In contrast, the temperature never went below 10 degrees, but often hung in the 30s, 40s and even once the 50s during the 2012, 2015 and 2016 events.

Forecasts for the weekend this weekend call for high temperatures in the 30s.

During this week's events, complimentary shuttle service will be provided between downtown and the Black Ice Hockey Championship. Parking is available in the covered garage located in the Capital Commons Parking Garage accessed via Storrs Street.

It will be a busy weekend in Concord as the NHTI Winter Fling dancing contests and the downtown Winter Fest will also attract visitors to the city.

The two days of Winter Fest activities are presented by Intown Concord, Hannaford Supermarket and The Hotel Concord.

Spectators can observe ice-carving demonstrations and meet some of New England's most talented carvers on Friday, Jan. 24, starting at 3 p.m., followed by an ice carving competition on Saturday, Jan. 25 starting at 11 a.m., according to Intown Concord.

Carvings will be judged by a panel led by a team of Concord's own dignitaries. The Hotel Concord will award prizes to the top three carvers plus a People's Choice Award. Games and activities for kids and families will be stationed throughout downtown. Warm-up stations along Main Street will offer hot cocoa, hot cider, and toasty s.morcs.

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