

## CONCORD

# SLUSHED OUT

## Warm weather cancels dozens of Black Ice tourney games

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Monitor staff

**P**eople usually prefer sunshine to a cloudy day, but hockey fans and players alike were disappointed yesterday when above-freezing temperatures forced organizers to cancel most of the 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship games at White Park.

"Hey, I'm not Mother Nature," said tournament organizer Chris Brown. Of more than 60 games scheduled yesterday, 21 were played, Brown said.

The decision was made not because the ice was unsafe but to ensure it remained hard and smooth

*"It was difficult to control the puck."*

Gov. John Lynch

*"Hey, I'm not Mother Nature."*

Tournament organizer Chris Brown

enough to play on today, the final day of the tournament. The warmth of the sun and the steady cut of skates and shovels had worn it down and slushed it up.

"It was difficult to control the puck," said Gov. John Lynch, whose team, the Lynch Gang, played in three games over the first two days of tournament play.

"Today it was typical pond hockey,"

Lynch said.

Organizers and players echoed his sentiment.

"It is sloppy," said Bobby Berwick, 25, who was playing in the tournament for the first time with his team, the Waterbugs. Berwick, who lives in Hooksett and said he's played pond hockey for most of his life, felt just a

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little more cloud cover would have improved conditions.

"The sun kills it," he said.

The tournament, which is in its second year and raises money for local hockey programs and facilities, has been plagued by unseasonably warm weather this winter.

In January, organizers delayed its start by two weeks to allow for colder temperatures to thicken the ice.

When the tournament finally started Friday morning, officials reworked the schedule to prevent play at the peak of the sun. But by

late Friday afternoon, the skating, shoveling and temperatures - which were well above freezing all day - had taken a toll. About half the 41 scheduled games were canceled, Brown said, to ensure that play could continue yesterday.

And yesterday, the same conditions once again undermined the ice. By 2 p.m., the players had left, most of the vendors had cleared out and Brown was in a trailer reworking the schedule.

Brown said he'd heard grumbling from a few teams, which paid \$600 to enter. But

most people said they sympathized with the logistical challenge of running the tournament, which involved 68, four-person teams.

"Look at the amount of work it takes," said John Thomas, 42, who played with the Concord Police Department's team.

"You can't predict Mother Nature," Thomas said shortly after he instructed his young son to thank Brown for working on the tournament.

Brown said the ice was between 6 inches and 8 inches thick in the center of the pond but thinner at the

edges. Temperatures are expected to be in the teens today, giving organizers and players hope for uninterrupted hockey.

Brown released a revised schedule to teams early yesterday evening and was confident that players, who'd signed up for at least four games this weekend, would be able to play at least three. Games start at 7:45 a.m.

"We'll be able to skate tomorrow," Brown said.

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