

# LOCAL & STATE

A5

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2012  
CONCORD MONITOR  
concordmonitor.com

## CONCORD

# Black Ice kicks off today on soft pond

## Hockey games to avoid heat of day

By **BEN LEUBSDORF**  
Monitor staff

It's back. It's bigger. It's warmer.

And this year, thanks to Mother Nature, it almost didn't happen.

The 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship kicks

off this morning at White Park and will continue through Sunday. And while the event will be familiar to pond-hockey fans who attended last year's inaugural tournament, there are a few key differences.

The first is obvious: the weather. Last year's tournament benefited from icy temperatures that left the park's pond covered in hard, thick ice. This year, the

warmer-than-usual winter delayed the tournament by two weeks and left the ice safe for skating, but in rough shape.

With the temperature today expected to rise to 42 degrees in Concord, organizers yesterday announced schedule changes to minimize skating during the warmest hours of the day.

See **HOCKEY - A6**

*"The biggest issue is going to be how the top erodes with the play."*

**Chris Brown,**  
1883 Black Ice Pond  
Hockey organizer

## HOCKEY Continued from A5

The opening ceremony will be held as scheduled at 9 this morning, and games will be played from 9:15 a.m. to noon and then from 5 to 8:30 p.m. Play will be suspended, tournament organizer Chris Brown said, "at the peak of the sun" to protect the ice.

Brown said each team should play at least one game today. With temperatures expected to fall below the freezing point during the day tomorrow and Sunday, games delayed from today will be played Sunday morning starting at 8:30, followed by the playoffs in the early afternoon. Tomorrow's schedule is unchanged, with games starting at 9 a.m. and ending around 8:20 p.m.

An awards ceremony will

be held Sunday afternoon with division champions taking home the "Hobey Stick," an award named after the legendary St. Paul's School and college hockey player, Hobry Baker.

It's a bigger tournament than last year's, with 68 teams competing compared with last year's roster of 50. That's because the tournament organizers had the White Park pond dredged last fall to add additional rinks.

The games, though, will follow the same rules: four-on-four teams, two 15-minute periods with a two-minute intermission. No checking or fighting, no offsides or icing, no slapshots and no goaltending. Players will shovel

off their rinks when they're done with each game.

"The biggest issue is going to be how the top erodes with the play," Brown, the president and chief operating officer of New Hampshire Distributors, said of today's expected ice conditions. "It'll get soupy. It'll get loosened up a bit, so it'll be like you're playing in mud. . . . We know Saturday will be fine and Sunday will be great, so we're trying to prolong it into the colder days."

A food concession tent at the park will again be operated by Cimo's South End Deli. It's larger this year, Brown said, with room for 20 to 30 tables. But while Long Trail Brewing Co.'s Black Ice Ale

has been available on tap at local bars for weeks, there won't be a beer tent at the tournament: Drinking alcohol is banned on city property.

A shuttle service will take players from the park to their hotels and downtown restaurants. Bonfires will be lit at the park this afternoon and tomorrow. A fireworks show is planned tonight after 7.

Brown said he expects several thousand spectators to turn out for this weekend's games, and perhaps 4,000 to 5,000 tonight for the fireworks.

"It'll be a great time," he promised.

(Ben Leubsdorf can be reached at 369-3307 or bleubsdorf@cmonitor.com.)