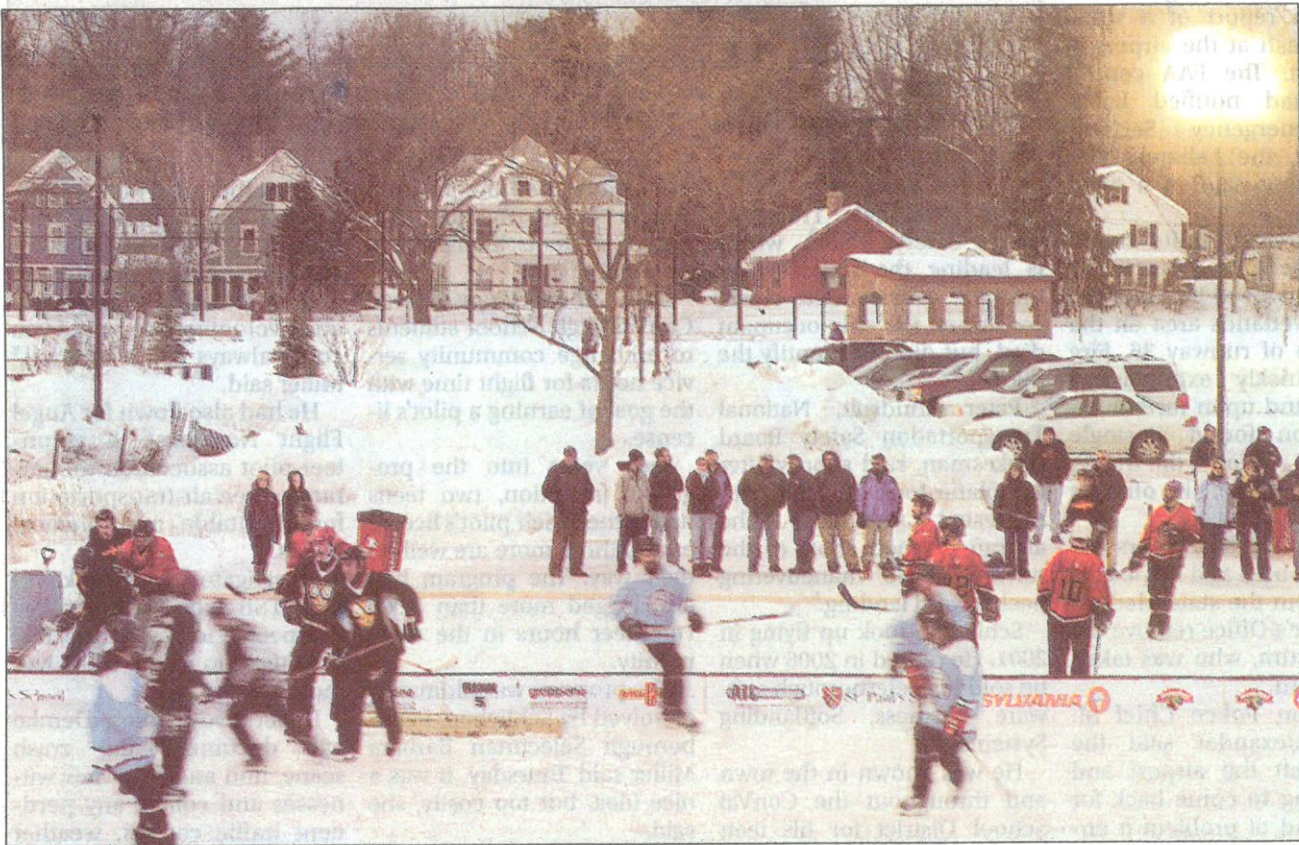


SKATING AWAY



Players compete during last year's 1813 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship held at White Park in Concord.

Teams gear up for Black Ice Pond hockey tournament

◆1883: Concord event honors nation's first hockey game.

By ALLEN LESSELS
New Hampshire Union Leader

THE TURKEY POND FLYERS are itching for another shot at a championship. The Lynch Gang is, too.
The White Park Hockey

Club and the team known as Jack Edwards Teeth/Cheers intend to defend their titles against all comers.

Those teams, along with 64 others, featuring nearly 500 players of assorted abilities and ages, converge on Concord and White Park this weekend for the second 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship.

The tournament was a smash hit a year ago and, despite the event being delayed two weeks this year because

of the weather, players and Black Ice organizers expect nothing different this time around.

"We had probably 2-3,000 people filter through the park on Saturday last year," said Chris Brown, the president and chief operating officer at New Hampshire Distributors and one of the tournament founders. "If the weather is good, I think we'll far exceed that

► See Hockey, Page B2

this time. We've heard from so many people who didn't get to go last year and heard about it and said they're coming down this year."

There are 68 teams, up from 48 last year, and they're split into six different divisions. The majority of teams are from Concord. There are a couple each from Manchester and Bedford and several others from around the state as well as teams from Miami, South Bend, Ind., and Montreal.

Last year, there were three women's teams, and this year there are five.

Seven players make up a team and they play four-on-four hockey with no goalies and no contact allowed on the seven rinks set up on White Park.

The rosters feature a former Hobey Baker Award winner as the best player in college hockey and a governor, former standouts with the Concord Eastern Olympics and Manchester Blackhawks, and former high school stars and standouts at the University of New Hampshire and other colleges. There are recreational and open divisions.

Steve Arndt of Concord played at Dartmouth and later with the Eastern Olympics and various other teams in the area and heads up one of two Turkey Pond Flyer teams. His team is in the 50-plus division and his son, Dan, is on the Turkey Pond Flyers in the 35-plus group.

Arndt is just back from an outdoor tournament in Minneapolis where he played with his brother and brother-in-law and nephews and his brother and brother-in-law are coming in to join him for this one.

He can't wait.

"It's such a great community thing and it's neat to see all the people come out," Arndt said. "The love of the game pulls them out of the woodwork even if they're not playing. It's great to see all the people who have been associated with the sport, friends of the sport. With the venue and it all being in one place, it's perfect."

Arndt's team and the Lynch Gang — with Gov. John Lynch, former Manchester Black-

hawks star Ray Champagne and Mark Fusco, who won the Hobey Baker Award while at Harvard in 1983 — will take aim at the White Park Hockey Club, defending champion in the 50-plus category.

Arndt and Champagne have long been rivals on the ice, and have played together, too.

"We played against each other when he played for the Blackhawks and the Manchester Monarchs," Arndt said. "I've played with him and against him. He's such a great athlete and a fine gentleman and a great ambassador for the sport."

The White Park team includes Bob Blood, who played at UNH, and Jimmy Hayes, who played at New England College.

Jack Edwards Teeth, featuring former UNH players Mick Mounsey and Tim Walsh, took the 18-plus Open division last year.

The mission of the 1883 Black Ice Pond Hockey Championship is to maintain and expand ice skating opportunities in Concord and to honor the heritage of the sport in the city. The 1883 in the title refers to the first hockey game in the country, played at St. Paul's School on Nov. 17, 1883.

Opening ceremonies are at 9 a.m. today and the first games begin at 9:15 a.m. The tournament takes an afternoon break to try and preserve the ice in what are forecast to be warm temperatures.

The Black Ice follows on the heels of the third New England Pond Hockey Classic in Meredith, which also had to make a concession to the weather. This year's tournament was moved to Lake Waukewan from Meredith Bay because of ice conditions.

Still, 175 teams, up from 152 last year and 77 the first year, and more than 1,000 players took part, said founder Scott Crowder of Nashua.

"You take what Mother Nature throws at you and try to figure out the best solution and try to make it happen," Crowder said.

He did.

The Black Ice folks aim to do the same this weekend.