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Innovations Take Over at Gander Ski Resort

BY JAMES FITZGERALD

Quick, what is the longest, natural vertical drop for any ski hill in the Chicagoland area?

Just ask Dan K. Strassheim that question and the answer will be quick and to the point. "It's 207 honest feet right here at Gander Mountain." The ebullient Strassheim may be prejudiced since he owns Gander Mountain.

Strassheim and his son, Dan Strassheim III, have made many improvements at Gander for the forthcoming ski season. Gander, which is located about a mile north of Route 173 on the Johnsburg-Wilmot road, is entering its seventh season as a ski resort.

More than Neighbors

Gander and Wilmot Ski hill are more than neighbors. They share a common boundary to the north with the Wisconsin state line separating them. Wilmot is in Wisconsin while Gander is in Illinois.

The Gander ski area is one of the largest and most beautiful in the midwest comprising 50 acres with 13 runs. There are three poma-lifts and five rope tows for the skiers.

"We cater to a different class of people at Gander," the elder Strassheim points out, "than most ski resorts. We do not have a liquor license so our area does not appeal to the wild, young skier who is just looking for another spot to have a big time. We do attract many family groups, tho."

Many Improvements

There have been several innovations this year at Gander in anticipation of the biggest ski season in history. They include:

1.—Doubling the length and capacity of the 30 poma-lift. It is now 700 feet long and doubles the advanced beginners' and intermediate areas above the lodge on a tree-free slope.

2.—Gander will now be open seven days a week. Weekday hours will be 11 a. m. to 4:30 p. m.; Fridays, from 11 a. m. to 10:30 p. m.; Saturdays from 9:30 a. m. to 10:30 p. m., and Sunday from 9:30 a. m. to 4:30 p. m. In addition, the area will open for private parties any night except Friday and Saturday when it is open to the public.

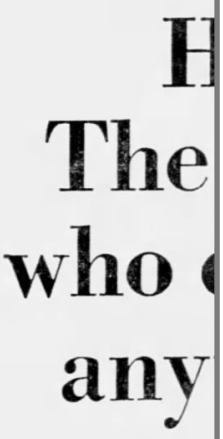
3.—Children under 12 will be able to use the beginners' area and tow without charge if accompanied by an adult with a tow ticket.

4.—A private club for skiers who have been steady customers at Gander.

New wells, new pumps, and new snow guns will more than double the efficiency of Gander's snowmaking this year.

Sun Deck Popular

Dan Strassheim is also proud of another feature at Gander that has been one of the most popular additions since the resort opened. It's the electrically heated sun deck that accommodates diners and tired skiers who just want to sit back and relax and enjoy one of the finest views in northern Illinois.



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