

Saratoga Living

WINTER 2017

THE WEDDING ISSUE

FEATURING

FROM "I WILL" TO "I DO"

FOUR BRIDES & GROOMS, FOUR ENGAGED COUPLES SHARE THEIR STORIES — FROM POPPING THE QUESTION TO UNCORKING THE CHAMPAGNE



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511718 ISSUES REMAINING: FALL 18
GORE MOUNTAIN
793 PEACEFUL VALLEY RD
NORTH CREEK NY 12853

\$4.95 (CANADA \$6.95) WINTER 2017
DISPLAY UNTIL MAR 21






Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing have been added to the already varied menu of activities available at the North Creek Ski Bowl this winter. The venue made its debut as a winter sports site 83 years ago.

SKI BOWL BOOM

LAST YEAR'S BAD WINTER HAS AN UPSIDE: NEW AND IMPROVED
NORDIC SKI AND SNOWSHOE TRAILS IN NORTH CREEK

by MIKE KANE



A variation on the “More Gore” marketing theme at Gore Mountain Ski Center fits nicely at the North Creek Ski Bowl: “More Nordic.” The historic site, operated by the Olympic Regional Development Authority in partnership with the Town of Johnsbury, now offers cross-country ski facilities, a direct result of the non-winter weather of 2015-16.

Once famous as a pioneer in winter sports in New York’s Adirondack Mountains, the Ski Bowl languished but has come back to life in the past 15 years and is flourishing again at the base of Little Gore Mountain. It is connected to ORDA’s seemingly ever-growing Gore Mountain center and offers a full menu of activities—Alpine and Nordic skiing, a terrain park with a half pipe, ski/boarder cross and snowshoeing under the lights on its grounds. The new Nordic and snowshoe network open to the public was developed over the summer following a successful experience of hosting cross-country races last winter.



The overall turnaround at the Ski Bowl is the result of several factors, including efforts by FrontStreet Mountain Development LLC to bring its ambitious Ski Bowl Village at Gore Mountain project to reality. David Crikelair, who has been skiing at Gore Mountain since the 1960s, is the managing partner. His son, Mac, is the project manager.

FrontStreet—working with over 400 acres that it intends to turn into a four-season sporting club community of hotels, townhouses and private residences—has made land transfers totaling 73 acres with the Town of Johnsbury that allowed for the expansion at the Ski Bowl. The first land deal led to the construction of the Hudson triple chairlift, which opened in January 2011, to replace the long-closed T-bar. The addition of the Hudson chair was the link to the interconnect with trails at Gore Mountain, and the Ski Bowl became a second entry point to the state-owned ski center.

In September 2015, FrontStreet announced the transfer of 35 acres that will enable ORDA to offer more trails off the Hudson chair. A vibrant Ski Bowl is essential for FrontStreet, as it markets and sells its property as a ski-in/ski-out resort.

ORDA has made some changes in its operational plans for the Ski Bowl, which have expanded the space open to cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Tubing—a staple at the Ski Bowl since ORDA began managing that site in 2002—has been discontinued and some of that part of the venue has been repurposed for cross-country skiing. The Ski Bowl has nine loops—the longest at 2.5 kilometers—for skiers of various abilities. Some three kilometers of the total of nearly five kilometers have lighting and snow making. Being able to produce snow for the groomed courses assures a viable season during a winter with very natural little snow, as was the case last year.

Once limited to Alpine skiing, the Ski Bowl offers many options to winter sports enthusiasts. (Top) A skier negotiates a rail at the terrain park. (Center) Longtime Gore Mountain Ski Center general manager Mike Pratt has overseen the changes at the Ski Bowl for the ORDA. (Bottom) Scholastic Nordic ski racing has become a staple at the venue.

Mike Pratt, the longtime general manager at Gore, who will become the interim president and CEO of ORDA in February when Ted Blazer retires, says that the Nordic expansion meets a growing demand and has been well received.

“In the demographics of society, the endurance community is growing. The Nordic community is part of that trend,” Pratt says. “Nationally, if you survey the population, more people would say that they Nordic ski than Alpine ski.”

After seeing what could be done last winter to accommodate cross-country skiing with snowmaking in place, ORDA improved the trails in the summer of 2016 so they could pass certification by the International Ski Federation to be used as race courses.

a lot of visual impact,” Pratt says. “We had parents of racers saying last year that this was the first time they had ever seen their children race. The visual impact was tremendous. We have some bleachers and little outdoor fire pits just to make the spectators comfortable, too.”

The 2016-17 season opened in early December when 215 competitors took part in Section II high school races.

“It was scheduled on their calendar to be a roller-ski event in Queensbury and, because we had snow, they came to Gore,” Pratt says. “Last year, because many areas were closed and we were hosting competitive and recreational skiing, we hosted nine Section II races and the sectional championships. We

“One of the things that was problematic last winter was the uncertainty of what we could provide, and what the Nordic skiers wanted,” Pratt says. “Going through the process of forming our courses, we can show people the certificates; everyone knows what we have. With the stadium effect at the modern certificates, the Nordic industry is really excited.”

SNOW TRAINS TO THE SKI BOWL
This season, the Ski Bowl is scheduled to be the site of many Section II events at its championships, more NYSSRA races and two Junior National qualifiers. It is part of the evolution of the Ski Bowl, which traces its roots to the arrival of the first snow train on March 4, 1935.



With snowmaking on a large portion of its nearly five kilometers of trails, the North Creek Ski Bowl is able to open for cross-country ski in winters with little natural snow. The facility at the base of Little Gore Mountain has lighting and can be open for Alpine and Nordic skiing after sunset.

“Those standards are very tricky in Nordic,” Pratt says. “They require certain hill climbs and a lot of different standards, and we met it.” The inspection has been completed and ORDA was awaiting the official documentation.

SPECTATOR-FRIENDLY RACES

Traditionally, cross-country ski races started and finished at the same spot, but most of the competition occurred on trails well out of sight of the public. ORDA took a different approach and set up the Ski Bowl to make the races spectator friendly.

“In modern Nordic ski racing, the courses are developed around what is called the ‘stadium effect,’ so there is

hosted four New York State Ski Racing Association events and a Junior National qualifier event.”

Cross-country skiing has been popular in the Adirondacks for decades, and more Americans began to embrace the sport after Bill Koch of Brattleboro, Vermont, earned a silver medal in the 30-kilometer race at the 1976 Winter Olympics at Innsbruck, Austria. Forty years ago, there were very few high schools in the Capital-Saratoga Region that had ski teams. That has changed quite a bit through the decades—there were 13 districts participating in Nordic a year ago—and the Ski Bowl has become an important location for high school and age-group races.

carrying nearly 400 members of the Wintersports Club of Schenectady. Buses and trucks took skiers up the road to the Barton Mines for the ride and slide down adventure. The community purchased 250 acres in 1935 to develop what became the Ski Bowl.

During the winters that follow, snow trains brought skiers from Manhattan to North Creek, and events at the Ski Bowl in the 1930s were routinely written about in major newspapers on the East Coast. The ski industry grew after World War II, and the Ski Bowl facility increased competition from many other venues, especially nearby Gore Mountain, which opened for business in 1964.

5K NETWORK, 3.7K WITH SNOWMAKING & LIGHTS!

The natural snow on trails D & E may require alternative grooming methods

Tip: Be aware of downhill skier traffic. Dotted areas indicate alternative loop options.

Snowshoers welcome on all terrain!
Please stay along the sides of XC ski trails.

GORE MOUNTAIN
Designated Cross-Country Ski Routes

Grooming Lights Snowmaking Snowshoes Only

A 1.06K	B .45K	C .56K	D .59K	E .46K	F .09K	G .23K	H .55K	I .25K	J .47K	K .28K
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SKI BOWL
NORTH CREEK
1934
GORE MOUNTAIN

Pratt, a native of Lake Placid and graduate of SUNY Potsdam, has been working at Gore Mountain for about three decades and has been active in ORDA's role at the Ski Bowl.

"We have been operating there since 2002, starting with tubing," he says. "In 2007 we replaced the little T-bar with the Village triple chair and added some lights. Then, in 2011, we replaced the big T-bar that had not operated since 1977 with the Hudson triple chair and redeveloped the historic area. In the summer of 2015 we added snowmaking on the lift line trail that is called 46er, because the big T-bar we replaced was originally installed in 1946."

A signature steep trail served by the 1946 T-bar was the Hudson. It was re-opened as a glade in 2011 when the triple chair replaced the T-bar. ORDA cleared more of that trail and added snowmaking in the summer of 2015,

but the weather was so bad last winter that the Hudson area was not used. It is scheduled to make its debut this season.

The Ski Bowl is an example of the public-private partnership. The Town of Johnsbury owns the base area, the lower part of the mountain home to the cross-country ski trails, and the parking area. FrontStreet's property is located to the north, but some of its acreage included part of the old Hudson trail, part of the Rabbit Pond trail and the lift line. The Gore Mountain lands are further up the mountain and on three other peaks. The transfers allowed for the rebirth of the Ski Bowl.

"The town has acquired those lands in an agreement with the developer, so that we could utilize them," Pratt says. "The developer received some other lands from the town that were desirable in his permitting process."

There will be more improvements

made in the future to the skiable terrain transferred from FrontStreet. According to the company's website, when it is completed, FrontStreet's Ski Bowl Village is planned to include 136 townhouses, 18 single-family homes, The Hudson Lodge, five hotels, a spa facility, a nine-hole par three executive golf course, an equestrian facility, restaurants and retail space. See skibowlvillage.com. **SL**

IF YOU GO

During the 2016-2017 season, daily tickets for the Nordic trails at the Ski Bowl are \$8 for ages 7 to 12; \$16 for ages 13-69; and \$12 for seniors 70 and older. On weekends and holiday weeks the lighted trails are open until 8:30 p.m. Up-to-date information on operating hours, snowfall and conditions is available at goremountain.com.