



Golf on Christmas Eve? Yes.



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

It was short pants and long lines at the Granite Links Golf Club in Quincy on Thursday as the morning fog shrouded the Boston skyline.

By **Jessica Geller** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT DECEMBER 25, 2015

Greg Booth flew in from Los Angeles to visit with his family in South Boston for the holiday, expecting to head to the mountains this weekend to go skiing with his brother.

Instead Christmas Eve found him dressed in a light jacket, teeing up at Granite Links Golf Club in Quincy, joining his brother and father in a queue of golfers taking advantage of the record-setting temperatures, which peaked at 69 degrees.

“I brought my snowboard. That was a mistake,” quipped Booth, who had to borrow clubs to play the round.

Fathers with their sons and groups of friends, most of whom had never golfed on December 24 in New England, started teeing off before the fog even lifted Thursday morning. The temperature was in the mid-50s already at 8:30 a.m.



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“I only wear shorts when I golf. If it was 30 degrees, I’d still be wearing shorts,” Mike Zolga of Raynham said, sporting watermelon-hued bottoms. But he normally stops golfing in New England in November so his legs don’t end up freezing.

In another sign of the unusual weather pattern gripping the Northeast, it was easier to find an open golf course than a ski trail in Massachusetts on Christmas Eve. Jesse Menachem, executive director of the Massachusetts Golf Association, said the unseasonable temperatures were a “bonus” for golfers.

Those golf courses that were open this week reported brisk business. Tee times at Granite Links were sold out Thursday, said Stephen Clancy, the head golf professional.

“This is exceptional,” said Clancy, who normally only gets eight to 12 diehard golfers on a good day in December. “We’ve been open this late in the past, but obviously temperatures would be much cooler.”

Ever expect to golf on Christmas Eve with such pleasant temperatures?

“Are you kidding me? I could play in 40-degree weather. This is a treat,” said Booth’s father, Steve, who left Newport, R.I., at 6:30 a.m. Thursday to play with his sons. “This is like early fall. It’s the benefits of global warming.”

George Wright Golf Course in Hyde Park and William J. Devine Golf Course at Franklin Park were also both open and expected more than 100 golfers at each location Thursday, said Dennis Roache, director of administration for the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, which owns the courses.

Roache said both courses haven’t been open this late in at least 10 years; he expects them to close Jan. 1.

The extra month of golf at George Wright has generated about \$16,000 in revenue, much more than off-season gift certificate sales, said Joe Leary, assistant golf professional at George Wright.

“We are here anyway so we might as well stay open,” Leary said.



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Meanwhile ski areas in Massachusetts, seeing more green than white, were reviving off-season activities after having to shut lifts yet again in this fitful start to winter. At Jiminy Peak, which has run ski lifts just five days this season, the resort is now running warm weather activities such as zip lining, a climbing wall,

and face painting for visitors still coming to the Berkshires, said Alan Wolfe, a sales and marketing representative. Jiminy Peak has hired about 800 employees and the substitute activities will help avoid layoffs.

“It’s an unprecedented start, but it’s not over yet,” Wolfe said. “We are trying everything we can to make it a success for everyone involved.”

Ski Ward in Shrewsbury opened Dec. 20 but then closed on Dec. 22 after temperatures got too balmy, said Michael Proctor, its business manager. Instead Ski Ward is opening its summer tubing hill Saturday for kids to have some activity during vacation, Proctor said.

Wachusett Mountain has only been open 11 days since Nov. 27, said Tom Meyers, the marketing director there. As of Thursday, the mountain plans to reopen Saturday. Jiminy Peak hopes to resume skiing Tuesday, Wolfe said. And Ski Ward anticipates a Jan. 1 or Jan. 2 reopen, Proctor said.

This time of year, the Leo J. Martin Memorial Golf Course in Weston is usually given over to a cross-country ski track. Golf was shut down Nov. 22, the snow-making pipes are in, and the staff is ready, but there’s no white, said Matthew Sisk, deputy commissioner of operations for the Department of Conservation and Recreation, which runs the facility.

The agency has already sold about \$26,000 in early season ski tickets.

“I am hoping for an isolated snowstorm only at Leo J. Martin,” Sisk joked.

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