Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/376274264/


Downloaded on Dec 16, 2025

# GANDER HAS FEWER TREES, MORE SLOPES

## North Hill's Ready for Skiers

BY JAMES FITZGERALD

Things are looking down this season at the Gander Mountain Ski resort.

But Owner Dan Strassheim isn't worried as he explains the situation at the popular area about an hour's drive from downtown Chicago.

"This year we concentrated on downhill skiing at Gander," Strassheim explains, "rather than uphill. Our major project during the summer and fall months was clearing the north hill of trees to give Chicagoland skiers one of the finest ski hills outside of Colorado."

**Drops 200 Feet**

Cleaning out the trees was quite a job on the north hill which has a vertical drop of more than 200 feet and runs that range up to 1,800 feet.

"In the past," Strassheim continues, "only the best skiers used the north hill. My dad and I used to ski there, but we had to keep dodging trees so the hill wasn't too popular with the average skier.

"Now we have a hill that's almost the width that a football field is long," Dan said, "and you'd be surprised at the number of average skiers that have used it in the few days we've been open."

**Good Skiing Now**

Like most midwest resorts, Gander has been plagued with the warm weather altho the area was open for five days in early December. It opened again Monday and skiing is excellent with the snow storm on Wednesday adding many inches to the man-made base.

Dan and his father, Dan K. Strassheim, opened the Gander Mountain area with one antiquated rope tow in 1958. Now the area boasts three poma-lifts and five rope tows on 50 acres with 13 runs.

Gander Mountain is next door to Wilmot Mountain, site of the 1967 TRIBUNE ski school, and only the Wisconsin-Illinois state line separates the two areas. Gander, which uses a Spring Grove, Ill., post office address, is on the Illinois side of the line while Wilmot is actually in Wisconsin altho a few feet of the property are in Illinois.

**On State Line**

Gander is about a mile north of Route 173 on the Johnsburg-Wilmot road. It can be reached by either the Tri-State tollway to Route 173 and then north on the Johnsburg-Wilmot road, or by taking U. S. highway 12 north thru Fox Lake to the Johnsburg - Wilmot road and then north to the area.

"We cater to a different class of people at Gander," the elder Strassheim once explained. "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."

There is skiing seven days and nights a week at Gander and the Strassheims are looking forward to their biggest season.

One of the reasons for their optimism is the various improvements that have taken place at Gander. They include:

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.

Children under 12 can now use the beginners' area and tow without charge if accompanied by an adult with a tow ticket.

O, yes, there's always that north hill for adventurous skiers, and this year they don't have to worry about the trees.

Copyright © 2025 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.