

Heavenly Mountain lives up to its name on opening day

By Kathryn Reed

Seven months was a long wait. And when the wait was finally over at 8:30am Saturday, cheers reverberated throughout the plaza at Heavenly Village.

Heavenly Mountain Resort opened for business for the 2011-12 ski season Nov. 19 with the gondola, Tamarack and Dipper running. As more snow falls, more lifts and runs will be accessible.



Heavenly
Mountain
Resort
provides some
of the best
views of Lake
Tahoe.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Mostly snowboarders were playing in the Ante Up terrain park.

Plenty of snow covers runs. With the roar of snowmaking guns, more terrain is likely to open soon.

It took about 10 minutes to load the more than 100 people who

stood in line to catch first tracks. Of course, many more riders came throughout the day. These were just the die-hards who needed to their fix first thing.

Casey Bedell and Megan Hickel of South Lake Tahoe were two of the many with smiles on their faces as they made their way to the front of the gondola line. They said having all summer off made them eager to get back on the slopes.

Yungjin Choi came up with his 12-year-old daughter Eura and 10-year-old son Brendon to snowboard. Even though the San Ramon family had never been to Heavenly, they were in line to buy the Tahoe Value Pass.

Eura, according to her dad, is the one who wanted to come opening day. With Heavenly having to delay opening a day because of weather, it worked for them not to have to skip school to be at the resort Nov. 19.

Leaning on a rail, watching the skiers and boarders getting on the gondola, some guy came up and said, "What do you do here, Pete." "I'm the general manager," Pete Sonntag said. "That's cool. I just bought the Epic Pass." To which Sonntag said something like, "Have a great time."

That friendly interaction among employees of all levels and riders was evident all morning.

Ron Thompson, who spends about 30 percent of his time in Meyers and the rest in Fremont, commented on how much better the conditions were this opening day compared to 2010. Not only is the snow better, but also more runs are open. Plus, it was a bluebird day for much of the morning.

"It's just that feeling of getting back on the snow. It's incredible," Thompson said. He added that skiing on California Trail before anyone was there gave him chills. He caught the 10th gondola chair up the mountain.

While Thompson has been skiing 43 of his 47 years, John Gianotti of Stateline has him beat. The 83-year-old has been schussing down slopes throughout the world for 78 years.

“I ski practically every day because I’m old and I don’t have anything else to do,” Gianotti said as he took the gondola down after skiing for a couple hours. “Look at what you see. It’s absolutely one of the most beautiful places in the world.”

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