

Skiers enthusiastic about Kirkwood opening day

By Kathryn Reed

KIRKWOOD – It wasn't exactly a powder day, but there was powder to be found and more of it falling – especially as the morning turned to afternoon.

Considering the calendar said Nov. 16 – it was a great opening day at Kirkwood Mountain Resort. The resort didn't open daily last season until December.

If bartender Patrick relayed the forecast correctly, by Tuesday the 'Wood could have 5 more feet of snow. And if even half that amount falls from the sky, more terrain will keep opening – which is true at all the Tahoe area resorts.

What's going on at lake level is never a good indication of what is happening at Kirkwood. While it rained in South Lake Tahoe, it was all snow in Kirkwood on Friday. This spot on Highway 88 where the counties of El Dorado, Amador and Alpine come together is a magnet for the white stuff.



The number of passes proves Ben Russo likes skiing Kirkwood. Photos/Kathryn

Reed

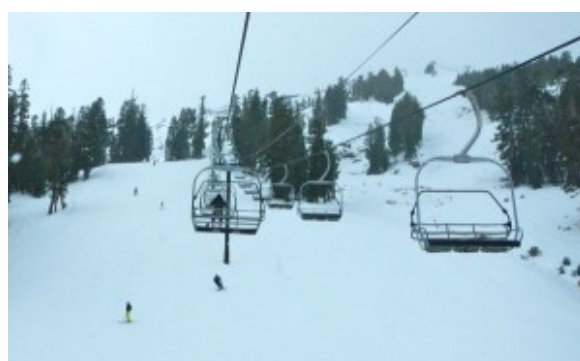
Ben Russo was proud to show off his slew of passes from Kirkwood from years past. He and buddy Greg Hutton thought it worth the drive from Orangevale to take in early season runs.

An addition they like is the safety bars that have been installed on all the lifts. It helps those with height issues.

About six people were waiting for Solitude to start spinning at 9am Friday. More people quickly filled the few runs that are open off that chair.

Justin Oltesvig of Oakland and Daniel Valenzuela of San Leandro aren't sure if they'll buy a pass that would include the other Vail Resort properties in the Tahoe area – Heavenly and Northstar. They were satisfied to skip work and pay the daily rate just to experience opening day.

Troy Mayers of Santa Cruz was thrilled to be on his tellies for the first time this season. He's been a longtime Kirkwood season passholder and wasn't about to give up the opportunity to ski no matter who owns the resort.



Snow fell for most of the day Nov. 16 – which didn't seem to bother anyone.

Colorado-based Vail Resorts bought Kirkwood earlier this year, with this being the first full season under the new ownership. For the time being, it's mostly the status quo. Food prices

are a bit more, but two bloody Marys at Monte Wolfe's were \$12.50 – about what one is at Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly. New to the eatery's menu is the Epic Burger, which the parent company is known for.

What was strikingly noticeable was the attitude of every employee. The friendliness was refreshing – and seemed sincere. And when someone didn't know the answer, they went to get it.