

Heavenly, Northstar conditions wow skiers



Snowmaking along with Mother Nature allowed Northstar to open earlier than normal. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Smiles and praise for the conditions dominated the conversations about opening day at Northstar and Heavenly on Saturday.

Jim Lamore, director of mountain operations at Northstar, was giddy and proud when talking about the coverage – bark-to-bark – meaning the whole run has snow, it’s not just a strip of white.

“Even if we get a warm spell, we are in great shape,” Lamore told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The depth on Nov. 15 ranged from 18 inches to 4 feet. That’s plenty for the groomers to move around to make sure no

obstacles are showing.

Northstar skiers were treated to an extra early opening on Saturday when Beth Howard, general manager of the resort, said get the gondola running. This was 20 minutes before what was supposed to be the official 8:30am opening. The 100 or so people in line didn't mind.



Jim Lamore, mountain operations director at Northstar, is ecstatic with how much terrain is open.

Howard had tested the slopes the day before so she knew what the guests were about to experience.

"I'm pleasantly surprised," Matt Hunstock of Santa Rosa said of the conditions. Even though he didn't ski a single day last season, he likes coming back to Northstar – noting the guest services are better here than other places.

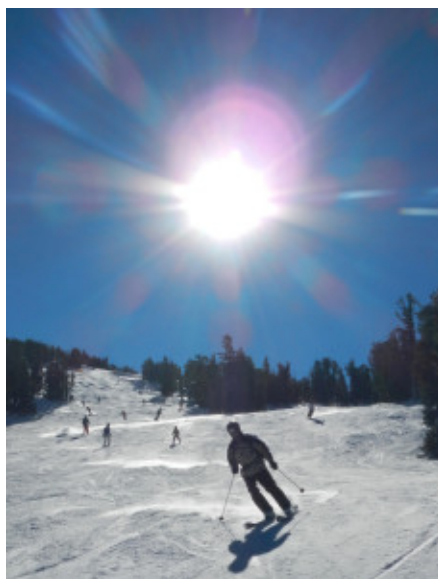
Ian Balmer of Australia was lucky the resort opened a week earlier than originally planned because he was flying home that night. For mid-November he was impressed with the amount of snow.

The Truckee resort is open top-to-bottom with seven lifts and 14 features in the Pinball terrain park.

“We have the biggest footprint in Lake Tahoe by far,” Lamore boasted.

Changing where the snow guns are working has made a difference.

Heavenly on Saturday had the gondola, Tamarack Express, Dipper Express, Comet and Big Easy running. This is quite a contrast to a year ago when the resort opened a week later with just the terrain off Tamarack skiable with manmade snow.



Blue skies and 50-degree weather for opening day will be replaced with snowy 30-degree temps on Day 2.

Jerry Klosterboer has been buying season passes at Heavenly since the 1978-79 season. This is the first time he remembers skiing two weeks before Thanksgiving. Passes then were \$425 and day passes were \$23, so it took a lot more ski days to have the pass paid for compared to today. He paid \$459 for his pass this year; a single-day ticket for today is \$94.

Yohei Takami of Concord was excited to be skiing on some

natural snow so early.

“The snow is good. This is typical Heavenly snow. I’m pretty happy with the conditions,” Adam Oliff of San Jose said.

While the coverage is good at both resorts, a clear sign it is early season conditions is the lack of tree skiing. Northstar kept a few areas ungroomed so riders could get a taste of powder next to the groomers.

With another storm expected to drop a foot of white stuff today at the higher elevations, it is only going help all of the Tahoe resorts.