

Whistler Olympic Park open for Nordic skiing

Clubs and high performance programs out on snow, Lost Lake to open this month

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Whistler Olympic Park has had the best opening conditions in five years. Photo by Noel Hendrickson/ Whistler Sports Legacies

High performance Nordic teams have been on snow for the last two weeks, but on Thursday (Nov. 26), Whistler Olympic Park (WOP) had its official opening to the public for the winter season.

“As far as conditions go, it’s been one of our better opening days since Whistler Sports Legacies took over (WOP) five years ago,” said Roger Soane, president and CEO of Whistler Sports Legacies (WSL). “We have a good base between 40 and 50 cm on the trails that we have open, so we’re looking good.”

Soane added that WOP has approximately 30 kilometres of trails open for cross-country skiing, but the snowshoe trails through forested areas are still limited.

Two years ago WSL invested in a snow stockpiling program to allow WOP to open for its high performance athletes earlier in November. While there was nothing to stockpile after the dismal 2014/15 season, this year the cold temperatures and early season snowfall is setting the stage for successful stockpiling.

Snowmaking facilities exist around the base of the ski jump, with plans to expand in the future.

This past Sunday (Nov. 29) saw the first Teck Coast Cup at WOP, hosted by Hollyburn Cross Country Ski Club. The Whistler Nordics were pleased to be out racing so early in the season.

“There was close to 150 participants,” said Brent Murdoch, president of Whistler Nordics. “Hollyburn seem to get a lot of their younger skiers early in the year, which has always been a difficulty in Whistler. We had some good results with the few that came out and we’ll continue to encourage the participation of the younger athletes the best we can.”

Murdoch added that the registration for membership was weak earlier in the year, but it has picked up as early season snow began to fall in the valley in mid-November.

“I think our registrations will be somewhat consistent as it has been in the past,” he said. “Our weekday programs at Lost Lake have been a little light in terms of numbers, but by the time we get that going in early January we’re hoping to be up to our normal numbers. I think cross country (skiing) in general didn’t survive as well the last two years with the poor snow seasons, but hopefully it’s back in a big way this year.”

Cross Country Connection, the outfitter and ticket sales agent for the Lost Lake Cross Country ski trails, was optimistic with the frozen ground and cold temperatures and hoped to be open within the first two weeks of December.

The high performance provincial Nordic teams are heading to Canmore for the Haywood Noram Opener Dec. 5 - 8, with hopes of some athletes qualifying for the national team. The World Junior Olympic Games will be taking place in February 2016 in Lillehammer, Norway, with British Columbian athletes hoping to qualify.

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