

Weather alters cross country race location

Challenging late-season snow conditions have forced a venue change for the USSA Super Tour cross country races. Royal Gorge, which will be hosting the Hill Climb race on April 8, will now also be hosting the National Distance Championships with the women's 30K race on April 10, and men's 50K race on April 11.

The Super Tour Finals is a mini tour with cash bonuses not only for race winners, but also for the best climber, best sprinter, and best young skier (under 23). The first two races – a 3.2k skate prologue on April 4 and a 10/15k classic mass start on April 5 – were moved from Tahoe Donner Cross Country to Auburn Ski Club Training Center due to low snow. Auburn Ski Club Training Center will also host the classic sprint competition on April 6.

The mini tour finishes with a Hill Climb, which this year will be a grueling test of endurance at Sugar Bowl Resort on Donner Summit. The race takes competitors from Sugar Bowl Village down to Van Norden Meadow on the Royal Gorge trail system before sending them over 1,100 vertical feet to the top of Mt. Disney. The Hill Climb will feature a “pursuit” start – competitors will start the race based on how far behind the leader of the mini tour they are after the first three events, and the first racer to the top wins the Tour overall. Spectators will be issued a free pass to ride the gondola into Sugar Bowl Village and walk partway up the course. An awards ceremony and party will be held at Village Hall in Sugar Bowl Village after from noon-3pm. Spectators will have a chance to meet the athletes, and join in the festivities.

The 30/50K National Distance Championship is part of the week of races, but separate from the mini tour. These races will

also feature junior race of 15/20K, and will be on a 10K loop at the Summit Station of Royal Gorge Cross Country Resort. Discounted spectator passes and free “foot spectator” passes will be offered, and spectators can see plenty of action from the Sun Deck at Summit Station. The awards ceremony and after-party for this event will be at noon on April 11 at Tahoe Donner Cross Country.

These are all important qualification races for the 2014 Olympic Games and will be attended by the best athletes in the U.S., as well as a number of international athletes.