

Amgen women, men cyclists returning to Tahoe



The lead this year changed several times on Kingsbury Grade. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe will be an integral spoke in the Amgen Tour of California 2018 cycling event with the women and men coming to town.

Both will be here May 18.

The women's second stage will begin and finish at Heavenly Mountain Resort as they have done multiple times – this being the fourth consecutive year. The men will finish stage 6 at the resort after leaving from Folsom that morning.

The exact routes, though, will not be announced until after the first of the year.

With the women only being in town for one leg, it's likely they will not ride around the lake. This year's route over

Luther Pass, through the Carson Valley and up Kingsbury Grade was touted as being one of the best. Tourism officials like that this route showcased what the Sierra has to offer in terms of challenging terrain, elevation gain and scenic aspects.

The lead changed multiple times coming up Kingsbury, making for an exciting race for riders and spectators.

"There were some maneuvers there that changed the whole finish. That was pretty exciting," Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Some of these women, they are not first-timers. They have learned to deal with the environment."

The European tour, though, is not about altitude, so starting at more than 6,000 feet in itself is a challenge, let alone climbing to more than 8,000 feet.

What the men bring is live coverage, which is great for the location to show off the scenery on television.

The last time the guys were in Tahoe they came over Luther Pass into the South Shore.

The main options from Folsom to South Lake are Luther or Echo Summit. With the race being on a Friday and the locals coming unglued with even the thought of Echo being closed, it's doubtful that will happen.

"I would much prefer Luther because it is the road less traveled," Chaplin said.

With the race being mid-month, the threat of nasty weather diminishes. It must be 45 degrees for riders to race. Snow, cold and wind have all been a factor here in the past for this race.

While the crowds have been less in Tahoe than in some locations, it's not really an event about putting heads in

beds.

“We still feel this is a more of a media event. It’s not about attracting overnight stays as much as it is telling the story about our outdoor recreation, cycling and elite events,” Chaplin said.

And for 2018 Reno will be hosting the Interbike event, a massive trade show that will put the region on the map for cycling. Having Amgen a few months earlier will increase the awareness of the Tahoe-Truckee-Reno area being a cycling destination for roadies and mountain bikers.

In total, the Amgen women have three stages – each within the city they are at – Elk Grove, South Lake Tahoe, Sacramento. The men have seven stages – starting in Long Beach on May 13 and ending in Sacramento. From Tahoe they all will drive to Sacramento for their respective final legs on May 19.