

Clark on top of podium in halfpipe

By USSA

LAAX, Switzerland – Kelly Clark (Mammoth Lakes) and and Chloe Kim (Torrance) continued their battle for queen of the hill at the Burton European Open in this weekend taking first and second, respectively, in women's halfpipe – flipping the results from X Games a week ago.

Heavy snowfall had been a factor for the entire week, causing canceled practices and challenging competition conditions.

"It pretty much hasn't stopped snowing since we got to Switzerland" Clark explained, "I knew it was going to be challenging conditions and that I needed to be smart and put down a solid run first."

Which is exactly what she did, putting down a run with a crippler and backside 540 along with back-to-back 720s, a conservative run for Clark who's known for landing the only 1080 in the business.

"Today was more about smart snowboarding than progressive snowboarding. It was just one of those days, and my experience paid off," Clark said.

Kim, 16 years Clark's junior and last weekend's X Games gold medalist, opted for a more progressive route putting together a run that included a switch straight air and and a switch backside 540. Switzerland's Nadja Purtschert finished third.

On the men's side Olympic gold and silver medalist, Iouri Padladtchikov of Switzerland and Ayumu Hirano of Japan, had a repeat showing finishing first and second with David Habluetzel of Switzerland taking third. Taylor Gold (Steamboat

Springs) and rookie U.S. Snowboarding team rider, Jake Pates (Eagle, Colo.), were the sole American's in finals and struggled to land their runs, finishing eighth and tenth respectively.

IRS phone scams making the rounds

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office continues to receive calls reporting telephone scams involving aggressive and threatening calls by criminals impersonating IRS agents. This activity is expected to increase during the current tax filing season.

Scammers commonly prey upon those that are most vulnerable, such as the elderly, newly arrived immigrants, and those whose first language is not English.

The following information provided by the Internal Revenue Service will help identify fraudulent calls. According to the IRS, there are five things that scammers often do, but the IRS will never do:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

According to the IRS, fraudulent callers often alter caller ID numbers to make it look like the IRS is calling and will identify themselves by using fake names and bogus IRS badge numbers.

Anyone who receives a scam telephone call is encouraged by the IRS to report the incident by calling 800.366.4484.

Study: College isn't always worth it

By Danielle Paquette, Washington Post

Last month, after announcing his plan to make community college free, President Obama lauded a college degree as “the surest ticket to the middle class.”

New research in the prolific field of “Is College Worth It?” suggests it’s not that simple.

“‘Ticket’ implies a college degree is something you can just cash in,” said Alan Benson, assistant business professor at the University of Minnesota. “But it doesn’t work that way. A college degree is more of a stepping stone, one ingredient to consider when you’re cooking up your career. ... It’s not always the best investment for everyone.”

Benson, along with M.I.T.’s Frank Levy and business analyst Raimundo Esteva, co-authored a paper, released last week, examining the value of public university options in

California. Factors like how long it takes to complete a degree – often longer than four years – and whether students make it to graduation, he learned, can significantly diminish the value of pursuing higher education.

Read the whole story

Squaw, Alpine celebration focuses on kids

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows' 6th annual Kid-O-Rama celebration returns Feb. 14-21. This family-friendly tradition features street parties, live music, cookie happy-hour, free face painting, kid-approved game and craft room, and fan-favorite Big Truck Day.

Big Truck Day, offered at both mountains for the first time, invites youngsters to get behind the wheel of some heavy-duty machinery, including fire trucks, snowplows, grooming machines, snowmobiles and more. Big Truck Day is Feb. 16 and Feb. 19 from 3-5pm in the Village at Squaw Valley. At Alpine Meadows, Big Truck Day will be Feb. 14 from 10:30am-2pm.

For more information, go online.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- South Tahoe High School students Kori Zwijsacz, Joemae Santos, Lauren Tang, Cara Filce, Catherine Baghdikian, Christina Boyar and Angelica Rodriguez were honored by Sorooptimist International South Lake Tahoe as this year's Young Women of Distinction.
- South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts is giving the Tahoe Prosperity Center \$10,000 a year for three years. Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation has approved a grant of \$15,000 to the Measuring for Prosperity Indicators project.
- Diamond Peak Ski Resort and the Incline Village General Improvement District will reward Incline Village students with a free 2014-15 Diamond Peak season pass if their January 2015 report card has straight A's.
- The next Clearing the Chakras series is Feb. 3 from 6-7pm at Rejuvenate in South Lake Tahoe on Ski Run Boulevard. It is free, but donations are accepted. For more info, call 530.541.6565.
- The Wineries of Fair Play are celebrating all things chocolate and wine in February. Each participating winery will feature some kind of chocolate decadence paired with their wines.

Group medical care taking on new meaning

By John Tozzi, Bloomberg

In a typical doctor's visit, you wait around for a while, get

your vitals checked, and spend a few minutes alone in a room with a physician. It's private and short. Some doctors, frustrated by a relentless schedule of 15-minute, one-on-one visits, are experimenting with appointments that are neither.

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, around 10 percent of family doctors already offer shared medical appointments, sessions that bring together a dozen or more patients with similar medical conditions to meet with a doctor for 90 minutes. With pressure from the government and insurers to bring down the cost of care while treating the increasing number of people with health insurance, patients can expect group visits to become more common.

"It's efficient. It's economical. It's high-quality care when it's done right," says Edward Noffsinger, a California psychologist who created the model in the 1990s at Kaiser Permanente, the state's largest health maintenance organization (HMO).

Read the whole story

Then and now: From Sahara to Hard Rock



The Sahara Tahoe opened in 1965. Photo/Bill Kingman

Del Webb's Sahara-Tahoe opened in 1965 in Stateline.

Elvis Presley appeared in more than 100 performances in the Sahara-Tahoe's High Sierra Theater during the early 1970s. Elvis proclaimed it as his favorite showroom of all. Dozens of other major names in entertainment like Johnny Carson, Jack Benny and Liberace performed there, plus Karen and Richard Carpenter made their Nevada showroom debut at the Sahara.

The theater later offered first-run movies, and then it became the "Chuckwagon Buffet." Major live entertainment waned.

From 1983 until 1990, the resort was remodeled as Del Webb's High Sierra, featuring a western theme with Lily's Dance Hall.

Columbia-Sussex bought the property in 1990 and renamed it the Horizon. Concluding a dramatic decline in business, Horizon closed its doors March 31, 2014.

With a \$60 million renovation of the entire property, Hard Rock Hotel and Casino opened Jan. 28, 2015.

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– Bill Kingman

Reno hotel proves gaming, smoking not needed



Brandy Mane tests her agility at the climbing gym inside Whitney Peak hotel. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

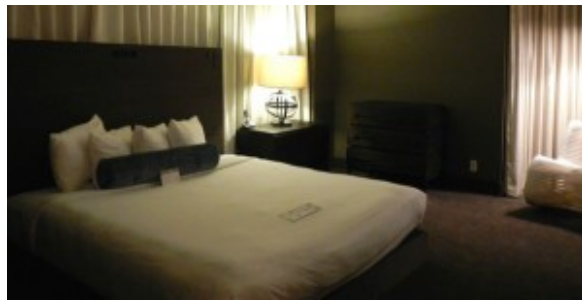
RENO – It's hard to believe this is Reno. No stench of stale cigarettes. No casino. A restaurant that is a destination unto itself. A lobby like many boutique hotels; meaning modern, chic and upscale. And live music that rocks.

Whitney Peak Hotel isn't what one would expect from any Nevada hotel.

It is the only non-gaming, non-smoking hotel in Reno.

But for those who want to partake in those activities, the hotel is steps from venues that allow those sorts of things. Whitney Peak is in the heart of downtown – right at the famous Reno arch and walking distance to the Truckee River area.

“It’s a hotel experience, not a casino experience,” Eli Gross, social media community manager, said. The goal, he said, is to provide a four star hotel.



Hotel rooms look nothing like when this was the Fitzgerald.

The ownership group out of Chicago took over the Fitzgerald, which closed in November 2008, and spent \$10 million transforming this property into something unique. It opened in June 2014. But before it became Whitney Peak it was CommRow from Oct. 1, 2011, to Jan. 1, 2013. This is when the exterior climbing wall was built.

Improvements are not complete. Gross told *Lake Tahoe News* it’s possible a pool will be added in the future. But it won’t be the party scene Las Vegas is known for or the Hard Rock at Stateline wants to become.

This has to do with the hotel catering to a demographic that isn’t all about partying, getting drunk and being half naked.



Food at Heritage is unique,
fun and flavorful.

By April another \$3 million will have been spent. This is to bring another 150 rooms online, upping the total to 300.

Most rooms average 300-square-feet, and are the same footprint of the old Fitzgerald that was built in 1976. Even so, it's only the size of the bathroom – especially the tub – that indicates this is not a hotel built today from the ground floor up.

Whitney Peak, while it is chic upon entering, isn't all about being high-end and sophisticated.

Rigorous Proof and Bryan Jones were playing in mid-January at Cargo, the nightclub on the first floor. It was a celebration of their album release "Moondog Matinee".



Rigorous Proof and Bryan

Jones at Cargo.

There is an outside entrance to the 5,000-square-foot music venue that seats 400 or can accommodate more than 1,000 people if they are standing.

In some ways Whitney Peak is the antithesis of upscale luxury because there is no sense of pretentiousness. Employees at the front are in flannel shirts; at the bar workers are in jeans and grey button down shirts with their sleeves rolled up. It's elegant without being over the top. Rooms are modern without being minimalist. Décor reflects the surroundings without being gaudy.

Service is at a level to be envied and emulated by others – except for at the climbing gym. Workers didn't seem to care that a rookie was in the gym. It's possible to take lessons to be more proficient at the indoor bouldering gym or to be Spiderman-like on the North America's tallest outdoor climbing wall at 164 feet.

But the members, they were helpful to explain the pitches, the holds and how to swing a leg to stay anchored.

This rigorous play area is open to hotel guests for a small fee, and to the public for daily use or monthly membership. The owners invested \$800,000 into the climbing facility.



Whitney Peak has the largest outdoor climbing wall in the United States.

Outside there are numerous routes that Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson of Yosemite's Dawn Wall fame could tackle in seconds because the holds are built-in and not a work of Mother Nature. Here climbers are roped in, then rappel down as downtown Reno is in view. People on the street gawk at the scene.

All that climbing can stimulate an appetite. Heritage is Mark Estee's seventh restaurant. The James Beard semifinalist and veteran of the Ahwahnee Chef's Holidays at Yosemite National Park is putting his culinary stamp on Reno.

Estee is all about using locally sourced food in all of his restaurants.

The open kitchen allows diners to see their food being prepared. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served here, plus there is a bar. There is no confusing what one is ordering when the menu has categories like Animals and Plants. There are plenty of offerings to satisfy those who prefer one of those to the other.

Notes:

For more info, go online.

Letter: Kirkwood serves at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Taking the opportunity to help people struggling with hunger, Kirkwood Mountain Resort was the Adopt A Day of Nourishment sponsor for Bread & Broth's dinner serving on Jan. 26. The dinners, which are held every Monday evening at St. Theresa Church's Grace Hall, offer full course, nutritionally, well-balanced meals to all who attend.

With the funding provided by the evening's host, the creative B&B cooks are able to provide sufficient food to serve over 100 guests, offer seconds servings and provide "to go" containers.

Representing Kirkwood and donating their time at its sponsorship dinner were Jon Copeland, director of skier services; Ashley Sell, team lead, ski school; Anjie Goulding, sales manager; and Becca Daiek, executive administrator. These four friendly Kirkwood team members jumped right in with the B&B volunteers to help make the evening a well-run and enjoyable experience for those attending the meal.

Jon Copeland enjoyed being behind the line serving. "Everyone is so grateful," he said.

Bread & Broth would like to thank Kirkwood Mountain Resort for their financial support through the Vail Epic Promise grant program and the incredible service their volunteer sponsorship crew provided throughout the evening. B&B is very grateful for the positive impact that our Adopt A Day sponsors have on the lives of those attending the Monday dinners.

For more B&B information, go online or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

USFS looking for input on grant application

Tahoe National Forest officials are preparing an annual application to the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division, to request funding for trail maintenance, restoration, development of facilities, law enforcement, and planning for off-highway vehicle access.

These annual grants provide funds for the Forest Service to develop and maintain trails and trailheads, repair winter storm damage and restore trailside environments, as well as provide patrolling and monitoring of these areas.

On Feb. 12 from 4-7pm the U.S. Forest Service will host an open house for people to provide input and review proposals for the application. Comments are being accepted until Feb. 24.

The open house is at 631 Coyote St., Nevada City. For more

info, email joetchavez@fs.fed.us or call 530.478.6158.