

Mackinaw, browns biting in Lake Tahoe

By Cal Kellogg, Fish Sniffer

If you would like to land some mackinaw and have a shot at hooking a jumbo brown, now is the time to hit Lake Tahoe. The mackinaw are hitting near the bottom in 100 to 200 feet of water, while the browns are cruising the middle depths assaulting immature kokanee.

“My clients have been catching limits of mackinaw every day. We are slow trolling and bouncing the bottom in 150 to 200 feet of water,” related Gene St. Denis of Blue Ribbon Charters. “Minnows and dodgers are doing the trick for macks. The average fish goes 3 to 6 pounds and some larger fish to 12 pounds have been landed recently.”

Read the whole story

Sullivan strong in Lake Louise downhill

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta – Marco Sullivan of Squaw Valley was the American to watch in Saturday's downhill, holding the top step of the podium for 13 racers, before finally finishing in fifth place.

Wednesday's training run-winner Kjetil Jansrud of Norway squeaked a first place by Manuel Osborne-Paradis and Guillermo

Fayed, who tied for second. It was Sullivan's best finish in two seasons, since skiing to the podium in Lake Louise in 2012.

The men's speed team was in Lake Louise for the first speed series of the season with five U.S. Ski Team racers starting: Sullivan, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley), Steve Nyman (Sundance, Utah), Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) and Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley).

"I knew it was going to be good snow and I needed to take advantage of that early start number. I didn't feel the fastest, but I was clean the whole way," said Sullivan. "I'm one of the veteran guys now and I'm just feeling comfortable racing these days. Nothing is holding me back."

Athletes praised the course set, which was full of bigger jumps and higher speed than years past. Even with the snowfall canceling the last two training runs, the track was fast and hard, with temperatures dipping into the negatives.

Ganong also skied a solid race, tying for 10th place. In addition, the U.S. athletes had two notable bibbos: Steve Nyman started 44th and finished 16th, and former U.S. Ski Team athlete Wiley Maple wore bib 56th and ended up 22nd.

Rounding out the athletes, Goldberg finished 35th and Bennett in 56th place.

Slow-growth issues not going away in EDC

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County voters just rejected three growth-control initiatives amid a \$1 million dollar opposition campaign funded by developer and real estate interests. Yet a ballot sequel already looms for 2016 as voters, once again, will consider measures restricting development in the Sierra foothills county.

Two other citizen-backed measures, which were withheld from the 2014 ballot for further study by county officials, have now received the go-ahead to appear on the county's June 2016 ballot.

The Board of Supervisors on Nov. 21 approved a public vote on an initiative to ban approvals of new subdivisions, apartments and commercial projects if they lack reliable water supplies or connections to public water systems.

Read the whole story

Safety paramount to not creating unwanted fire

The Tahoe Fire & Fuels team is offering a variety of fire recommendations.

Embers, often concealed in what appears to be cold ashes, can remain hot enough to kindle a fire for several days.

To safely dispose of ashes, fire officials offer these tips:

- Never store ashes in bags or boxes.
- Place discarded ashes in a heavy metal container, douse with water, and cover with fitted metal lid.
- Store the container outside, away from structures, decks, fences, wood piles or other combustible materials.
- Never use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes.
- Contact your local trash collection agency for their disposal recommendations after ashes have cooled and embers are out.

General fire safety tips:

- Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom. Test them at least once a month.
 - Keep anything that can burn at least three feet from space heaters and other heat sources.
 - Never leave the kitchen when something is cooking.
 - Keep candles and matches out of the reach of children.
 - Extinguish all fires, even candles, when you leave the room or go to sleep.
 - Remember to call 911 for all fires, no matter how small.
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Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Irene DiMatteo has sold Push Fitness in South Lake Tahoe to a chain in the Central Valley. The club is now called Fitness Evolution.

- Any new or like-new toys may be dropped off for Christmas Cheer at the South Lake Tahoe fire stations. The department's decorated fire engine will be out Dec. 10-24.
- Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedule for next week from Caltrans.
- Winter Wine, Spirits and All that Jazz is a wine tasting and dance to benefit the Brewery Arts Center in Carson City. The event is Jan. 17 from 7-10pm. Tickets are \$40 in advance (gina@breweryarts.org) or \$50 at the door (449 W. King St., Carson City).
- The Carson Valley Chamber of Commerce recently named Austin's House the 2014 Nonprofit Organization of the Year.

Biggest U.S. casino cuts back on gambling

By Michael Melia, AP

HARTFORD, Conn. — Foxwoods, the largest casino resort in North America, is reducing its number of slot machines and table games to free up space for nightclubs and other new

attractions as it adapts to fierce competition, the new CEO said in an interview with The Associated Press.

It's a transition that CEO Felix Rappaport says probably should have started years earlier, held up perhaps by emotional attachments, and one that reflects a decline in the number of people gambling inside the cavernous Foxwoods Resort Casino on a given day.

"We think we have too much gaming," Rappaport said in the interview Monday.

The tribal-owned property in southeastern Connecticut has 5,800 slot machines and 350 table games, spread across several individual casinos. Foxwoods is identifying gaming areas that can be converted for other purposes in a process that Rappaport said would likely leave it with closer to 4,800 slot machines and 250 table games.

Foxwoods enjoyed a monopoly on casino-style gambling in the region for years after it opened in 1992 and had 6,300 slot machines and 380 table games before the Great Recession introduced a decline in gambling revenue that has yet to be reversed.

Now, the embattled resort is positioning itself to endure competition that is expected only to intensify in coming years with as many as three casinos in Massachusetts. Foxwoods and its local rival, Mohegan Sun, already have been losing revenue to casinos in the New York City area and Rhode Island's Twin Rivers Casino, which recently added table games.

At Mohegan Sun, Tribal Gaming Authority CEO Mitchell Etess said on a conference call with industry analysts last week that its gaming floor has shrunk but he does not anticipate more big cuts.

"I think we've really done a good job at getting the floor down to what's manageable and what's right and then scheduling

it for the times when the people are here,” Etess said.

Rappaport, a Philadelphia native, was named CEO last week by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. He joined Foxwoods in February and had been part of a management team focused on expanding the resort experience including new nightclubs, restaurants and an outlet mall expected to open in the spring.

He worked previously as president of the casinos Excalibur, New York-New York and Luxor in Las Vegas, where he saw each property have a “golden era” and then have to adapt and sometimes contract with changes in the marketplace. Rappaport said Foxwoods is evolving in the same way, adding attractions with the goal of stirring excitement and keeping visitors on the property for longer periods of time.

“The industry in general has become less gaming centric,” he said. “I think in Foxwoods’ case we have exactly the same opportunities.”

He said he expects Foxwoods will move toward earning 65 or 70 percent of its revenue from gambling – down from 80 percent – as it leans more on entertainment and other offerings.

Associated Press writer Stephen Singer contributed to this report.

South Shore chamber workshop for businessowners

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce in partnership with South Lake Tahoe is offering the Overcoming Your Business Roadblocks: Planning to Propel Your Business to New Heights

workshop for businessowners on Dec. 10 from 1-5pm.

The goal of the workshop is to help businessowners and managers start 2015 with a solid plan to climb over or mow down their business barriers. During this half-day interactive workshop attendees will be taught a quick and easy problem-solving process. They will select a strategic issue or opportunity specific to their business that they want to resolve, establish the best imaginable outcomes for the issue, develop a plan of action, and walk out the door with a plan they can begin implementing immediately.

The course instructor, Anne Marie Smith, is the author of “60 Minute Strategic Plan”, an Amazon.com top-10 selling book on strategic planning.

The workshop will be at the chamber, 169 Highway 50, Stateline.

For more information or to register, go online.

Timber becoming a commodity of the rich

By Jesse Solomon, CNNMoney

NEW YORK — In the rarefied world of the wealthy, timber is the hot new commodity.

That's according to Dennis Moon, head of Specialty Asset Management at U.S. Trust, a division of Bank of America, whose job it is to find, manage, and log plots of trees for the firm's well-healed clients.

Ever since the financial crisis, business is booming, as rich families have worked tirelessly to diversify their investments beyond traditional stocks and bonds.

Here's why the 1 percent are loving lumber, and all the green that comes with it.

After seeing their portfolios pummeled during the recession, many wealthy people have flocked to asset classes that don't rise and fall with the stock markets. That's where timber comes in.

"They'd rather this be their steady eddie, slow-as-you-go type of asset," said Moon, who's based in Dallas. "They like transparency. You can go see it if you want to. It's not like a piece of financial paper like a stock or a bond."

Read the whole story

World may be running out of chocolate

By Roberto A. Ferdman, Washington Post

There's no easy way to say this: You're eating too much chocolate, all of you. And it's getting so out of hand that the world could be headed toward a potentially disastrous (if you love chocolate) scenario if it doesn't stop.

Those are, roughly speaking, the words of two huge chocolate makers, Mars, Inc. and Barry Callebaut. And there's some data to back them up.

Chocolate deficits, whereby farmers produce less cocoa than

the world eats, are becoming the norm. Already, we are in the midst of what could be the longest streak of consecutive chocolate deficits in more than 50 years. It also looks like deficits aren't just carrying over from year-to-year – the industry expects them to grow.

Last year, the world ate roughly 70,000 metric tons more cocoa than it produced. By 2020, the two chocolate-makers warn that that number could swell to 1 million metric tons, a more than 14-fold increase; by 2030, they think the deficit could reach 2 million metric tons.

The problem is, for one, a supply issue. Dry weather in West Africa (specifically in the Ivory Coast and Ghana, where more than 70 percent of the world's cocoa is produced) has greatly decreased production in the region. A nasty fungal disease known as frosty pod hasn't helped either. The International Cocoa Organization estimates it has wiped out between 30 percent and 40 percent of global coca production.

Because of all this, cocoa farming has proven a particularly tough business, and many farmers have shifted to more profitable crops, like corn, as a result.

Read the whole story

Special events drive skiers to Tahoe slopes



A crowd watches Olympic snowboarders face off at the poker table and the big air jump at High Roller Hold 'Em at Heavenly. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

By Kathryn Reed

Events have long been said to be an economic force – no matter the location. It's true for the greater Lake Tahoe Basin as well as the hosting venue.

While it can be hard to put a definitive dollar amount on what the various ski resort events add to the economy, these activities are bringing people to the area who may not otherwise have come. The industry as a whole brings more than \$500 million to the basin each season, according to economic studies.

Events give added value to the passholder and day lift ticket buyer.

“Though I do not have specific numbers, our special events

definitely attract locals as well as traveling visitors. Several events do draw tourists to the resort; who plan their trips around these exciting activities,” Cass Walker, spokeswoman for Northstar, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Paul Raymore with Homewood Mountain Resort, said, “These events are really designed to give our customers unique experiences that they wouldn’t normally get.”

Thea Hardy at Sierra-at-Tahoe, said, “These events are important to build excitement during the season and to give back to the community that supports us all year. Whether they are for spectators or not, Sierra-at-Tahoe events are an important way to communicate our mission and to give our guests an extra incentive to connect with Sierra and feel like they are part of its animation.”

Plus, the promotion associated with the various events gives obvious added attention to that particular resort as well as triggers the thought of Lake Tahoe as a whole to people.

“We think that events at our South Shore ski resorts enhance the visitor experience, which creates the potential for social sharing of that experience and/or enticing a visitor toward a repeat visit,” Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “From the destination differentiation aspect, the events send a brand message. That message boasts the high-energy vibe we have both on and off the slopes. We also know that event marketing helps to heighten awareness and inquisitiveness that might lead to visitation.”

Events also give guests a different view of a resort – more whimsical, more hardcore – depends on the attraction.

“There is more to Heavenly and South Lake Tahoe than incomparable skiing and beautiful views. Events like these take the resort experience to the next level, where guests can go all in with world-class entertainment, après ski parties,

and nonstop casino nightlife,” Liesl Kenney with Heavenly told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Resorts are always looking toward the future. While tradition is important, so is being innovative and having big dreams.

“It is important to continuously create new, unexpected traditions that allow guests to celebrate with each other,” Walker from Northstar said.

Mt. Rose aspires to be an Olympic venue or host an international extreme skiing competition. This could be possible as it is eyed to be one of the few resorts that could host the Olympic men’s downhill.

Homewood would also like to host more high-profile ski/snowboard racing events/competitions.

“Homewood has a racing heritage we’d like to bring back,” Raymore told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Ski resorts were asked to share what they believe are the top three events for this season.

Northstar:

- **Bubbles on the Slopes**

New this winter, Northstar will host *tōst*, the celebratory culinary tradition that redefines the art of the daily toast. Celebrating the mountains, Lake Tahoe and the tradition of toasting to friends and family, Northstar invites guests to raise their flutes and sip bubbles each day on the mountain at 2pm.

- **Mountain Table**

Epicureans are invited to discover the essence of Northstar’s laid-back California luxury through Mountain Table, the new mountaintop culinary experience at Zephyr Lodge, which

features an entire menu of California-sourced ingredients. Meals will be paired with regional artisan wines, craft beers, and distilled spirits. Each Mountain Table dinner will donate proceeds to one of North Lake Tahoe's nonprofit foundations. Dinners are: Dec. 19, Jan. 16, Jan. 30, Feb. 13, Feb. 27, March 13, and March 27 from 6-9pm.

- **Northern Lights**

The inaugural Northern Lights festival will commence Dec. 12 by welcoming connoisseurs to the Brewmaster Dinner at Zephyr Lodge. The five-course menu will feature fresh, seasonal produce and meats from California's finest sources. Each course will be customized to highlight select craft brews and seasonal specialties from Lagunitas Brewing Company. Northern Lights culminates Dec. 13, during which kids and families partake in a day and evening of light-filled revelry and activities, a torch light procession and snowcat light parade – all of which leads to the Village at Northstar where the festivities and entertainment continue with a fireworks grand finale.

Mt. Rose:

- **Chutes Fest**

The Feb. 21 extreme competition is the 10th anniversary celebration of the notorious Mt. Rose Chutes.

- **Local Craft Brew Festival**

This is a gathering of many Tahoe-Reno craft brewers, combined into an outdoor ski festival on March 7.

- **Burner Party**

March 21 is the second annual party recognizing the Burner Spirit on snow.

Homewood:

- **New Year's Eve Party**

Dance to the infectiously funky grooves of Lake Tahoe's Drop Theory from 9pm-1am while enjoying beer, wine and cocktail specials at the Fireplace Tavern bar, inside Homewood's South Lodge. Tickets are \$25 in advance online, or \$30 at the door.

- **First Tracks Breakfasts**

Skiers and snowboarders will want to set their alarms early on select weekends throughout the season as Homewood expands its lineup of First Tracks Breakfasts. Early-birds looking for untracked powder tracks or pristine corduroy are invited to load the Madden Chair from 7:45-8:15am and enjoy all the fresh tracks they can find off the Old Homewood Express chair before the general public is allowed to start loading the Madden Chair at 9am. In addition, participants will enjoy a hearty breakfast at the mid-mountain Big Blue View Bar anytime from 7:55-9:30am. Free for Homewood season passholders, the First Tracks Breakfast events will cost \$40 in addition to the normal lift ticket price for non-pass holders. Dates: Jan. 10, Jan. 24, TBD in February and March.

- **March Music Series**

Dates to be determined.

Heavenly Mountain Resort

- **Winter Ignite**

It spans two weekends, Dec. 5-6 and Dec. 12-13, culminating with a free concert by Young the Giant on Dec. 13 at 7pm in Heavenly Village. Winter Ignite will jumpstart the 2014-15 ski and ride season with on-mountain activities such as pop-up DJ Cat and Unbuckle après kick-off parties as well as off-

mountain events like “Pretty Faces” movie Dec. 12 at Harrah’s and comedy from Daniel Tosh at MontBleu Dec. 12.

- **High Roller Hold ‘Em**

Three Olympic athletes from the inaugural U.S. slopestyle snowboarding team will arrive in South Lake Tahoe on April 4. Olympic gold medalist Sage Kotsenburg will place his bets against fellow Olympians Billy Morgan and Chas Guldemond, as well as High Roller Hold ‘Em veterans Gjermund Braaten and Eric Willett. Developed in partnership with Snow Park Technologies, High Roller Hold ‘Em combines the thrill of snowboard Big Air with the strategy of high-stakes poker into an event that sends the winner home with \$50,000. This event is free and takes place on the World Cup run at Heavenly’s California base area.

- **Unbuckle at Tamarack**

Rated as the No. 1 après ski party in North America by *Forbes* and confirmed by CNN Travel, is Lake Tahoe’s highest elevation après ski party featuring music, drinking, dancing and the Heavenly Angels. Après takes place daily from 3:30-5:30pm with half-priced drinks and food specials and, exclusively on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, a guest DJ. There is no cost for admission to this event.

Diamond Peak

- **6th annual Ullr Fest**

The Jan. 23-25 event to raise funds for the Diamond Peak Ski Team. The action-packed weekend kicks off Friday with a Torch Light Parade, bonfire, and live music, and continues through Sunday with other events including races, competitions, food, entertainment and more. Come dressed in the best Ullr attire as the event is named for the Scandinavian god of winter and snow, who is widely regarded as the patron saint of skiers.

- **Last Tracks Wine/Beer Tastings**

Every Saturday Feb. 7-April 11, enjoy beautiful views of Lake Tahoe from Snowflake Lodge while tasting fine wines or craft brews paired with tasty appetizers. At the end of the event, ski or snowboard down a freshly groomed run at sunset. Last Tracks tickets are \$34 and include a lift ticket valid from 2-4pm. Participants must be 21 years old to attend and ski or snowboard at an intermediate level.

- **15th Annual Dummy Downhill**

The Dummy Downhill (March 15) has been a favorite community event for past 14 years and every year it gets better.

Participants build a dummy on skis or snowboards that get launched off of a big jump and watch as unique characters fly down the hill or crash hard. This is the flugtag for dummies. Dummies will be judged on creativity on the Base Lodge deck, followed by the jumping and an awards ceremony. Prizes and certificates will be awarded for creativity, best crash, furthest distance, and more.

Sierra-at-Tahoe

- **Jamie Anderson's Give Back with Love Sponsorship** (not for spectators)

Women's snowboard slopestyle Olympic gold medalist Jamie Anderson will partner with Sierra and the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to sponsor local students again this winter. Less fortunate students in the community have a chance to experience what it is like to be a sponsored athlete for a season. Each winner receives a season pass at Sierra, complete snowboard set-up including board, bindings, boots and outerwear, and a day of snowboarding with Jamie Anderson.

- **Equinox Spring Festival**

Sierra-at-Tahoe Resort will kick off the spring season on

March 21 with the second annual Equinox Spring Festival. The festival includes a free concert series, events, parties, and more, giving guests an opportunity to enjoy the outdoor Solstice Plaza, listen to live music, reminisce about a great day on the mountain and celebrate spring in the Sierra.

- **Ski With Maddie Bowman Day** (not for spectators)

Women's freeskiing halfpipe Olympic gold medalist, Maddie Bowman, hosts an annual Ski with Maddie Day where up-and-coming skiers in Sierra's Rippers program have the chance to ski with Bowman and receive expert tips. Bowman, being an ex-Ripper, wants to inspire younger kids to follow their dreams and share how her dream came true.

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Notes:

- More info about events may be found on the resorts' respective websites.