

Sorting out how Caesars slid into distress

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

The financial mess consuming Caesars Entertainment has been years in the making.

The casino company has struggled with more than \$20 billion in debt for about six years. It's lost money every year since 2009, largely because of its debt payments.

Now, the largest (and most indebted) unit of Caesars is apparently preparing to file for bankruptcy. That doesn't mean Caesars, the largest operator of casinos in the United States, will cease to exist; it will, presumably, emerge on the other side as a restructured company.

The situation isn't easy to understand, especially because many details are under wraps while the company negotiates with creditors. But extensive reporting from Laura J. Keller at Bloomberg News, company filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission and analyst comments help clarify some of the complexity.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

Read the whole story

Judge denies sports betting in N.J.

By Geoff Mulvihill, AP

A federal judge ruled Friday night that New Jersey cannot partially lift a prohibition on sports betting in an effort to boost the state's struggling horse racing and casino industries.

The decision from U.S. District Judge Michael Shipp was the expected outcome since the judge had ruled similarly in the past.

The state, locked in a legal battle with the NCAA and four professional sports leagues, is expected to appeal to a higher court.

"We are going to continue pursuing every legal option available," State Senate President Steve Sweeney said in a statement Friday. "The economic impact that sports wagering can have on New Jersey is far too important to simply shrug our shoulders and move on."

A federal law bans New Jersey and most other states from authorizing betting on sports. But the state contended it did not want to license or authorize the betting. Instead, it was seeking to end a prohibition and that it would not regulate sports betting.

But Shipp agreed with the sports leagues that setting parameters such as limiting sports gambling to certain places amounts to regulation, but noted, that he "finds that the present case is not nearly as clear as either the leagues or the defendants assert."

While Shipp agreed with the central part of the sports'

leagues argument, he dismissed some of their other arguments.

New Jersey has been pushing persistently to allow sports betting at horse tracks and casinos in an effort to support both struggling industries. Voters have approved the concept, but a federal court rejected it in a slightly different form. The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case earlier this year, and it seemed that might be the end of it.

But as the financial crisis in Atlantic City's casinos deepened, Gov. Chris Christie's administration tried a new approach. Instead of legalizing sports gambling in defiance of the leagues and federal government, it called for not enforcing the state's ban. The Legislature followed with a bill to lift the ban as it pertains to casinos and tracks. Christie signed that into law last month.

The NCAA and four major professional sports leagues contend that federal law would allow the state to lift the ban entirely – but not to allow sports betting with some conditions, such as limiting it to certain locations and keeping minors from participating.

The ruling comes just over a week after NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said he supports legalizing sports gambling – though not in the way it would happen if New Jersey prevailed. Silver is the first commissioner of a major U.S. sports league to make such a stand.

Talk to focus on ski touring

Greenland

Brennan Lagasse, local writer, skier, and adventure guide is well-known for his global adventures on snow and the popular “State of the Backcountry” blog on Unofficial Networks.

Lagasse has been seeking out adventures on snow for more than 20 years. He is also a backcountry guide with Points North Heli in Cordova, Alaska as well as Doug Stoup’s famous ice ax expeditions.

The Home Brew Series, presented by Alpenglow Sports and Tahoe Art Haus & Cinema, is designed to showcase local athletes who live regular lives and accomplish extraordinary feats in the mountains. The series is designed to be mellow, free, and community-centric for all ages and abilities.

Lagasse’s show is the second installment in a three-part series that runs once per month from November through January. Lagasse will take attendees to Sisimiut, Greenland, an expedition designed to help map ski terrain for proposed future experiences led by local Greenlanders and Ice Axe Expeditions.

While the Dec. 3, 7pm show is free, attendees are encouraged to arrive early for good seating. Tahoe Art Haus & Cinema will serve refreshments and participants are encouraged to remain after the show for additional festivities.

Tahoe Art Haus & Cinema is at 475 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City.

For additional information, call Brendan Madigan at Alpenglow Sports – 530.583.6917.

'Birdman' – a near perfect movie

By Jeremy Miller

Ever wonder what has-been actors do when they've got one last shot to get back on the grid? Wonder no more. "Birdman" is the answer.

Riggan Thomas (Michael Keaton) was once the iconic super-hero Birdman however his choice to steer clear of the fourth installment of the franchise had bigger consequences than he had foreseen. He's under the impression that if he writes/directs/stars in a hit play on Broadway, people will remember who he is and possibly catapult him back to the top. Unfortunately for Riggan his main actor flaked out, his daughter Sam (Emma Stone) is fresh out of rehab, his manager/best friend Jake (Zach Galifianakis) is overworked and overly anxious and his marriage dissolved leaving him in a pretty awkward rebound with one of the play's actresses.

The play is ambitiously titled "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love" and its dialogue is equally as ambitious. When the lead actor bails, Riggan calls upon the talent of renowned actor Mike (Edward Norton) who's as arrogant as he is naive. He's probably the best representation of a cliché Broadway actor I've seen in a movie.



The Miller Meter – 4.5 stars out of 5.



Mike shows up and immediately restores Rigger's faith in his play, as Mike brings some serious talent to the screen. The film takes place over the course of a weekend, the first night being the preview during which everything that could have gone wrong did.

Rigger has moments of panic that unlike most include serious introversion and telekinetic powers.

Two days into the weekend Rigger runs into the most reputable theater critic in New York Tabitha who very overtly announces that she will do everything and anything in her power to destroy his play.

Throughout the weekend dealing with Mike's Prima Donna antics, his manager's haphazard organizational skills and his daughter lurking around making everything super weird, Rigger has to handle one problem after the next, ultimately climaxing in one of the most beautiful endings in its genre.

Now I am a huge and very loyal fan to Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu. He's given me some of my all-time favorite films such as "Babel", "21 Grams", "Beautiful", and "Amores Perros". I was beyond excited to see him take a stab at comedy, especially being that it's a dark comedy. He set out to give his film the feel that it was filmed in one continuous shot, which is a daunting feat for any filmmaker and he absolutely nailed it.



Alejandro's strong suits are emotionally driven visuals and exploring realistic human emotion and response, sometimes painfully so. The script and story were loads of fun and full of suspense and sadness as well.

There's a scene in which Mike (Norton) takes hold of Riggen's script and transforms it into something watchable. Watching these actors play actors was absolute bliss. The entire cast brought incredible performances that left a lasting impression on me after I left the theater. Keaton gave one of the best performances I have seen all year and wouldn't be surprised if come Oscar season he starts getting a lot of buzz. It was a perfect blend of touching, vulnerable and desperate.

I loved the cinematography, a one-shot movie definitely aided in the story taking place over a weekend. I felt like we watched all of it go down, which was the whole point.

There are many suspicions about what exactly took place at the end, which I loved as well. I love when a movie leaves it up to you to decide what happens. I'll tell you one thing for sure, the movie was a perfect blend of darkly humorous, sad, and touching.

The only reason this thing didn't creep up to a 5 on the meter is because I felt that a few scenes were just a tad drawn out and though the score was good, I felt it could have been more emotionally in tune with the story.

Overall, a great movie, and definitely worth the watch.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.

Historic Nevada locomotive restored to life

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Glenbrook – perhaps the most viewed locomotive in Nevada history – roared to life for the first time in 88 years last week in Carson City.

“This is, indeed, an important day in the annals of railroad preservation, for Nevada and the nation,” said Peter Barton, administrator of the Nevada Division of Museums and History, just before white steam rose above the boiler and black smoke from the stack of the historic engine.

Perhaps best known as the train that graced the front of the Nevada State Museum for four decades – a favorite artifact for thousands of school kids, railroad buffs and visitors – it has been at the Nevada State Railroad Museum since 1982.

The museum’s shop crew – headed by chief maintenance officer Chris DeWitt – spent years restoring the locomotive, piece by piece, to get it back to operational condition and on Nov. 19, the biggest hurdle to date was cleared as the engine was fired for the first time since 1926, passing a key safety inspection.

Read the whole story

Be smart when dealing with frozen pipes

With the onset of really cold weather, frozen water pipes are inevitable.

Unfortunately, along with this problem, the fire department responds to an increase of structure fires caused by residents trying to quick fix the problem themselves. Instead of using space heaters, torches, or other hot flame devices to thaw pipes, call a professional plumber to get the water flowing again.

In the long run, it's much cheaper and effective than burning the house down around those frozen pipes.

– Sallie Ross-Filgo, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Lake Tahoe Community College Professor Larry Green has been honored by the 20 Million Minds Foundation for creating free textbooks for students. In 2011 he was part of a pilot program

bringing etexts to students.

- Zephyr Cove Ski Club is taking sign ups at the Kahle Community Center in Stateline on Dec. 6 from 9am-noon, Dec. 9 from 5:30-7:30pm and Dec. 11 from 5:30-7:30pm. Call Sally O'Brien at 775.588.7233 for more info.
 - Mt. Rose will celebrate its 50th anniversary Dec. 31.
 - Mark Estee, a James Beard finalist, is opening Reno Provisions in December. It will be a restaurant-bar-market space at 100 N. Sierra St., Reno.
 - Lake Tahoe Hard Rock is selling a limited edition pin for \$14.95 with half of the net proceeds going to the League to Save Lake Tahoe. It will be available when the Stateline property opens in January.
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Schools rethinking use of 'Lady' for female teams

By Alexandra Svokos, Huffington Post

Recent debates at two universities about removing "Lady" from the names of women's sports teams caused very different reactions, highlighting the two sides of an ongoing discussion about women's athletics.

The *Review*, the student newspaper of the University of Delaware, announced on Sunday that it will no longer use the term "Lady Hens" when writing about the university's women's sports teams. The newspaper's decision comes just as University of Tennessee fans and players are fighting to keep the term "Lady" attached to the name of their female squads,

which are currently known as the Lady Vols.

“Though this change is long overdue, we are proud to announce we are disposing of a discriminatory term,” the editors of the *Review* wrote of their decision.

The newspaper’s move was prompted by a letter to the editor from alum James Wiles, who said that “the term Lady Hens is inherently sexist.”

“The men’s teams are somehow solely entitled to the general term Hens, without a gender specific qualifier,” Wiles wrote.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe looking to renovate rec center



The South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center's men's bathroom lacks privacy. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Tape on many weight room apparatuses, blocks at the swimming pool the public aren't allowed to use, no private showers in the men's room, two out of three showers off-limits in the women's locker room.

This is the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center.

It was built in 1975. Nearly 40 years later it is sorely in need of being overhauled, if not gutted and rebuilt from the ground up.

"It's rundown and needs serious renovation," Pete Fink, chairman of the city's recreation commission, told the more than two dozen people at a Nov. 18 workshop.

Turning this into a green building is a goal so it is extremely energy efficient. Today the annual electric bill is about \$170,000 for the building, including the pool.

Last year \$37,000 had to be spent on fixing the roof.

“It seemed like it was raining more inside than out,” Fink said.



Many would like the pool to be upgraded.

An aspect of the recreation master plan being developed by the city and El Dorado County calls for renovating the center. Last week was the first opportunity for the public to tour the facility and offer input as to what they would like to see changed.

Faye-Marie Pekar, Grace Usui Meyer and Jenn Boyd finished their evening lap swimming before joining the group to offer their opinions.

They told *Lake Tahoe News* the locker rooms should to be upgraded, the starting blocks need to be accessible to anyone, there should be a professional timing system and the number of lanes expanded beyond six.

They and others voiced the need for a swim center like Carson Valley has where there are multiple pools that would accommodate divers, swimmers and those looking for therapy sessions.

Some would like a permanent roof to replace the bubble over the pool. Bleachers would be beneficial for spectators during competitions.

Both locker rooms are a bit repulsive. Even though a major

overhaul of the rec center is likely, the city is going forward with fixing the rusting, corroding women's showers.

In the men's locker room the urinals go to the ground in an old-school fashion. A short wall separates the two toilets, but privacy is completely lacking.

The rec center has various rooms that are used for meetings and classes. One has mirrors for dance class, but the floor in it is not conducive to dancing. And the mirrors don't make for a professional meeting center for the entities that rent it for that purpose.

An industrial kitchen is adjacent to the gym.

Lauren Thomaselli, parks manager, suggested putting in a concession window between the kitchen and gym so food could easily be sold. She would also like to see cooking classes.

Caterers in town who need a facility that meets the health department's requirements often rent the kitchen.



Duct tape is common on weight room equipment.

The weight room equipment looks like something found in a bygone era.

"A lot of the equipment here I've been told was donated by clubs that went under and it looks like it," Peter Evenhuis,

who was touring the site, told *Lake Tahoe News*. His suggestion is to lease equipment in the future.

The city is looking for more input on the rec center via this online survey.

Letter: Night walkers need to be visible

To the community,

Now that winter is upon us and the time has been set back, I can't help but notice how much darker it is getting much earlier in the evening.

The reason I bring this up is because soon we will have snow, our streets become narrower with snow banks and our small subdivision, residential neighborhoods seem especially dark with no street lights. I have lived in Tahoe 24 years. Every season I am a nervous wreck driving at night in fear I am going to hit someone.

People out walking at night wearing dark clothing, with no kind of reflective gear to alert drivers of their presence are at risk. Seriously people, please, for your own safety get some kind of reflective tape from the hardware store for you, your children, even your pets on leashes. We can't see you. I don't care how fashionably lame this might look, it could save your life.

That's all. It scares me and it should you, too.

I hope you all have a safe and happy holiday season.

Cheers,

Karen Jaime, South Lake Tahoe