Why the West is burning this season

By Wes Siler, Outdoor

Hurricanes, earthquakes, and nuclear war, oh my. And don't forget to add a near-record wildfire season to that list of disasters. According to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, there are 137 large wildfires currently raging across the American West, burning a total of 7.8 million acres.

That's not yet as bad as 2015, which saw 8.4 million acres burned, but it's only September and this is already the third worst year for wildfires in the last decade. It's already way ahead of the previous 10-year annual average of 5.4 million acres burned.

You've seen the apocalyptic images from the Columbia River Gorge, Glacier National Park, and the Los Angeles Suburbs, but those fires are only a small part of the overall picture. Currently there are 13 active wildfires in Washington, 26 in Oregon, 23 in Idaho, 46 in Montana, and 38 in California.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County brewery offers wine-infused beers

By Matt Kawahara, Sacramento Bee

Scott Johnson acknowledges that merging beer and wine in one glass might sound a little weird. He also swears by the

result.

Solid Ground Brewing, a new brewery in El Dorado County, combines Johnson’s winemaking background with the beer brewing experience of his co-founder KC Sare. Along with creating standard lagers and ales, Johnson and Sare are producing some of their beers by using winemaking techniques and by infusing wine into the brew.

Solid Ground, which features a 30-barrel brewhouse, taproom and kitchen, opened this summer in Diamond Springs.

Read the whole story

Growing garlic, onions subject of 2 talks

There will be two opportunities at the end of the month to learn from Lake Tahoe master gardeners how to grow garlic and onions in the basin and Truckee.

The first class will be be Sept. 25 from 5;30-7pm at the Tahoe City Field Station.

The varieties are specifically chosen to survive tough Tahoe winters and provide a hearty spring harvest. Topics include proper varietal selection, location in the garden or container, planting options, and methods for protecting the young plants. Come to the to learn more and take some plants home to try growing them yourselves.

A $5 donation requested at the door.

The second presentation will be Sept. 27 from 5:30-7pm at the

Truckee Demonstration Garden located at the Truckee Regional Park. Each participant will receive various types of garlic to plant in their own home gardens.

This garden workshop is free, but donations are appreciated and benefit Slow Food Lake Tahoe.

Training for size can hurt sports performance

By Nick Ward

When it comes to getting big for sports like football, is muscle over movement developing players in the right way? What can we learn for our gym sessions from the science of strength training?



Nick Ward

Another high school sports season is under way around the country. At times, body image seems to be a more desirable goal for young athletes than performance. In the weight room, players focus on energy-zapping, muscle-reforming, and non-functional exercises. But instead of shape and size, the focus should be on athletic performance.

Bodybuilding, or hypertrophy training, is only one method of

strength training. It does have a place in an athlete's development if lack of size or muscle mass is hurting his or her performance. But genetics and maturity also play important roles. Our physique can dictate what sports or positions we play. Making the most of your body's potential and performance comes down to three things: how well you train, eat, and rest.

Training for speed and strength

Science shows that a bigger muscle fiber will produce more force. Several muscle fibers are capable of producing high force, but at different rates and speeds. How we train can strongly influence whether our muscles can produce faster, higher force movements or slower, high- force movements.

It's about speed and strength. The equation force = mass x acceleration shows that mass or size isn't everything. We can train for speed, too. However, this doesn't mean lifting light weights quickly. It means lifting the heaviest weight and accelerating as quickly as possible. So grinding out a squat or a bench press is inferior to using a load where at the end of the session, you might feel like you've still got a couple of reps left in the tank.

Maintaining flexibility

Losing coordination and flexibility is the other problem. High school students aren't professional bodybuilders who train for symmetry and good mobility to assist in posing. This type of exercise leads to beach muscles and loss of the flexibility needed in sports. Exercises like leg extensions and curls build the muscle into non-athletic forms. Instead, students should use athletic forms of single-leg squatting, cleans and dead lifts, and body-weight or upright-based pushing and pulling.

Training for size can hurt your athletic abilities. The good news? Training for movement, not muscles, can improve athletic performance, and muscle growth still comes as a secondary

effect. This training, along with eating well, resting well, and giving your body opportunities to perform well, reduces the risk of injury and allows players to reap the physical benefits.

Nick Ward is the sports performance director at Barton Performance by ALTISTM.

Page Meadow – a tranquil, scenic trek



Page Meadow pops out of the forest on the North Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – Something about meadows is mesmerizing. These vast grassy areas seem to appear out of nowhere. Such a

contrast to all the conifers that dominate Tahoe hikes.

Page Meadow was not a disappointment; especially considering I had heard so much about this North Shore area that is part of the Tahoe Rim Trail.

A month ago today five of us and the wonder dog AJ explored the area for the first time. For a summer weekend it was surprisingly uncrowded. We ran into a woman who lives nearby; this is her regular route for exercise. And no wonder – it would undoubtedly be one of those locations that would seem to change with the seasons.

In mid-August a few wildflowers still dotted the terrain. The grasses were full of life, some golden, some verdant. They didn’t look dead or even dying. The actual meadow was more like fertile grasslands reminiscent of the Midwest. It was inviting in the sense part of me wanted to run through it. I knew better. It seemed almost sacred. I didn’t want to ruin the beauty for others.

Mountain bikers, too, kept to the trail that skirts around the perimeter of the meadow.



The trail in parts is a road, other sections it is single track. Photo/Kathryn Reed

I would imagine with fall in the air now that the foliage will soon be turning yellow and orange.

Winter must be spectacular in there for snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

Even in late summer water was an issue in one spot. Fortunately someone had laid down what looked like a homemade ladder only it was a foot bridge across the boggy area. This might be the only section anyone would really need/want hiking poles.

We were thankful for the fellow hiker who told us to look to our left for this crossing.

Signage is spotty. Multiple connector trails intersect with the main one. On the one hand this is good because it disperses users, it also means more options for accessing the meadow, as well as being able to lengthen the trek if so desired.

Starting out we were on what seemed like a road – wide enough to walk alongside someone. No aspect of this approximately 5-mile loop is steep. It's a gentle meander up and down, and around.



Liz, Sue and Rosemary crossing the wet area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 89 north. Not too far after Sunnyside, turn left on Pine Street. Go right onto Tahoe Park Heights Drive. Then go right on Big Pine Drive. Go left

on Silvertip Drive. The trailhead is at the end of Silvertip.

Letter: NTPUD article misleads the public

To the community,

Duane Whitelaw, the manager of the North Tahoe Public Utility District (NTPUD), Aug. 31 column regarding the potential 70-year lease of the North Tahoe Event Center to one of Laulima Partner's LLC's was full of spin and factual omissions. Don't the NTPUD ratepayers deserve the whole story? We do.

The event center $90K yearly loss is a small portion of the Parks and Recreation $1.5M 2016 budget operating loss. The $1.5M is before depreciation and the Mellos Roos tax contribution. The Tahoe Vista Boat Launch loses $75K/year and the Boys and Girls Club cost $125K/year.

It is clear some of the board and management don't like the event center.

There is no guarantee of affordable accessibility with Laulima et al. What they will charge is up to their "good faith business judgement." After supposedly injecting $5.6M into the place it is doubtful a local 25 percent off discount will be affordable.

Yes, more than a dozen public meetings have been held, but the public didn't know the terms of the lease until Sept. 7 after almost two years of secret negotiations. Now the public only has less than a month before board approval to digest a draft lease full of errors and incorrect references. The NTPUD

legal team, Ethan Walsh and Josh Nelson of BB&K, should be ashamed. At last week's workshop, Walsh sounded more like a salesman than someone hired to protect the NTPUD ratepayers.

Although Laulima initially said they would pay $200K/yr for the lease; now it starts at $50K/yr for the first year leasing 16,000 square feet and then goes to $75K for years two and three; $100K for years four and five, $126K for years six and seven; $165K doesn't start until year 10.

It runs from 26 cents to finally 85 cents per square foot per month in year 10.

The Citizen Advisory Committee will only be able to make recommendations to Laulima. There is no teeth for enforcement.

The NTPUD is trying to eliminate a relatively small operating loss (what community centers make money?) in return for huge potential financial liability for the ratepayers. What if Laulima fails to complete their project or files bankruptcy and the ratepayers have to finish? Is 110 percent bond enough for interest and delinquencies. It wasn't for the Cal-Neva bankruptcy.

Laulima et al is proposing to develop a deck on top of the event center. This will be a discretionary approval because it's located in an environmentally sensitive lakefront location. Who will pay for that? Us? What about the environmental study and parking?

NTPUD justifies this all by a bogus survey sent to ratepayers last year that was frankly incomprehensible. What should have been asked of ratepayers is, "are you willing to contribute $27/year to support the event center?" I would have resoundingly answered yes.

Under the current NTPUD management and board, we have lost control of the Kings Beach Recreation Area Parking lot and the

Dollar Hill Firestone property. Now they want us to lose the eventcenter to any of nine LLC's associated with Laulima Partners. One of which is Laulima Northstar, LLC. Ouch.

The final meeting for NTPUD regarding the North Tahoe Event Center is Sept. 12 at 5:3pm at the center.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance

Tested: The best new bikepacking bags

By Aaron Gulley, Outside

Bikepacking used to be a fringe activity. These days, it's about as commonplace as sidewall tears in the rocky desert. There are drop-bar and flat-bar bikes built expressly for it, videos about it, and it's even popping up in the *New York Times*.

And, unlike a decade ago, when only a few tiny companies sold made-to-order bags, some of the biggest brands in cycling have started building packs to make it easier to get out and camp overnight on a bike.

Those tiny brands, such as Apidura, Nuclear Sunrise, Oveja Negra, and Porcelain Rocket, continue to innovate and create excellent products. Heck, for the most part I still mainly use my 10-year-old packs from Revelate Designs—the stuff is that good. At the same time, the mom-and-pop shops haven't always kept up with burgeoning demand, which is partly why I love that big companies like Specialized and Blackburn have gotten into this space.

Read the whole story

Last call at Calif. bars will not be extended

By Dennis Romero, LA Weekly

It was a valiant effort that nearly slid by the foes of alcohol, but in the end there wasn’t enough time and support to save a proposal to allow cities like Los Angeles to extend bars’ last call serving times to 4am.

Legislation that would have given municipalities the flexibility to go later for last call died over the holiday weekend in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Jeff Cretan, communications director for the proposal’s author, Sen. Scott Wiener, explained what happened.

The bill’s core language was replaced with a proposal to create a task force that would study the idea of extending alcohol service hours, he said via email.

Read the whole story

Seismologists hope to create

Calif. earthquake forecasts

By Rong-Gong Lin II and Raoul Rañoa, Los Angeles Times

One day, next to the traffic map and weather forecast on your smartphone, seismologist Thomas H. Jordan envisions an app that you can check to see when the chances of a major earthquake in California rise.

Jordan, director of the Southern California Earthquake Center, is quick to make clear this is not an earthquake prediction. Predicting exactly when and where a catastrophic earthquake will strike next is impossible, scientists say.

But what scientists can do is pay close attention when moderate quakes strike in perilously sensitive spots – places right next to major faults such as the San Andreas.

Read the whole story

Road Beat: Volvo V90 AWD, better than the sedan



The Volvo V90 AWD is a high performing car with good looks. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

It’s not often a station wagon will out do the sedan, especially one as competent as the Volvo S90, but in this case the AWD Volvo V90 is a winner. While the S90 is stunning, the V90 adds a dash more sport and its proportions are smoother and more rakish, giving the V90 an edge in the appearance department.

I never thought I would say this, but Volvo now makes some of the best-looking cars in the business and the V90 takes the cake, it is beautiful.

Built on the S90 chassis, the new V90 is an inch shorter at 194 inches, but an inch taller at 58 inches. They share wheelbase and width at 116 and 74 inches, respectively, making the V90 only slightly bigger than a mid-size, but with a full size, roomy interior. And what an interior it is. More on that

later, but other manufacturers could take a lesson here.

Under the V90’s bonnet lies an anomaly of an engine, similar to the aircraft radial engines of World War II, which had mechanical supercharging and turbo charging which gave our aircraft high performance at any altitude. Volvo has introduced the same principal. They have downsized their engines to 2.0L with all the bells and whistles (DOHC, 16 valves, variable timing, direct injection, etc.) to produce an astounding 320 hp at a low 5,700 rpm (up 4 hp over the S90) and the same 295 pounds of twist from about 2,200-5,400 rpm. Low speed engine coarseness seemed less and unobtrusive. Power first gets multiplied by Volvo’s trick eight speeder torque converter cog swapper and then sent to all four wheels on an “as needed basis.”



Specifications
Price
$56,300 to $64,640
Engine (AWD)
2.0LDOHC 16valave direct injected, turbo and supercharged inline four cylinder
320 hp @ 5,700rpm
295 lb.-ft. of torque @ 2,200-5,400 rpm
Transmission
Eight-speed torque automatic

Configuration

Transverse front engine/front wheel drive/all wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 115.8 inches
Length 194.3 inches
Width 74.0 inches
Height 58.0 inches
Ground clearance 6.0 inches
Track (f/r 19-inch wheel) 63.7/63.9 inches
Weight 4,492 pounds
Furl capacity 15.9 gallons
Cargo volume 69 cubic feet
Trailer capacity 4,600 pounds
Wheels 19 inch alloys
Tires 255/50X19
Turning circle (wall to wall) 38.0 feet
Co-efficient of drag 0.30

Performance

0-60 mph 5.77 seconds
50-70 mph 2.96 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 4.39 seconds
Top speed 130 mph governor limited

Fuel Economy

EPA rated at 22/30/25 mpg city/highway/combined. Expect 25-26 mpg in mixed driving and 34-35 mpg on a level highway at legal speeds.

Volvo lists the 0-62 mph time at 6.1 seconds and my average to 60 mph was 5.77 seconds, perhaps a bit quicker than the Volvo guys. Passing was also equally as quick with a 50-70 mph level pass just taking 2.96 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade only slowed the V90 to 4.39 seconds. This is world class performance producing virtually identical numbers as S90. And with both a mechanical supercharger plus a turbo charger, there is absolutely no turbo lag. Zero, zip, nada.

On the flip side is the remarkable fuel economy returned by this near full-size 4,492-pound ride. EPA says it should achieve 22/30/25 mpg city/highway/combined. On a level highway with the cruise set at 70 mph the two-way average was 34.6 mpg. Overall the V90 averaged 25.8 mpg with almost no highway and plenty of suburban driving and it was aggressive. On the round trip to Carson City over the Sierra on Highway 50 the V90 average a decent 26.3 mpg. It certainly isn't a gas hog, if anything considering its world class performance, it's downright miserly.

Volvos in general have a slightly disconnected feel, perhaps it's the "fly by wire" systems, where everything is electronic. In aircraft, it used to be that all controls were mechanically connected giving pilots a direct, actual feel as to what the controls were doing. It's what made the P-51, T-28 or even a Beechcraft Bonanza such a pleasure to fly doing exactly what your inputs asked with perfect feedback and feel, ask any lucky pilot who flew one. Now everything is electronic, but the V90 has lots of cornering power and with its state of the art suspenders, wide 64-inch track, big 235/50 meats on 19-inch wheels and reasonably quick steering of 3.0 turns lock to lock it can dance in the twisties with the best sporting sedans. However, when pushed hard, the steering is slow to unwind.

Ride quality is firm but supple, the bigger the bump the better it does. On smooth roads, it is very smooth and it soaks up all minor road imperfections. It is quiet with no

wind, engine, road or tire noise.

Safety is Volvo’s forte, and the V90 is no exception, with automatic emergency braking, lane departure and every acronym in the book, plus massive four-wheel ventilated discs almost 14 inches in diameter in front. Volvo is a veritable buffet of safety. LED headlights are fabulous and they have standard AFS which follows steering inputs.

Perhaps the piece de résistance of this Volvo V90 is the sumptuous, but sporty interior. Quality is absolutely top of the line, with the softest and thickest leathers done is a warm natural tan. And there is plenty of it as it covers the seats and the center console. The rest of the materials are also first rate on the dash and door panels. Seats are sublime and rear seating is huge and also sublime.

So, what could be wrong? Perhaps in an attempt to mimic the Tesla big center info screen, Volvo does almost everything by touch screen and while it seemed better in the S90, it appeared more difficult to use in the V90. Sometimes it doesn’t take a finger touch, whatever it is it does not compliment the vehicle. Even voice input is more difficult. Changes need to be made to make this system more user friendly especially to those who are semi-computer illiterate. As a safety factor, operating the touch screen is also distracting.

Pricing starts for this V90 T6 AWD at a reasonable $56,300 plus $995 for the luxury liner from Gothenburg, Sweden. Geely of China may own Volvo, but it is still Swedish, with most parts sourced there except for the tranny which is imported from Japan. Options ran the total to $64,640 with the most noteworthy being the $3,200 stupendous Bowers and Wilkens sound system. It is meant to listen to music, especially rock as no matter the volume there is no distortion. And you can set to mimic yourself standing in front of a live stage. Amazing. Fix the sound system operation and the entire Volvo will be amazing. My preference leans toward the V90, same

exhilarating performance, equal handling, perhaps better looks and certainly more utility. And nobody has better leather, not even a Bentley.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.