

Romo – From Tahoe to the pro golf circuit?

By David Gardner, Bleacher Report

Although his football career with the Cowboys is finished and his basketball career with the Mavericks never got out of warm-ups, Tony Romo isn't through with professional sports: The 37-year-old former Dallas quarterback is attempting to qualify for the U.S. Open.

But first he will be returning in July to the American Century Championship in Stateline. This will be the first time he has played in the celebrity golf tournament in five years.

Romo has a long history on the links. He began as a boy, playing with his father, Ramiro (who eventually competed in the 2015 U.S. Senior Amateur). At Burlington (Wisconsin) High School, Tony Romo was a three-sport athlete, competing in football, basketball and golf. And although he didn't play much basketball beyond high school, he continued with a heavy golf course load even as he was looking for his break in the NFL.

Before his rookie season in 2003, Romo made his first attempt to qualify for the U.S. Open, finishing seven strokes shy in Chicago. In May 2004, he fell short in another run at the Open. Later that summer, he won the Tri-Course Golf Tournament in Racine, Wisc., before competing in Cowboys training camp. In fact, during that camp—which he entered as the No. 4 quarterback behind Quincy Carter, Vinny Testaverde and Drew Henson—Romo considered a permanent change in profession.

Although he never did make the cut for the U.S. Open, he found success in several other tournaments during those years, most notably the American Century Championship, a competition that pits celebrities and athletes against each other for a week at

Lake Tahoe each summer. Romo participated every year from 2007-12, coming in second place three times and never finishing worse than 11th.

Read the whole story

The expedition that forever affected Tahoe resources

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

Ever wonder why Lake Tahoe is split down the middle, with one half in California and the other half in Nevada? Are the two states just that good at sharing? The history of the split dates back to the 1840s and the early explorers of the American West, when mapmakers were beginning to chart the unknown territory, and California joined the Union as a state.

Lt. John C. Fremont, an American military officer and later a candidate for the U.S. presidency, was tasked with the first of three government surveying expeditions in 1843, according to the Truckee-Donner Historical Society. His team spent nine months charting the Northwest before finally heading south and coming upon the friendly Paiute tribe that camped on the land by Pyramid Lake, the geographical sink of the Truckee River Basin that sits 71 miles northeast of Lake Tahoe.

Sarah Winnemucca, granddaughter of the chief of the Paiute tribe at the time, writes of the meeting in "Life of Among the Piutes," "My grandfather met [Fremont], and they were soon friends ... Capt. Fremont gave my grandfather the name Capt. Truckee, and he also called the river after him. Truckee is an Indian word, it means all right or very well."

Read the whole story

Wet winter could create memorable EDC vintage

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – With the sudden heat wave, it can seem like last winter's deluge was in some other decade. For El Dorado County vintners, it's all in a day's work to contend with whatever Mother Nature brings.

Growing grapes is farming. And all farmers know they are at the whim of the weather.

Coming out of multiple years of drought, though, is bringing a bit of optimism to many in the foothills.



El Dorado County winemakers are thrilled with the moisture that fell this past winter. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Elliot and Sherrie Graham, owners of Busby Cellars, dry farm 7 of the 15 acres that are planted. That acreage without irrigation yielded 4 tons of grapes last year. This compares to 14 tons in 2012.

They are hoping this year will be similar to 2006 which followed two dry years. That vintage saw 40 tons of grapes from the whole 15 acres.

Grape vines can have roots that are 20-feet deep, so it takes a bit of water to reach that depth.

While many vineyards were sitting in several inches of water during the winter, this was no big deal because the vines are dormant. Trouble would come if that same ponding were to occur between now and harvest in late summer/early fall.

The abundance of winter moisture is expected to bring in yields that have not been recorded for years. And while robust

harvests can actually mean the quality is less, the opposite tends to be true when the higher tonnage comes after a year or two of dry conditions.



Vaughn Jodar respects Mother Nature, knowing she always has another lesson to teach.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

At Jodar Vineyard and Winery the rocky mountain side makes it near impossible to keep any moisture in the ground by the vines. Five wells on the 40-acre parcel provide water to the vineyard and the family house.

"Two years ago we were really frightened," owner Vaughn Jodar told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We were surprised we still had water."

Vineyard managers would draw on the wells early in the morning to irrigate, then overnight the aquifer was refreshed. The drought that finally came to an end this winter tested those wells more than they had been in the last 30 years.

"There are many lessons you don't want to learn, but Mother Nature will teach you," Jodar said.

The Placerville area received about 80 inches of rain this past winter. Bud-break was normal, coming in April. But a frost last month damaged vines in the region. At Madrona it hit some of the Chardonnay and Cabernet grapes.

“In 2015, a lot of berries didn’t mature, though the quality was off the charts,” Paul Bush, Madrona owner, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I think this could be a bumper crop and exceptional quality this year. It will depend on the summertime temperatures.”

Opinion: California’s courts are failing us

By Joe Mathews

Dig deep enough into California’s biggest problems, and you’ll hit upon a common villain: our court system.

California’s housing shortage, its poverty, its poor business climate, and its failing infrastructure all are explained in part by the failure of our underfunded, delay-prone courts. But in public narratives of what’s wrong with the state, we have mostly let the courts dodge responsibility for their many crimes against California’s future.



Joe Mathews

Why? Our courts have been broken for so long that we've stopped expecting them to work. And so we've become too accustomed to blaming others –regulators, politicians, unions, businesses or even President Trump – for our failure to build a state that meets its population's needs.

But the biggest reason why we've allowed the courts to skate responsibility involves a public underestimation of their importance. While the courts account for a small fraction of the state workforce and budget, they have a huge impact, serving as a faulty foundation for our state's economy and government.

Too often, Californians blame laws—like CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act—for costly delays in building housing or infrastructure, when more of the blame should go to the courts, argued Emile Haddad, the chairman and CEO of FivePoint, the largest developer of mixed-use communities in coastal California, at a recent Chapman University conference.

"I'm one of those probably odd developers who say they love CEQA," he said, because it protects open space and adds to the quality of life. The real problem, he said, is "the entire legal system." He recounted a project that got local government approval in 2003 and permits a decade ago, but still hasn't happened, as his company is now litigating its 30th lawsuit.

Such legal delays bear a heavy responsibility for our historic housing shortage and add to housing costs that are more than twice the national average. In turn, expensive housing is a huge factor in California's highest-in-the-nation poverty rate and its persistent homelessness. Poverty is now highest in coastal areas with the most development restrictions, which produce more litigation and costlier housing.

The same court-related delays and resulting costs also plague transportation and water projects, and new businesses. The

state courts so utterly failed to resolve California's prison problems that the U.S. Supreme Court had to step in. And while Californians love to mock our years-behind-schedule high-speed rail project, most of the project's delays involve the courts.

The delays are likely to get worse, as courts are being asked to do more with less. New state policies on sentencing and marijuana have created new questions and petitions that boost court workloads. And the courts still haven't recovered from Great Recession cuts that shuttered more than 50 courthouses and 200 courtrooms. Court officers in 49 of 58 counties warned in a February letter to Gov. Jerry Brown that without more money in this year's budget, they'll need to cut existing levels of service.

The pressure on the courts would be even worse if the total number of court filings hadn't declined by 25 percent over the last decade. But that may be bad news. Almost all the decline has been in small claims, challenges to infractions, and minor civil cases. Regular Californians have simply given up on seeking justice in our courts.

"Inadequate funding and chronic underfunding of the courts is just one way a justice system can become unjust," warned California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye in a recent speech, noting that since 2011 the state has added 6,408 laws while the judiciary budget has stagnated.

I recently walked three blocks from my office to the Stanley Mosk Courthouse in downtown Los Angeles. Amid the glitter of new urban development, the court building is an eyesore, with visible scars on its walls and roof. Inside, nothing—from bathrooms to WiFi—works particularly well. Lawyers receive trial dates more than two years in the future, court reporters are scarce, and overworked clerks scramble to keep things from breaking down. A lawyer acquaintance who took me around quoted Charles Dickens' "Bleak House," a 19th-century novel about the delays and injustice of England's Court of Chancery.

Broken courts, Dickens wrote, promote a crippling fatalism in society, “a loose belief that if the world go wrong, it was, in some off-hand manner, never meant to go right.”

It's way past time for California to pull itself out of this Dickensian muck. Yes, fixing our court system—making it the fastest and most efficient in the country—would be challenging politically. But it also would be relatively cheap, just a couple billion more dollars a year in a state with a \$150 billion budget and a \$2.5 trillion economy.

This budget season, let's return timely justice to the courts, and stop this crime against California's future.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Calif. wine country looking more like cannabis country

By Angela Hart, Sacramento Bee

The grapevines that line rolling hillsides and sweeping valleys in Northern California's wine country have become iconic — a symbol of the region's rustic charm that helped California earn its reputation as a world-class wine and food destination.

But winegrapes have new competition: weed.

California's legalization of recreational marijuana has led to the beginning of a major transformation of wine country. It's been just seven months, but already investors are snapping up property where wine was once produced. Vineyard operators are

developing expertise in cannabis cultivation. New, specialty marijuana businesses are sprouting up in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. And farmers who have long made a good living by growing and harvesting wine grapes are expressing interest in diversifying with marijuana.

Read the whole story

Ceremony in S. Lake Tahoe on Memorial Day

The American Legion Post 795 of South Lake Tahoe with members of the American Legion and the Ladies Auxiliary will be hosting the Memorial Day ceremony at Happy Homestead Cemetery on May 29.

The ceremony will take place at 11am at 1261 Johnson Blvd.

After the ceremony, the public is invited to join Legion and Auxiliary members for cake and refreshments at the American Legion Hall on Highway 50.

Originally known as Decoration Day, Memorial Day originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971.

Members of the Auxiliary will be collecting donations for poppies, which have become a symbol of Memorial Day. On May 26, beginning at 11am, Auxiliary members will be stationed at Grocery Outlet in South Lake Tahoe.

Happy Homestead is the final resting place to more than 560 veterans.

Traffic stop in Truckee leads to 2 arrests on drug charges

California Highway Patrol officers seized nearly 30 pounds of marijuana and arrested two people near Truckee.

Yi Wang, 39, and Jin Mei, 31, both of Chicago, each face charges of transportation for sale and possession of marijuana for sale.

Officers stopped the two on May 18 at about 4pm on Interstate 80 near Hirschdale Road on a routine traffic stop. A search ensued when false identification was reportedly presented, they didn't have paperwork for the rental car and the smell of marijuana was strong.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Virtual reality could give more people access to outdoors

By Shane Downing, Sierra

As you've probably heard by now, virtual reality technology—or VR—is shaking up industries as disparate as gaming and real estate, filmmaking and journalism, tourism and (no surprise there) pornography. The 360-degree video presentation, which

sometimes is also rendered as 3D, has the power to create immersive experiences that seem remarkably real. Now, some media producers and conservation organizations are experimenting with using VR to capture and communicate the experience of outdoor recreation.

Imagine: Someday soon you could scuba dive the Great Barrier Reef, canoe through the Everglades, or hike Half Dome in your bathrobe and slippers, from the comfort of your home.

Those who are experimenting with VR as a conservation tool acknowledge that the visceral experience of being outdoors can't be replicated easily. The intoxicating mountain air, dizzying heights, and sense of adventure of a mountain ascent are one-of-a-kind. "There's nothing that takes the place of actually being outside," says Connie Dassinger, a member of the Centennial Group of the Sierra Club's Georgia Chapter.

Read the whole story

Wet winter should delay wildfire season

With one of the biggest winters in years and the snowpack level well above normal, it is expected that the excessive precipitation will likely push the start of the fire season back a couple months.

The National Interagency Fire Center and Reno National Weather Service are leaning toward July/August time frame for the grasses to cure, dry, and for fire season to heat up.

"The fire season has the potential to get busy quickly mid- to

late summer once we have a few good heat waves, the snow is gone and grasses have cured and dried,” reported Edan Weishahn with the Weather Service.

A delayed fire season could mean a shorter season if winter arrives on schedule.

Road Beat: Tesla's house of cards

By Larry Weitzman

There is an adage in the auto industry, especially among car dealers: “We lose money on every car, but we make it up in volume.” Obviously, if you sell your cars or any product at a loss, more volume just magnifies the loss. That appears to be the business plan of Tesla Inc. (formally known as Tesla Motors), the maker and seller of the much-heralded Tesla electric car.

Now connect the first adage with the dot com bubble saying that in the late 1990s as tech companies were losing ever more money, their stocks prices climbed, the bigger the loss, the bigger the stock price gain and you have the Tesla business model. It is the current description of what is happening to Tesla.

Tesla earnings for the first quarter of 2017 was a loss of \$330 million on just \$2.7 billion in sales. In the almost five years that the Model S has been in production, Tesla has had only two profitable quarters, which profits were achieved by the sale of fictitious zero emission vehicle credits to other manufacturers. For all prior quarters, Tesla has never made a

profit from the sale of their cars which income included the sale of ZEV credits.

In fact, in those two “profitable quarters, the first quarter of 2013, Tesla had earnings of just \$11 million but their income included \$85 million in ZEV credits so their loss on car sales was in fact \$74 million and in the third quarter of 2016 when Tesla reported a profit of \$22 million, ZEV credit sales totaled \$139 million meaning the loss on car sales was about \$117 million.

But the stock continues to climb from about \$40 a share in early 2013 when I first wrote about this house of cards and its inability to earn money because electric cars are too expensive and impractical (range anxiety and refueling anxiety) to a current \$310; the all-time high was \$325. That without the government mandating electric cars and government subsidies, electric cars cannot compete with conventional cars.

Now with that huge loss in the first quarter this year, Tesla stock has climbed to over \$300 a share. Tesla’s market cap (total value of its stock) now exceeds the value of GM and Ford. And that begs a question. How many cars did Tesla sell last year (answer: about 76,000). GM and Ford sold about 8 million and 6.7 million cars, respectively. GM earnings for the last five years’ total about \$32 billion and for Ford it was about \$30 billion. Tesla has lost over \$2 billion over the same period and without ZEV credits that loss would have been \$600 million more and federal tax credits to buyers totaled about \$300 million (state credits would add another \$50 million to \$100 million as California alone has paid out \$38 million), so without direct government help, Tesla losses would have totaled about \$3 billion.

Looking at it another way, according to *AutoNews*, last quarter, GM earned a profit of \$1,418 and Ford \$1,174 for every car they sold throughout the world. Tesla lost \$15,855

for every car it sold. And the market cap of Tesla is about equal to Ford or GM? And we haven't even discussed the hard assets (land and buildings) of each company. Something doesn't make "cents" here.

And it's not like Tesla has some patent or proprietary information. GM is already producing a pure EV, the Chevy Bolt that has a range of about 230 miles with terrific reviews and it retails for about \$40,000. Tesla's not yet in production Model 3 is alleged to have a price of \$35,000, but insiders tell us that all Model 3s will sticker for \$50,000 or more as they will come optioned up. And even if the price were \$60,000, it is questionable whether at that \$60K price Tesla will make any money on the Model 3. GM is losing money on the Bolt as well, but their other profitable production allows them to do so. In other words, other GM customers are subsidizing the Bolt.

Tesla's average sale price is about \$108,000 and considering its loss per car, it would need an average sales price of \$125,000 per car to break even. Most buyers receive \$10,000 back in federal and state tax credits that you pay. Tesla's most expensive car is the P100D at \$140,000 (price went up in the last few weeks from \$134,500) and the Model X starts at, \$82,500 and goes up to about \$100,000 for the 100-kWh Model X. However, the base model S 75D starts at \$70,000 going up to \$97,500 for the 100D.

If you talk to most people on the street, they believe batteries are improving. The reality is they are not. Battery technology and chemistry is essentially the same for the Tesla sports car of ten years ago, as it is today for the Model S and X. The key word here is chemistry which describes what a battery is, a chemical reaction. There is nothing new under the sun and there is nothing in the foreseeable future to change that unless a new element is discovered which shall be named "Unobtainium."

Without government mandates and subsidizes, Tesla would have folded years ago, just as other start up battery car companies have done and the Baker Electric car did which owned the car market in 1902. When government subsidies terminate such as the tax credits and ZEV credits, Tesla's prices will have to increase by as much as \$30,000 per vehicle. According to Strategic Vision, Tesla buyers now have an annual average income of \$320,000. With respect to Tesla, the poor and middle class are subsidizing the wealthier.

And Elon Musk, who made his first millions selling PayPal to EBay, and who owns about 27 percent of Tesla is now worth over \$10 billion. I hope he cashes in on a billion or two while he can.

The problem for any electric car is that batteries do not have sufficient energy density to compete with gasoline or diesel and the refueling process of batteries is time consuming and cumbersome and if everyone used electric cars, without nuclear energy producing the power, the cost per mile for electricity would probably be more expensive than gasoline. And right now, many utilities are subsidizing EV energy costs, meaning that you are paying for that, too.

Let's hope if and when Tesla folds, we do not hear politicians claiming "It's too big to fail."

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.