Ski demo event on North Shore

Alpenglow Sports has partnered with Alpine Meadows Ski Resort for the 5th annual Alpine Touring and Telemark Demo Event on Feb. 11 from 9am-3pm.

The event will provide a forum to perpetuate the enthusiasm for all aspects of in-area and backcountry skiing.

Free to all, the event will showcase the latest and greatest in both telemark and alpine touring equipment. Participating vendors will include Black Diamond, Dynafit, G3, Scarpa, Garmont, Marker, Volkl, DPS, Moment and SkiLogic.

Participants must possess a valid lift ticket or season pass purchased from Alpine Meadows or Squaw Valley, along with a driver's license and credit card for deposit.

For more information, call (530) 583.6917.

Glider plane makes emergency landing at Heavenly

Updated Feb. 5 at 8:40pm.

By Kathryn Reed

A glider plane made an unexpected landing at Heavenly Mountain Resort on Sunday afternoon.

There are no reports of injuries.

“We had one of our instructors with an experienced pilot on a flight review who got on the wrong side of the mountain and had to land,” Dan Schuler with Soaring NV out of Minden told *Lake Tahoe News*. The company operates the glider business out of the Minden Tahoe Airport.

Winds were calm to almost non-existent Feb. 5.

Schuler said he was not permitted to release the names of the people involved. He did say no one was injured.

A witness told *Lake Tahoe News* when she was on the Nevada side of Heavenly she saw the glider disengage from the plane as is normal. But then she got to the California side just after 1pm and the plane was landing near the beginner lift by the California Lodge.

No one from Heavenly returned phone calls.

A dispatcher with El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department said the U.S. Forest Service is handling the case. The Forest Service said the incident was on private property.

The National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration could not be reached Sunday.

Opinion: When will the campaign get serious?

By Thomas Sowell

The Republican candidates' circular firing squad now seems to be using machine guns. Whoever the eventual "last man standing" turns out to be, he may not be standing very tall or very steadily on his feet – and he may be a pushover for Barack Obama in the general election, thanks to fellow Republicans.

Whether you are a Democrat, a Republican or an independent, this is a very serious and historically crucial time for the United States of America. What Mitt Romney did or did not do when he was with Bain Capital, or what Newt Gingrich did or did not say to his ex-wife, are things that should be left for the tabloids.

With the economy still faltering and Iran on its way to getting nuclear bombs, surely we can get serious about the issues facing this nation. Or can we?



Thomas
Sowell

Mitt Romney's boasts about what he did at Bain Capital are as irrelevant as Newt Gingrich's demagogic attacks on Romney's role there. Romney is not running to become head of Bain Capital.

While Gingrich backed away from his demagoguery about Bain Capital, Romney is continuing to press ahead with his charges that Gingrich was a lobbyist for Freddie Mac. As someone who has been a consultant, but never a lobbyist, I know the difference.

As a consultant, I have offered advice to people in government and in private organizations, both businesses and non-profit organizations. But I have never gone to a government official to urge that official to make a decision favorable to those who were paying me, or to those for whom I did free consulting.

It takes two to tango, and lobbying requires not only a lobbyist but also someone who is being lobbied. With more than 500 people in Congress alone who could have been lobbied, and additional officials in the bureaucracies, if Romney cannot find even a single person to say that Gingrich lobbied him or her, then it is long past time for him to either put up or shut up.

On the other hand, if Romney just wants to sling a lot of mud in Newt's direction and hope that some of it sticks, then that should tell the voters a lot about Romney's character.

So much of what has been said by various Republican candidates, as well as by the media, has been in the nature of unsubstantiated, peripheral or irrelevant talking points for or against particular candidates, rather than serious statements about serious issues confronting the nation.

So common has this approach become that even some conservative writers have come to the defense of John King, the CNN reporter who opened the South Carolina debate with a question about Newt Gingrich's former wife. These writers have declared that question "legitimate," in some undefined sense.

If all that "legitimate" means is that John King was not doing anything that many other reporters would have done in the same circumstances, that is making common practice a substitute for our own judgments about what is and is not relevant in a given context. Neither the audience in that room nor the millions watching on television were there to find out about Newt Gingrich's marital problems. If it is a common practice for

the media to focus on such things, so much the worse for the media – and for the country.

"The politics of personal destruction" – as Bill Clinton called it, and as he himself practiced it – is not the way to solve the nation's problems. It has already poisoned the well of political discourse this season and claimed Herman Cain as its first victim, on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations by women with checkered pasts of their own.

Whether Herman Cain was good, bad or indifferent as a candidate, and whether his chances of winning the Republican nomination were substantial or non-existent is not the issue. Nor is this the issue as regards Newt Gingrich, Mitt Romney or any other candidate.

Poisoning the well of political discourse may be one of the reasons why we see such unsatisfactory sets of candidates for political office in both parties, not only this year but in previous election years as well.

Many able and decent people are understandably reluctant to subject themselves and their families to a mud-slinging contest or to media "gotcha" questions. The creeping acceptance of such practices is hardly a justification, but is itself part of the degeneration of our times.

The time is long overdue to get serious.

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute and author of "The Housing Boom and Bust".

Squaw Valley is topic of Placer County planning meeting

Placer County planning commissioners will discuss proposed changes to Squaw Valley at the Feb.9 meeting.

The meeting is at the North Tahoe Event Center, 8318 North Lake Blvd. The meeting start is at 10am.

More information is online.

Study: Nevada's science curriculum receives a D grade

B**y Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau**

CARSON CITY – As Gov. Brian Sandoval and the Board of Education move ahead with the selection of a state schools chief to push forward with education reform, a new report gives another reason for urgency: Nevada has received a D grade for its science standards from a national group.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute this week released its report, "The State of State Science Standards 2012", and if there is any good news, it is that Nevada is not alone in its poor marks.

"American science performance is lagging as the economy becomes increasingly high tech, but our current science standards are doing little to solve the problem," the report

says. “Reviewers evaluated science standards for every state for this report and their findings were deeply troubling: The majority of states earned D’s or F’s for their standards in this crucial subject, with only six jurisdictions receiving A’s.”

The District of Columbia and five states: California, Indiana, Massachusetts, South Carolina and Virginia received A’s. Seventeen states received D’s. Another 10 received F’s.

Nevada received two of seven points for content and rigor, and one of three points for clarity and specificity for its science standards.

The report said: “The Nevada science standards are lamentably brief. Complicating matters, educators must piece together information from two separate and confusing documents to form a complete picture of what students must know and be able to do. Altogether, the materials furnish a very shaky foundation in the sciences.”

Ray Bacon, executive director of the Nevada Manufacturers Association and a long-time advocate for education reform, said the report isn’t all bad news for Nevada.

“The good news is, that this is a test, if you take a look at the last time this thing was scored, which I think was either three or four years ago, Nevada was pretty much down at the bottom of the pole,” he said. “So we’ve done something in our science programs to move up substantially. I think that is wonderful. We have a long way to go, obviously.”

Bacon said Nevada still has inequities in its science programs statewide because of the difficulty some districts have, particularly rural districts, in recruiting qualified chemistry, biology and physics teachers. A teacher shortage problem in the past in the Clark County School District also led to the use of long-term substitutes to teach math and science, he said.

Bacon said the recent adoption by the state Board of Education of the Common Core State Standards could make further improvement in science a challenge because the focus will be on English and math.

“I hate the thought but I suspect that we probably are not going to make as much progress in the next couple of years as we have made in the last few years because the common core standards are going to shift the focus back to the two primaries,” he said.

But getting the math standards in place will make it easier in the future to address the science standards, Bacon said.

The report identified four areas in particular where science standards are flawed: In the handling of evolution in the face of anti-evolutionary pressures; standards that are so vague as to be meaningless; attempting to teach science through discovery instead of direct instruction of specific content; and failing to link math to science.

In commenting on the findings, Fordham President Chester Finn Jr. said: “If America is to remain a prosperous, scientifically-advanced and economically competitive nation, then we must ensure that every school is teaching science to a very high standard. In this subject as in others reviewed by Fordham experts, the states set the bar, prescribing what schools should teach and students need to learn. They then develop assessments keyed to those standards. If our expectations are low and unclear, we’re guaranteeing the failure of our students and the weakening of our nation.”

Sandoval pushed hard for education reform in the 2011 legislative session, and has said the appointment of a new schools chief will be one of his most important as governor.

The Nevada Board of Education is set to interview five finalists next month for the position of state superintendent of public instruction. Three names will be forwarded to

Sandoval for his final selection.

Education reform is also viewed by policy makers as a key element of Nevada's efforts to grow and diversify its economy by producing an educated and well-trained workforce.

California gasoline consumption continues to drop

By Nancy Rivera Brooks, Los Angeles Times

California drivers are keeping their feet on the brakes, with gasoline demand falling for eight months in a row.

Gasoline consumption in California totaled 1.23 billion gallons in October, down 1.8 percent from the 1.26 gallons used the previous October, according to a report released Tuesday by California State Board of Equalization Chairman Jerome E. Horton. The last time gas use increased was in January 2011, when consumption rose 2.7 percent. Consumption was flat in February.

"High gas prices appear to be directly affecting fuel consumption in California," Horton said. "We are seeing a trend of Californians consuming less gasoline in the last eight months of 2011.

"We'll see what coming months show as California begins to turn the corner and shows signs of economic growth."

Read the whole story

Mancuso tops podium in super G

By USSA

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany – Three-time Olympic medalist Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley attacked a gnarly Garmisch super G that forced 14 racers off course to win her first Audi FIS Alpine World Cup of the season.

The victory, Mancuso's career sixth, completed a U.S. Ski Team weekend sweep following Lindsey Vonn's of Vail historic victory in the opening downhill.

It was Mancuso's fourth podium of the season.

Frigid temperatures and extremely flat light added to the difficult conditions.

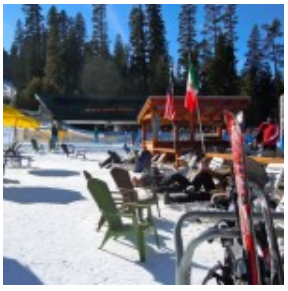
"At this point in my career, I really want to win. I go into every race with that attitude and I knew that today – just like the other super G's – you have to put it all on the line," Mancuso said. "You can't hold back at all if you want to win a super G. When I crossed the finish line, I thought, 'if that wasn't good enough, then I don't know what is'."

Plenty of snow to keep skiers happy at Sierra

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – A good midmorning parking space and no problem finding two Adirondack chairs at West Bowl on a Saturday in February. It must be the winter of 2011-12.

With all the kvetching about the dismal snowpack, skiers and boarders are staying away from the slopes. That was our good fortune Feb. 4. No lift lines, no beer lines, great seats to bask in the sun. Even better, the snow on Dogwood at Sierra-at-Tahoe was exceptional – and not just because our expectations were so low. It really was great skiing.



A warm, sunny day Feb. 4 has people relaxing at West Bowl. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The rest of the resort – of which 80 percent is open – was pretty good. While we didn't hit every run, we got in a good sampling. Lower Main is slick on spots – but that isn't unusual. And no moguls made me smile all the way down.

Upper Powderhorn is a bit gnarly. For someone who learned to

ski in California, I called it icy. For Sue, who learned to ski on the true blue ice of Vermont, she calls it hard pack.

Watching her zip down the run I needed binoculars to see her at the bottom. She's just that much better and faster than me in these conditions.

But once off the upper part, the rest of the way down Powderhorn was fun for both of us. (In my book, ice, or whatever one calls it, is not fun.)

Beaver is fine to navigate, but it's weird to see some flora popping up through the snow. But that's better than dirt or rocks.

No rocks were visible on any run, but a few parts are getting thin. Signage is good to warn people.

Groomers are doing a bang-up job of servicing the runs.

Grandview lodge is open for drinks, but not food. Steve Hemphill, spokesman for the resort, said the lack of visitors doesn't make it economically viable to have the restaurant open.

Because the lift by the same name did not open until well into the season, it was a while before anyone realized a pipe had burst at Grandview lodge. Repairs are still being made.

Baja Grill is serving up its Mexican specialties Friday-Saturday-Sunday. Until riders figure out the slopes are worth visiting, the resort can't justify keeping the West Bowl eatery open seven days a week.

With a chance of snow Monday night and a 30 percent chance on Tuesday, there may be a couple powder days to plan for this week.

Opinion: Disarming the hooligan fans among us

By Andy Brooks and Steve Weber

On any given Sunday, you never know who will win an NFL game.

But if you've been to the 'Stick or many other stadiums this year, you know one thing: Fans' actions toward the opposing team's fans will go beyond just emotional or angry to sometimes threatening and even violent.

And it's not just in the United States: A riot after a soccer game in Egypt this week left 74 dead when local fans chased the supporters of the visiting team with knives, clubs and stones up against a locked gate at an exit.

Is the behavior at U.S. football stadiums hooliganism in the making? That's what the British called the unruly behavior that came to dominate their soccer stadiums in the early 1980s. Police in riot gear had to escort each team's fans to and from games. At the stadium, a wall of riot police stood between opposing fans. A game meant tear gas obstructing the field, homemade explosives lobbed at opposing fans and players, and racist chants.

Things have improved in the United Kingdom since then. But is this the NFL's future?

Andy Brooks is a doctoral student at UC Berkeley's School of Information and grew up rooting for the 49ers and A's. Steven Weber is a faculty member at the same school, but devotes his

life to the New York Giants and the Yankees.

Read the whole story

Forum for South Shore businesses

Businesses in South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County are invited to a forum to learn about what low-cost, no-cost services and loans are available.

The Feb. 29 3:30-5:30pm forum is being put on by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and Lake Tahoe Community College.

The meeting is at Lake Tahoe Community College's board room in South Lake Tahoe.

To reserve a seat or for more information, call (775) 588.1728, ext. 303 or email emily@tahoechamber.org.