U.S. men blow away snowboardcross competitors at X Games

By USSA

ASPEN -– Nate Holland of Squaw Valley, Nick Baumgartner of Iron River, Mich., and Jayson Hale of Sierraville led U.S. Snowboarding to a clean sweep of the snowboardcross podium at Winter X Games.

Alex Deibold of Manchester Center, Vt., was next in fourth, demonstrating the depth of the U.S. team. Holland's time of 1:27.57 was a commanding half second ahead of Baumgartner's 1:28.01.

Lindsey Jacobellis of Stratton Mountain, Vt., injured her knee two days before the event and was not able to defend her title, breaking her streak at four consecutive wins. Canadian Dominque Maltais won the women's event.

This is Holland's fifth X Games snowboardcross gold.

Nick Baumgartner, who won gold in 2011, earned silver

Hale took bronze for the second time in his X Games career.

"It always feels great to be on top. I knew I just had to ride my heart out and back my words up and I was able to do that. I am fired up to be back on top," Holland said.

Reno’s Wise brings home X Games gold in ski superpipe

By USSA

ASPEN -– U.S. Freeskiing’s David Wise of Reno averaged airs of 17 feet en route to the Winter X Games ski superpipe title. His 93 on his second run of three nailed down the win for the 21-year-old, the oldest competitor on the podium in only his second X Games. Teammate Torin Yater-Wallace of Basalt, Colo., 16, was third for the second Winter X medal of his career.

This is Wise’s won first Winter X Games medal.

Wise’s winning run was a switch left double 1080 Japan grab, right 900 true tail grab, left 900 true nose grab, ally-oop flat 540 true tail grab (20 feet out of halfpipe), left double 1260 mute grab.

“I just didn’t think about it as pressure. I focused on the perfect halfpipe and perfect conditions,” Wise said. “I wanted to show the world who I am and what I can do. Thanks to everyone for giving me the opportunity to show you what I can do in the pipe.”

Reno-Sparks taking new approach to promoting area

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Four weeks into his new job, Chris Baum has been a busy CEO at the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority.

A new marketing campaign targeting Northern California will be up and running by March 1. The tourism agency's slogan, "Far from expected," is gone. And the word is out to staff: As a destination, Reno-Tahoe will not escape prospective tourists' attention.

"We want people to have Reno-Tahoe tops in their minds, whether they want it or not … something they can't escape," Baum told the RSCVA board Thursday in his first monthly report. "We are keeping the logo. It's good, solid and competitive. 'Far from expected' is dead. We're not using that anymore.

"I think we can do a lot better, and we will," he said. "We're getting somewhere in my first 27 days. There's a lot more to come. No reason to waste time."

Baum's no-nonsense demeanor in the face of recession impressed board members – just as it did in December when they unanimously approved him after a two-hour interview. "Way to hit the ground running," said Beth Cooney, executive director of marketing at John Ascuaga's Nugget.

Read the whole story

USFS to set several prescribed fires in Tahoe basin

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will continue prescribed fire operations in various locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin on Jan. 30.

Operations may be carried out in Emerald Bay, Kingsbury Grade, Kings Beach, or the Bunker area of Tahoe City. Locations and size of the operations will depend on conditions at each site. Operations may continue through the week.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from these prescribed fire project areas. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed.

To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, No. 6.

Lecture about heart health

In honor of National Heart Month and Barton cardiologist David Young’s strong belief in preventative care, he is scheduled to

speak at Kahle Community Center on Feb. 1 from 6-7pm.

Young will address cardiovascular risk factors and heart health.

Kahle is located at 236 Kingsbury Grade, Stateline.

For more information on this free lecture, go online.

Ma Nature, lack of publicity hurt El Dorado wineries

By Kathryn Reed

FAIR PLAY – Not a cloud in the sky, not many people in the wineries. From a consumer standpoint the first day of the El Dorado County barrel tasting event was great. From the viewpoint of some of the 27 wineries that are part of the event, Saturday was disappointing.

Coming off a harvest that was bizarre by most definitions, having a special event that is less than successful is not welcome. The event continues today. But at $35 for the weekend, it is more money than 2011.



Barrel tasting continues

today at designated El Dorado County wineries. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Some industry officials who spoke to *Lake Tahoe News* off the record on Jan. 28 attributed the less than stellar turn out to the public relations-marketing firm that is in its first year for El Dorado Winery Association.

The latest stats on the website are from March 2011. The latest press release is from February 2009.

Twenty-seven wineries were on the list this year as participants in the barrel tasting event – one more than 2011. In 2010, 1,200 tickets were sold, while 2,000 were sold in 2011. Ticket sales for this year have not been released.

An increase in price during a recession could be a contributing factor to the decline of participants in this event that started in 2007. This year the weekend pass is $35 (tickets still available for today), compared to $20 or $25 for the two days in 2011. No Sunday-only tickets were for sale, as was the case last year for a price less than the weekend rate.

A Fair Play winery said the barrel tasting event in 2011 attracted about 1,400 visitors. About 10 were at this particular winery midday Saturday. Usually people are flowing out of the tasting area – even when the weather has been less than ideal.

Lake Tahoe News reporters are used to having to struggle to get to the counter to get a pour. Of the five wineries visited Saturday, the opposite was the case.



Vines are dormant -- but it's still dry, as evidenced by the brown at Skinner vineyard.

Besides the lack of people, the lack of rain is everywhere. Brown terrain proves moisture has been scarce. Cows are munching on grass in fields that are normally green and several inches tall.

John Latcham, who manages the vineyards for Latcham Winery, says he knows of people who have already started to irrigate.

“If this continues, we’ll be irrigating soon,” Latcham said. “The water table is way down.”

The irony about this dry winter is last year was extraordinarily wet – setting records for moisture totals in so many parts of Northern California.

But growing grapes is farming. And farmers and Mother Nature have a love-hate relationship. The love seems to be lukewarm based on the inconsistencies.

Last year at this time Single Leaf Vineyards had 70 inches if rain. This year 10 inches have been recorded. Pam Miller, who owns the winery with her husband, said someplace in between would be ideal.

“Don’t tell me there is not climate change,” Miller told *Lake Tahoe News*. “There is no doubt Northern California is changing.”

With the abundance of moisture a year ago, which kept coming during the fall harvest of grapes, it meant Latcham lost 40 percent of its harvest. The white grapes were off the vine before the problems arose, but the reds – especially the tender Zinfandel grapes – were hit hard.



Scott Miller is about to pour from the barrel Jan. 28 at Single Leaf.

The rain drops the sugar content of the grapes.

“Not only was it a difficult harvest, it was expensive,” Latcham said.

Bunch rot was a problem for some wineries.

Still, winemakers believe the 2011 vintage will be good.

“We’re optimistic about 2011,” said Greg Baiocchi, winemaker at Miraflores.

What will come of 2012 remains to be seen. This is the normal dormant season for the vines. Every place is below normal for rainfall, but there is still time for that to be made up.

Bowman snags silver in ski superpipe at X Games

By Colin Bain, XGames.com

ASPEN, Colo. – Canadian skier Roz Groenewoud – better known in the action sports world as "Roz G" – won her first Winter X Games gold in the Women's Ski SuperPipe in an emotional final that became a celebration of the memory of Groenewoud's longtime friend and teammate Sarah Burke.

Like most of the skiers in Saturday's competition and many of the other athletes at Winter X Games 2012 this week, Groenewoud wore a red "Sarah" sticker on her helmet in tribute to Burke, the 2011 SuperPipe champion and four-time Winter X Games gold medalist whose death Jan. 19 after a SuperPipe training accident in Park City, Utah, has hung heavy over Winter X Games 2012.

"It means so much," said Groenewoud, tearing up at the base of the SuperPipe at Buttermilk after taking a Run 3 victory lap. "After the tribute for Sarah on Thursday I was just so proud to be a skier. The outpouring of love from the community was just absolutely amazing, and Friday morning in training and all of today I just tried to let all of that love lift me up. It feels so great. I definitely felt like I had Sarah with me. She was my teammate for so long."

Groenewoud beat out Maddie Bowman of South Lake Tahoe and Brita Sigourney for the win after posting a score of 93.66 and taking the lead from Bowman in Run 2 with a massive 14-foot

safety grab and a run featuring a 900, back-to-back 540s, a left-side 720 and a switch 540 traveling down the pipe. Bowman’s Run 2 score of 92.00 held for the silver medal, and Sigourney blasted to third place in Run 3 with 90.66 after landing the only 1080 of the competition.

Read the whole story

Incline office of USFS to resume regular hours

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit office in Incline Village will return to its normal hours beginning Feb. 1. Normal hours are Wednesday through Friday from 8am until 4:30pm.

The North Shore office issues wilderness permits for Desolation Wilderness, as well as national recreation passes, including the Access, Senior and Annual Interagency passes. It also sells maps and offers hiking, biking, backpacking, off-highway vehicle and other recreation information for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The North Shore office is located at 855 Alder Ave., Incline Village and the phone number is (775) 831.0914.

Local-food movement gets verbal support from El Dorado County officials

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The grass-roots (and grass-fed) agriculture revolution that Patty Chelseth started last summer is picking up steam.

Chelseth, of My Sisters' Farm in Shingle Springs, has launched a campaign to get a "Local Food and Community Self-Governance" ordinance. Her effort got a warm reception Tuesday from the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

Although supervisors did not pass anything with teeth, they gave strong verbal support to Chelseth and others who believe they are starting a revolution against onerous state regulations that hurt small farmers.

"I am personally appalled that they will come onto my ranch and tell me I can't share my cow or I can't share my chickens," said Supervisor Ray Nutting, after speaking of his homesteading, cow-milking, (and chicken-decapitating) grandmother. "Whatever we need to do, I'm in full support."

Chelseth was backed by more than 20 speakers and more than 100 onlookers who overflowed the board's meeting room.

Her cause began last year when the California Department of Food and Agriculture issued a cease and desist order against Chelseth. She was selling shares of cows on her farm in an attempt to deal with rules that prohibited her from selling raw milk directly to consumers.

She only keeps two cows.

Sheriff John D'Agostini told supervisors he consulted with the

district attorney about Chelseth.

“I made the decision that the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office was not going to be the milk police,” he said. “So I support this ordinance.”

Read the whole story

Not all wetlands are created equal

By Rachel Nuwer, New York Times

To many, it’s a familiar scenario: a strip mall suddenly pops up in what was once a desolate quagmire or boggy boondock.

But people are coming to realize that these seemingly wasted plots where land meets water provide a valuable ecological service. In addition to nurturing biodiversity, wetlands purify water, produce fish, store carbon dioxide that would otherwise contribute to global warming, and protect shorelines from floods, storm surges and erosion.

Since the early 20th century, development has claimed over half the wetlands in North America, Europe, Australia and China. To repair the damage from those construction binges and regain the benefits of wetlands, restoration has become a booming business.

Yet new research calls into question whether manmade versions can ever compensate for wetlands buried beneath parking lots and subdivisions. In an article published on Tuesday in PLoS Biology, scientists write that restoration efforts often fall short of returning wetlands to their former biological

complexity and functioning.

“In traditional restoration, people repair hydrology, put in some plants, and after a few years say the wetlands are good,” said David Moreno-Mateos, a wetland ecologist at the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve at Stanford University and the lead author of the paper. “But if you look at what’s really going on down there, you see the processes are not recovering.”

“One of the results from this study is that we need to undertake more specific restoration measures focused on recovering processes, not just nice, beautiful wetlands with ducks,” said Dr. Moreno-Mateos, who conducted the research at the University of California, Berkleley.

Read the whole story