Tennis players being aced out of court availability

By Kathryn Reed

Tennis doesn’t get talked about much as a reason for tourists to visit the South Shore, while Tahoe City and Truckee are a draw for people looking for good courts.

Maybe it has something to do with the quality of and accessibility to courts in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin that makes the difference.

But it’s also locals on the South Shore, particularly on the California side, who are put off by what is going on with the myriad courts.



Lack of accessibility to South Tahoe High School's tennis courts is an issue for the public paying for them. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Community College has offered tennis classes for

years, and will again this fall. It used to be taught at Tahoe Paradise Park, then South Tahoe Middle School and now at South Tahoe High School.

The college's master plan includes courts, but last week they were stripped from the five-year facilities schedule because college President Kindred Murillo said there's no way they'll be built in that time span.

LTCC's classes keep changing locations because the courts keep deteriorating to the point they are dangerous to play on.

The three courts at Tahoe Paradise Park near Meyers were locked because of the horrible condition they were in. Two have been resurfaced, but are sitting without paint and lines – therefore, unusable. The groundskeeper says expect them to be playable in September. Only two are being fixed; the other is left as an eyesore.

The four courts at South Tahoe Middle School are open to anyone, but a "use at your own risk" sign should be placed there because of the numerous cracks.

South Tahoe High School's six courts were resurfaced as part of the Measure G bond that was passed by voters in 2008. The problem is accessibility.

The district wants to keep its $400,000 investment pristine, but that means a lock is on the courts when no one is there monitoring them. Skateboarder and cyclists are the users not wanted on the courts.

Justin Clark has the key. But it requires calling him ahead of time to open the courts or go during scheduled public time. For instance, *Lake Tahoe News* went to the courts on Wednesday at 1:30pm and found them locked, no one playing. The STHS court schedule does not favor the public when the high school tennis teams are not using them.

And the schedule is not posted on the courts – you'd have to read this story or have another connection to know the hours.

Clark is also LTCC's tennis instructor. Plus, he runs a for-profit tennis academy at the courts.

"We are not getting money from him. He has to put money back into the facilities, like $3,000 worth of backboards that he paid for," Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of Clark.

Those backboards should be up by the end of the month, according to Clark.

People have been dismayed they have to pay to use the courts when in the past they have been free. People have been complaining to *Lake Tahoe News* that they don't want to have to reserve a court, nor do they want to pay Clark.

To appease the general public, some of who are the taxpayers paying for the courts, the district is looking at putting in a card key for next summer. Rates have not been established, nor how it would work for the person just wanting to play once or twice.

This source of revenue for the district could then be used for future upkeep to the courts, and not go into an individual's pocket – something people have concerns with.

Clark would like to turn the courts at STHS into what Douglas County has at Zephyr Cove Park. It costs to play at those six public courts, plus there is a ladder and other tennis events.

The Tahoe Tennis Classic was at Zephyr Cove earlier this month.

Other tournaments in the basin include the 30th annual Incline Open that was last weekend and the Northstar Tennis Open the weekend of Sept. 10-12.

Incline Village Tennis Center has 11 courts.

Northstar-at-Tahoe has for years been singled out in *Tennis* magazine as a place to travel to play tennis. It has 10 courts and tons of camps for all ages.

Granlibakken resort in Tahoe City has been home to the Nike tennis program for years.

Tahoe City Public Utility District Parks and Recreation runs public courts –eight of them.

The only covered court in the basin is at Ridge Tahoe on Upper Kingsbury Grade. To use it, you must be a guest or owner of a time-share.

Evolution of Tahoe Travel event

Learn about the evolution of Tahoe travel from renowned U.S. Forest Service historian and recreation officer Don Lane on Aug. 24 at 8pm at the Lake of the Sky Amphitheater on the South Shore

Lane knows Tahoe and had published “Tahoe Tales of Bygone Days and Memorable Pioneers,” which will be part of the talk.

The talk is free, but donations will be accepted by the Tahoe Heritage Foundation to support the Taylor Creek Summer Speaker Series.

For more information, call (530) 543.2674.

Dugard-inspired bill would keep ‘dangerous’ prisoners locked up

By Maria L. La Ganga, Los Angeles Times

Two months after Phillip and Nancy Garrido were sentenced for the kidnap and rape of Jaycee Lee Dugard, a group of Northern California legislators introduced a bill to reform the state parole system and keep “dangerous, life-term prisoners” behind bars.

“Although we can’t undo the mistakes of the past, we can make systemic improvements so that all Californians are safer and that victims know government is working to protect them,” said Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, who introduced the bill Wednesday. “Senate Bill 391 is for those Californians who will never become victims because society’s most dangerous criminals are kept where they should be – behind bars.”

Phillip Garrido was on federal parole for a 1976 kidnap and rape when he and his wife abducted Dugard as the then-11-year-old was walking to the school bus in her South Lake Tahoe neighborhood. They held her for 18 years in a ramshackle compound in Antioch, where she gave birth to two daughters after being raped repeatedly by Garrido.

Read the whole story

Benefit for Christmas Cheer

What do you get when you combine networking, local charity, and a bar with karaoke – a Tahoe Regional Young Professionals' August FUNdraiser at Murphy's Irish Pub on Aug. 25 at 7:30pm.

It is a benefit Christmas Cheer All Year, the food bank in South Lake Tahoe.

The outdoor patio will feature an evening of karaoke and giving back to the community.

TRYP is a new organization created to connect Tahoe's next generation, while helping the Lake Tahoe community. The young professionals encourage people to bring any type of donation for Christmas Cheer, including cash, non-perishable items like canned food, rice, soups, vegetables or even toys gearing up for the holidays. Cash is the easiest item for them since they use it to buy from the Nevada Food Bank.

In addition to Murphy's offering a venue for this event, the South Lake Tahoe restaurant will write a check to Christmas Cheer.

Next month, the group will organize a TRYP mixer, incorporating a full moon hike/stroll on Sept. 12. In addition, they'll pair up with Great River Sierra Cleanup to help collect trash around the Lake Tahoe Basin on Sept. 17.

For upcoming events with TRYP, find them online or email tahoetrpy@gmail.com.

Sierra Summer Festival

The Sierra Summer Festival presents families in the Tahoe-Reno region with a new entertainment option Aug. 26-28 at the Reno-Sparks Livestock Event’s Center. The event, which is indoors and out, features live entertainment, freestyle motocross, a carnival midway, demolition derby and more.

Tickets are $5 for children and $10 for adults, in advance.

Tickets may be purchased online, which is also the place for more information.

Emily Clothier fundraising golf tourney

The 4th annual golf tournament for the Emily Clothier Memorial Scholarship Fund is Aug. 25 at Lake Tahoe Golf Course.

For more information, click on the flyer.

Ray May Fire may take week to contain; 2 teens in custody

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Updated 8:45pm Aug. 17:

It could take close to a week to control a fast-moving wildfire in Douglas County authorities say was started by two teenagers who lit an illegal campfire at a makeshift fort.

By late Wednesday the Ray May Fire had charred an estimated 2,730 acres with officials offering no estimate for full containment.

Crews had cut fire lines around roughly half the fire, which burned more fiercely as afternoon winds picked up and the fire burned into steep terrain covered thickly with pinon-juniper. One unoccupied structure was destroyed shortly after the fire started Tuesday afternoon.

“It’s pretty active. It’s burning hot,” said Rita Ayers, fire information officer.

Late in the afternoon, additional fire engines were ordered to protect about 20 structures along parts of Pine Nut Road threatened as the fire pushed to the northeast.

“It’s obviously going to be those homes that are our concern,” said Tod Carlini, chief of the East Fork Fire Protection District/

One homeowner in that area watched flames march northeast from U.S. 395 toward his home before he was told by firefighters to leave about 5 a.m. Wednesday. Musician David John grabbed a few prized guitars, fiddles and CDs and fled to his second home in Virginia City.

“You can’t take everything so you have to make choices,” John said. “It was getting close, very close. The trees were just exploding.

“It’s like being a sitting duck,” John said.

Authorities investigating the fire determined it was set by two 15-year-old boys who built a campfire at a fort they erected near Ray May Way, Ayers said. The pair were arrested

and are being charged with felony arson, she said.

The two teens arrested were not identified because of their age.

Read the whole story

Internet marketing class in Incline

As part of its Chamber EDucation program, the North Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Sierra Economic Development Corporation is hosting a beginner Internet Marketing – The Superhighway to Success & The Road class Aug. 23 from noon to 2pm at Patterson Hall (PA 207), Sierra Nevada College, 999 Tahoe Blvd., Incline Village. Deadline to register is Aug. 19.

In this beginner class, attendee will learn how to get top rankings on Google, how to pick the right keywords for their business, along with free tools that will improve their business and assist them in tracking website visitors. The instructor is Coryon Redd, a successful entrepreneur who has grown an e-commerce business to more than 3 million in annual sales of cell phone batteries and accessories. Redd will also help attendees develop a blueprint for online success through advanced techniques that will build their online traffic and convert more shoppers into buyers.

The cost is $65/person (payable in advance by mail or credit card), and participants need to bring their own lunch. To register, call the Sierra Economic Development Corporation at (530) 823.4703 or email info@sedcorp.biz.

This class will also be repeated Sept. 21 in Tahoe City at the Tahoe City Public Utility District and Oct. 4 in Kings Beach at the North Tahoe Event Center.

Future of pension reform in Calif. remains cloudy

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Public pension reform in California, once a top-shelf cause on both sides of the statehouse aisle, has become something of a political orphan.

While a handful of government pension bills await action when lawmakers return to the state Capitol this week, reformers say the measures mostly tinker at the margins of an unsustainable system that needs fundamental change.

Gov. Jerry Brown has stopped talking about the issue. Although he promised to change pensions when he ran for office and again signaled his support for rollbacks during budget talks this year, Brown spokesman Evan Westrup said last week that the governor has made “no decision on timing” for moving ahead.

That silence – and news on Friday that a Texas billionaire put money into a new report favoring a pension overhaul – has lawmakers wondering what’s next as they head into the last four weeks of the legislative session.

“We don’t know if there’s anything the administration is planning for pensions,” said Sandra Sanchez, chief of staff for Assemblyman Warren Furutani, D-Gardena.

Furutani chairs an Assembly committee that deals with public employee retirement legislation and has several pension bills pending action.

Read the whole story

Casinos, state on opposite sides about food comps

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

Food fight!

The state says it has been stiffed tens of millions of dollars by casinos that give free meals to patrons and employees but don’t pay taxes on the value of the comps.

And casino companies are trying to reclaim $210 million that they think the state wrongfully collected because of shifting legal opinions.

Who says the capital is quiet when the Legislature has gone home?

At issue is whether casinos should be taxed for the food they give away – whether to employees in their lunchrooms or to gamblers as a way to entice them to linger and gamble.

“The stakes for both sides are very high,” said Carole Vilardo, president of the Nevada Taxpayers Association. If casino companies win, the state would have to pay refunds “which would be very difficult in this economy.” But if the state wins, casinos would to pay a much higher sales tax based on the retail value of the food versus the wholesale value.

A state Tax Department audit found Boyd Gaming Corp. owes the state $20 million in unpaid taxes and interest, according to a company filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Boyd is fighting that decision, and argues the state owes the company about the same amount in taxes it wrongfully paid on comped meals from 2000 to 2008.

The comped-food battle will also test the will of Gov. Brian Sandoval and lawmakers to tangle with the state’s most powerful industry. Once, in 2008, gaming lobbyists successfully killed legislation that would have settled the matter.

Read the whole story