Watching a road bike race is worth the few seconds

By Heidi Hill Drum

Finally it is here! The photo was taken several years back at the Amgen Tour stage leaving Sausalito and heading up to Santa Rosa. We waited in the back of our car on the side of a super steep, windy hill in Marin County. Drawing pictures on the closed road kept Dalton entertained (he was only 3 and now 9.)

We thought this would be the best place to see the riders going slow. Well, the peloton (the riders all together in the main pack) don't really go slow. It is either fast or really fast. They sped up that hill with amazing speed.



It took several years, but John Drum's message finally got heard. Photos/Heidi Hill Drum

It was too early in the day for a breakaway group, so within about two minutes the entire peloton passed us by. Yes, Dalton asked, "Is that it?"

Our souvenir that day was a cowbell handed out by the folks at

Toyota, one of the early sponsors, so he left happy.

We have been to at least a couple of stages of every Amgen Tour de California and its predecessor, the San Francisco Gran Prix. When it was in February it usually coincided with Dalton's break from school, so we managed to get in a few stages fairly easily. Now, since it is in May we have a few more logistics to work out, but it is all worth it. When Lance rode in it last year we saw him in Sacramento. The year before we watched in the rain in Santa Cruz as Levi rode strong in one of his winning years.

Last summer we were fortunate to be able to see the real deal in France. Le Tour de France is so special and an incredible economic benefit to the towns that host a stage. In our opinion, this Amgen Tour is on track to be very similar for our state. We can't thank those enough who worked tirelessly behind the scenes for all they did to bring these first two stages to Tahoe (but thank you Carol and Andy).

We realized last week when we started volunteering that it isn't just a one-day event for our town. Riders, staff, mechanics, and others have been arriving all week. They are staying in our hotels, eating at our restaurants, and likely will be buying lots of hats and gloves in our local shops for today's cold race.



Dalton and John Drum at one of the early Amgen

races. The South Shore guys will be watching the the riders today from their home town.

Highway 50 closing Wednesday before the race instead of the Monday after is unfortunate, as it is likely more visitors will choose to go to the North Shore to see the finish. However, our entire community is still benefiting.

We have been volunteering to drive riders and staff from the Reno airport to their hotels here and those of us who live here sometimes forget how spectacular a sight Lake Tahoe is the first time you come up the hill. Every one of the folks who are a part of this tour have been inspired as they see the lake for the first time. Let’s take advantage of this amazing opportunity to open our doors, make everyone feel especially welcome and thank them for their participation in this event. Let’s also hope we can show enough Tahoe spirit to encourage Amgen to consider Lake Tahoe as another host city in a future Tour de California.

Fate of stage 1 Amgen ride to be decided Sunday morning

This statement was issued May 14 at 10:15pm:

“The 2011 Amgen Tour of California is scheduled to kick off

May 15, in South Lake Tahoe at 10:30am. As everyone is aware, there is a storm front predicted to reach the area. Therefore race organizers, in conjunction with the commissaires, teams and public safety organizations, have developed a number of contingency plans with the safety of the riders and fans being the No. 1 priority. The weather is constantly changing in the Sierras, and our team will be assessing weather conditions throughout the morning. A decision on any changes to the route and timing will be made at 9am Sunday, and will ultimately be based on what is best and most safe for our riders and spectators. Details will be distributed on the official race website and via email." – *Andrew Messick, president of AEG Sports, presenter of the Amgen Tour de California*

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By Elliott Almond, San Jose Mercury News

STATELINE – The Amgen Tour de California braced for a surprise spring snowstorm overnight that could spoil plans for Sunday's start in Lake Tahoe and increase the dangers of a sport already reeling from the recent death of a Belgian cyclist.

Race officials huddled Saturday night to try to determine whether they can hold the 118.7-mile stage from South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort as planned. The first foray into the Sierra Nevada is facing a serious test by forecasts of as much as three inches of snow accumulating on the roads Sunday and Monday – the first two days of the mini-Tour de France event that are being contested around Lake Tahoe.

"There's a lot of different variables," race director Jim Birrell said. "If we have to reverse it and not hit the whole circuit, those are things we'll look at."

No decision on course changes will be made until just before the start at 10:30am Sunday, officials said. But if road conditions are too icy and snowy, tour organizers could scrap the clockwise stage around the picturesque lake and instead

hold an abbreviated race such as a short time trial. The current route has two climbs over mountain passes 7,000 feet or higher, making it difficult to clear the roads, if snow does stick.

“If it is that slick, we won’t be racing,” tour favorite Levi Leipheimer said.

Read the whole story

Class focuses on building self-esteem

Setting Boundaries and Strengthening Self-Esteem and Confidence is a class facilitated by Dana McKnight Flentroy on June 13 from 5:30-8:30pm.

Research has provided insight to a child’s development and the influence of positive parenting, particularly for children with early “rough” starts.

The class will draw from the curriculum of Love & Logic, Positive Parenting and Beyond Consequences.

The class is at Lake Tahoe Community College,1 College Drive, Aspen Room, South Lake Tahoe.

RSVP to Dana at (530) 541.4660 x528 or mcknight@ltcc.edu.

TV chef to lead cooking classes in Reno

By Johnathan L. Wright, Reno Gazette-Journal

It would be hard to imagine Sara Moulton, the celebrated television chef and cookbook author, garnishing her culinary instruction with staccato exclamations, cutesy nicknames or frat boy gestures familiar from Facebook.

Sara – Bam! – Moulton? No. Definitely not.

But Moulton's style – approachable, knowledgeable, cheery without being cheesy – has served her (and her readers and viewers) well through three Food Network shows and "Sara's Weeknight Meals" – now on public television – 20 years as executive chef of Gourmet, her current gig as food editor of "Good Morning America" and through the creation of three cookbooks.

On May 20 and 21, Moulton will appear at Nothing to It! Culinary Center to promote her latest book, "Sara Moulton's Everyday Family Dinners" (2010, Simon & Schuster), a finalist for best family cookbook in the International Association of Culinary Professionals 2010 awards competition.

She'll lead a hands-on cooking class on May 20 in which students will prepare dinner with her.

Read the whole story

Winter weather advisory issued for Lake Tahoe

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for the Lake Tahoe Basin from 3-11am Sunday.

Snow is expected to begin late tonight and continue through Sunday morning, then taper to showers through the afternoon.

Forecasters are calling for 1 to 3 inches below 7,000 feet and 2 to 4 inches about 7,000 feet. There could be 6 inches near the Sierra crest.

Roads are expected to be slick with the oil having accumulated on them.

Amgen Tour de California officials are likely to make a decision Saturday night as to whether the race route will be altered. It is supposed to start at 10:30am Sunday near the state line, with cyclists doing 1.5 laps around Lake Tahoe before ending at Northstar-at-Tahoe. Stage two leaves from Squaw Valley on Monday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Decision expected tonight regarding weather and Amgen

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

With snow forecast for Sunday's first stage, and the tragic death of Belgian cyclist Wouter Weylandt still rocking the

cycling world, Amgen Tour of California officials said safety would be their top priority.

Race director Jim Birrell said Friday a number of options were under consideration, including altering the opening 118.7-mile route from South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort if necessary.

Birrell said race officials would meet tonight and make a final decision Sunday before the 10:30am start.

“Safety is paramount,” Birrell said. “We partner with Caltrans (California Department of Transportation) and CHP (California Highway Patrol). … We’ll be able to inform (riders) of the road dangers that will be out there. We take (safety) to heart.”

A big concern is the climb over 7,200-foot Brockway Summit on Highway 267.

“If there’s ice on the road, we’ll have a reactionary plan to that,” Birrell said. “If it’s wet, it will be all systems go.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: TRPA work was much more than a slideshow

By Claire Fortier

Recently, the League to Save Lake Tahoe has called my integrity into question. At issue is whether I disclosed my company’s income from TRPA in the 12 months prior to my appointment to the TRPA Governing Board.

The answer is simple: There was no income.

But nothing in Tahoe is simple.



Claire Fortier

Here’s the story: In November 2009, Dennis Oliver, then the public relations officer for the TRPA, asked me to go through some 20 boxes of documents that the TRPA received from the El Dorado County Library. He wanted me to pull key documents and catalogue the rest for a TRPA’s 40th anniversary project.

At the time, he had the lofty ambition of putting together an extensive website where anyone could access historic documents and news stories about the TRPA. He also asked me to work with him on a 24-page book on the history of the agency.

In December 2009, my company sent a written proposal to the TRPA to do that job, as well as extensive online research. For those who don’t know me, I make my living as a writer and researcher.

I spent countless hours in the TRPA basement, pulling documents, studies and news stories collected by the library over 60 years. It was glamorous and exciting work. I then spent hours online, tracking down documents and news stories. Even more exciting stuff.

All my information was turned over to Dennis Oliver during my final meeting with him in January 2010.

But the mechanics of getting the information online, which wasn’t my job, was simply too costly and time consuming. The

TRPA nixed the idea of the book and the website, instead using some of the information in an extensive PowerPoint presentation.

The presentation that the Lake Tahoe News linked on its website was not my work. It was Dennis Oliver's project for the TRPA's 40th anniversary. All of my research, as well as the outline for the book, are available to anyone who provides me with a disc.

Who would have thought that a year and almost a month after that project I would be an elected City Council member appointed by council to sit on the TRPA Governing Board?

I certainly didn't as I sat on a hard concrete floor, dusting off spider webs and going through more mind-numbing documents than a person should read in a lifetime. If I had, I probably would have insisted on a chair.

The *Tahoe Mountain News* has demeaned the attempt by the League to discredit me as a "pissing match" between Rochelle Nason and me. But I have a different word for it –bullying.

While the League is well within its rights to check all Governing Board members' disclosure forms, it seems only mine was of interest. In addition, the League has filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the TRPA for all correspondence and emails between the TRPA and me.

Is this a pissing match or an unabashed attempt by the League to intimidated me?

In my opinion, the League would like to discredit me because I have called into question its intent, its tactics and its membership.

Repeated requests by the city and other organizations to get a roster of the League members, its finances and board member affiliations have been ignored or rebuffed. Even requests to

attend League board meetings are denied because, as Ms. Nason said during our last City Council meeting, “we spend most of the meeting talking about litigation.”

Shouldn’t the League pledge to the same transparency that it demands of other Tahoe agencies and jurisdictions?

As City Council stated in a letter to the League board: “The League has blocked timely and economically feasible solutions to critical environmental problems. Further, the League’s use of confrontation through veiled threats of litigation or its eleventh -hour demands for more information or study have made collaboration all but impossible. The League’s demands are costly, time-consuming and unnecessary.”

It is my strong belief that the time has come to challenge the League and its stranglehold over the TRPA Governing Board. It’s time to put the League under the same microscope that it has put just about every plan, project or person that has come to the forefront at Lake Tahoe.

Claire Fortier is on the South Lake Tahoe City Council and is the city’s representative to the Governing Board of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• *San Francisco Chronicle* outdoor writer Tom Stienstra has released “Moon California Camping”. The top pick for families to camp is Camp Richardson on the South Shore.

• May 16-20 is Classified Staff Appreciation Week – be sure to thank your school secretaries, lunch staff, bus drivers, custodians, librarians and the others who are not teachers.

• Tahoe Water Suppliers Association is offering a deal for businesses that encourage people to drink tap water and use reusable containers. Click here for more info about TapIt.

• TripAdvisor lists the top romantic restaurants in the country, with Café Fiore in South Lake Tahoe coming in No. 7.

• TAMBA President Kevin Joell issues this statement to mountain bike riders, "Stay off of trails until they are adequately free of run-off. This doesn't necessarily mean completely dry. We all know a damp trail can be nicely smoothed out and packed by plenty of tires rolling over it during this window. But use common sense, if water is running down the trail, or snow patches cause you to leave the trail path, it may be a little too soon to ride there."

• Sealed With A Kiss Boutique in Heavenly Village is having a dance party May 14-15 from 8:30am-3:30pm, with a percentage of all purchases going toward purchasing 10 bikes and helmets for the Boys & Girls Club of South Lake Tahoe.

• Here is Caltrans road work schedule for the Sierra for the coming week. And here is the Caltrans Tahoe road work schedule.

Leipheimer in search of 4th Tour de California title

By Agence France-Presse

LOS ANGELES – One year after a 2010 edition rocked by the drugs accusations of Floyd Landis, the Tour de California starts on Sunday with RadioShack's Levi Leipheimer heading the field in search of a fourth title.

The eight-stage race starts Sunday in Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada mountains and ends on May 22 in Thousand Oaks west of Los Angeles.



Levi Leipheimer

The 2011 edition promises to provide the most demanding challenge since the event's inception in 2006, with two stage finishes at altitude.

Leipheimer, who won three straight titles in the United States' most prestigious road race from 2007-2009, finished third in last year's race won by Michael Rogers riding for HTC-Columbia.

Read the whole story

South Tahoe cancer survivor

to fire Amgen start gun

South Lake Tahoe resident and cancer survivor Valerie Smith will fire the gun to start the largest cycling event in the United States.

Smith was selected to start the May 15 race by Amgen's Breakaway from Cancer, a national initiative to increase awareness of the important resources available to people affected by cancer – from prevention through survivorship.

Smith was diagnosed with ovarian cancer two weeks after her 34th birthday in December 1999. Doctors found three tumors and the cancer had metastasized throughout her abdomen.



Valerie Smith

Today, she has no evidence of the disease and she continues to run not only because she loves it, but also because she feels it keeps the cancer at bay.

As part of the Breakaway from Cancer Amgen Tour of California activities, cancer survivors will not only participate in each of the race starts, but also jersey presentations at each finish and other activities throughout the eight-day event.