Mancuso on top of podium in World Cup downhill

By Ski Racing Magazine

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland – It had been a long four years since Squaw Valley's Julia Mancuso had topped a World Cup podium. She was back with vengeance today as women's competition at the 2011 World Cup Finals kicked off with the downhill and plenty of excitement in Lenzerheide, Switzerland.

Mancuso's impressive win, the fifth of her career, left no doubters as she screamed down the course 0.81 seconds faster than second-place finisher, Swiss Lara Gut. Downhill world champion Austrian Elizabeth Goergl finished third, 1.15 seconds back. Mancuso's last win came in March 2007 with a downhill victory in Tarvisio, Italy.

"It's the first time in four years, it's great to be back winning," said Mancuso. "I watched Lara ski so I knew I had to ski really fast because she nailed it. That's all it was, all or nothing this time, last downhill of the season so it feels good."

Vail's Lindsey Vonn claimed her fourth consecutive downhill globe mathematically two weeks ago in Tarvisio but was finally able to lay a big kiss on her trophy today after finishing fourth. Perhaps the biggest news of the day also followed Vonn as she took back the overall lead from German Maria Riesch (17th today) for the first time since late December. Today's results saw a 50-point swing in the overall standings as Vonn went from 23 points behind to 27 points ahead of her friend Riesch with three races (SG, GS, SL) ahead before the season ends this weekend.

"It was tough conditions out there today with really soft snow and flat light," said Vonn. "It was really easy to make

mistakes and unfortunately I made one on the top of the course in a pretty bad place and lost a lot of speed but I was able to ski the bottom well. Fourth place is still a great result, I'm really happy for Julia for winning, she skied amazingly well."

The win was enough to move Mancuso into third in the season-long downhill standings behind Vonn and Riesch in second.

Mancuso, who had the second fastest time in yesterday's training run, said the turny course fit her style.

"Leaving the start gate I knew I had to push really hard and be fast and I wanted to win," said Mancuso, the penultimate racer down the course. "I knew it would be a good opportunity here for me and those don't come around all the time so I took advantage of it and I'm just really happy.

"I've been working through injuries and working hard for the past four years and I'm finally back on the podium, it feels great," said Mancuso who was also back in the top three of any discipline standings for the first time since 2007. "I switched to Voelkl skis [this season] and everything has been working really well for me so it just gives me a lot of confidence that next year is going to be even better."

Catalytic converters being stolen for scrap metal

Five catalytic converters have been stolen this week on the South Shore.

A South Lake Tahoe resident started his 1994 Toyota pickup

Tuesday morning and immediately heard an unfamiliar loud rumbling sound. He thought the muffler had fallen off. He discovered the loud exhaust sound was unrelated to his muffler, but was actually due to his missing catalytic converter.

Three of these thefts occurred in South Lake Tahoe and two in El Dorado County. In each case, the thief crawled underneath the vehicle and used some sort of cutting tool to remove the converter, according to officers.

A catalytic converter functions as part of a vehicle's exhaust system. As poisonous and polluting gasses collect within its chamber, the precious metals inside the converter "catalyze" a chemical reaction that alters them into less harmful and cleaner vapors. This reduces harmful exhaust emissions by up to 90 percent.

Thefts of catalytic converters are on the rise across the country, according to officers.

"Thieves are looking for these devices which have ceramic cores coated with platinum, rhodium and palladium. Crooks turn in the metals for cash at metal recycling centers," police Sgt. Brian Williams said in a press release.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Jeff Roberson at the South Lake Tahoe Police Department at (530) 542.6100.

Nevada leads country in

number of houses underwater

By Bob Brundage, Reno Gazette-Journal

One of the many real estate issues homeowners in the United States face is negative equity, which occurs when homeowners owe more on their homes than they are worth.

It’s a more significant problem here in Nevada than it is in any other state.

According to a recent report from CoreLogic, 55.6 percent of all homeowners with a mortgage in Reno-Sparks owed more than their homes were worth at the end of 2010.

An additional 4.4 percent were in the near-negative equity category or at less than 5 percent equity.

The data showed Nevada as the runaway leader in the nation, with 65 percent of all mortgaged properties underwater. Arizona is second at 51 percent followed by Florida (47 percent), Michigan (36 percent) and California (32 percent).

In Las Vegas, 69 percent of all residential properties with a mortgage were in negative equity at the end of 2010, according to CoreLogic.

“From a lender’s perspective, there are a lot of people we can’t help refinance,” said Pam Robinson, a sales manager/loan officer for Eagle Home Mortgage in Reno. “Also, long-term, property values could decline more – I hope they don’t. Because there would be more people underwater, there could be more foreclosures.”

For homeowners in near-negative or negative equity, there are some refinancing options available.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Wet and snowy



Snow is coming down, roads are not plowed, and Highway 50 between South Tahoe and Carson City is a driver's nightmare.

Other than that, here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

More charges filed against El Dorado County restaurant owner

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Restaurateur Kevin Cairns was in custody Tuesday with bail set at $250,000 after the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office unexpectedly filed new charges.

Charges of disturbing the peace were added to two accusations lodged in November and February that Cairns assaulted travelers in the parking lot of his Dante's on the River, a restaurant along Highway 50 east of Pollock Pines.

Cairns was not arrested or cited by law enforcement in the latest incident, which took place Friday.

He’s accused of yelling at a family of motorists and calling them “black pigs” after they asked for a napkin to clean up after a child got sick in their car, said Deputy District Attorney Dale Gomes in his first comments to the *Bee* about Cairns.

Read the whole story

STHS looking for members for alumni foundation

For years the South Tahoe High School Alumni Council has been under the wing of the Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation. The growth and enthusiasm within the alumni community during the past few years have led to the decision to create a separate nonprofit.

On March 26 alumni are being asked to be one of the inaugural signers of the Articles of Incorporation for the South Tahoe High School Alumni Foundation. As one of the inaugural signers, you will have no formal or financial responsibilities.

There will be three signing parties taking place in three cities that Saturday.

South Lake Tahoe Location 1:30-3:30pm

Grand Central Pizza & Pasta

Kings Trading Post Center (Keys and Highway 50)

2229 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

South Lake Tahoe

(530) 544.1308

Hosted by Brooke Laine (’82)

(530) 318.9107

Reno Location 1:30-3:30pm

Extreme Pizza

4782 Caughlin Parkway

Reno

(775) 384.1900

Hosted by Raylene Catera Jennings (’67)

(775) 815.0660

Sacramento Location 11:30am-1:30pm

Mark and Monica’s Family Pizza

4751 Manzanita Avenue

Carmichael

(916) 487.1010

Hosted by Val Walters Edwards (’66) and Dennis Edwards (’66)

(209) 957.1560.

RSVP to the host for the location you will be attending.

California coast less susceptible to tsunami than Japan

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Much of California is less vulnerable to the kind of tsunami wreckage caused today in Japan because the state's coastline is generally steeper, a University of California quake expert said.

Steven Ward, a research geophysicist at UC Santa Cruz, said there are exceptions to that statement, including the Los Angeles coastal plain, many harbor areas, and any place where a major river enters the sea, such as the Moss Landing area at Monterey Bay.

But in general, he said California's steep bluff-encrusted shore would block the kind of broad waves that swept buildings and ships far inland in Sendai, the Japanese city of 1 million people near the epicenter of today's quake.

Ironically, he said it is the San Andreas earthquake fault that keeps California's coast so steep.

"Even big waves typically can't go very far inland because you have bluffs and whatnot," said Ward. "So the actual inundation zones are fairly limited. We're lucky that way."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Test scores alone not best judge of teachers

By David A. Sanchez

There are those who think the best way to determine teacher effectiveness is by looking only at students' test scores. The simplicity of this approach can be seductive, but it is inherently flawed. This approach only makes sense if you assume all children come to school with the same abilities, have the same educational resources and opportunities and return home to the same support systems. As a kindergarten teacher for more than 30 years, I can confirm what you already know to be true: Every child is different.

The fact of the matter is student achievement and teacher effectiveness aren't simple to measure, and the results of one test are not going to offer a complete assessment of either. Many different measures must be used in order to determine true effectiveness.

So how do you define teacher effectiveness? How to evaluate it? How to reward it? These are all good questions. Most research will tell you an effective teacher is one of the most important factors in a student's education, and I would agree. Research will also tell you that many other factors can and do influence student success: poverty, hunger, homelessness, language skills, parental involvement and education, the learning environment, hormones and personal motivation.

The California Education Code allows for the use of "state adopted criterion referenced assessments" as it "reasonably relates" to a teacher's evaluation. How those tests become part of the greater teacher evaluation program at each school district is agreed to by local stakeholders through collective bargaining. This allows for the buy-in and trust of principals

and teachers and ensures that local conditions and student needs are considered.

David A. Sanchez is the president of the California Teachers Association, which represents 325,000 educators in California public schools.

Read the whole story

Discounted spay-neuter services in Placer County

Low cost spaying and neutering is available in Placer County for dogs and cats ($20 for cats and $40 for dogs). Pick up a voucher at the Tahoe Vista Animal Shelter, 849 Shelter Road, Tahoe Vista (530.546.1990) or call Wylie Animal Rescue Foundation at 775.833.2319.

Options are available for people living outside Placer County. For questions or further information, call Connie at (775) 831.1730 or send email to tahoepet@yahoo.com.

Game allows skiers to virtually ride Alpine Meadows

Some mountains are known for their gentle side, while others offer a wild ride. Alpine Meadows Ski Resort is trying to do both with the interactive game The Alpinizer.

It is designed to show off the innovation and fun of skiing the mountain – and making Alpine Meadows even more difficult to get out of one's head.

The Alpinizer means skiers never have to leave their computer to enjoy the mountain's slopes.

"We developed the Alpinizer as a way for our guests to enjoy Alpine Meadows before and after their visits," Deanna Gescheider, vice president of JMA Sierra Ventures LLC, parent company of Alpine Meadows, said in a press release.

The game includes 13 mountain trail levels.

For more information, go online.