Mancuso posts best World Cup slalom finish since 2008

By U.S. Ski Team

COURCHEVEL, France – Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley produced her best Audi FIS Alpine World Cup slalom result since 2008, finishing 21st with teammate Resi Stiegler of Jackson Hole in 23rd. Austrian Marlies Schild captured the victory Tuesday as an extremely tricky first run course set claimed 23 racers including World Cup leader Lindsey Vonn of Vail and Germany's Maria Riesch.

Schild is now tied with Finn Tanja Poutiainen, who finished second, for the slalom points lead.

"It was like a survival first run and I definitely got pretty lucky," said Mancuso. "I wanted to ski solid, but I guess I needed to be a little faster. It will be good to have a little break now over Christmas and then get back into it. I'm very fired up with how things are going."

With the exception of the Aspen slalom, Mancuso has surged since landing double silver at the Vancouver Olympics, scoring top 25 finishes in every World Cup race this season including a super G third two weeks ago in Lake Louise, Alberta.

"It was a good day for Julia to take advantage," said technical Head Coach Trevor Wagner. "She's been training great slalom and just took it to the hill today."

For Stiegler, who waved to the booming crowd of thousands then wished a worldwide television audience "Merry Christmas" after crossing the finish line, it was another huge leap toward regaining her World Cup form. She was 25th in Aspen, her first race back since suffering a severely broken leg two races into the Olympic season. Prior to that, she had been sidelined much

of the two previous winters with an injury string that began in December 2007.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Courchevel, France, Slalom

1. Marlies Schild, Austra, 1:34.95

2. Tanja Poutiainen, Finland, 1:35.73

3. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 1:36.93

4. Maria Pietilae-Holmner, Sweden, 1:37.20

5. Kathrin Zettel, Austria, 1:37.21

—

21. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, CA, 1:39.53

23. Resi Stiegler, Jackson Hole, WY, 1:39.62

—

Did not qualify for 2nd run: Sarah Schleper (Vail, CO), Hailey Duke (Boise, ID)

—

Did not finish 1st run: Lindsey Vonn (Vail, CO).

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Deb Howard and Co. real estate will celebrate 10 years in business in 2011.

• Tahoe Rim Trail Association is offering Snow Camping 101 Feb. 26- 27 and March 12-13. Reserve a spot by calling (775) 298.0012 or by emailing programs@tahoerimtrail.org.

• El Dorado County Public Health Division is offering the seasonal flu vaccine by appointment in Placerville and South Lake Tahoe. To schedule an appointment, call (530) 621.6100 in Placerville or (530) 573.3155 in South Lake Tahoe.

• The making of a Jeep commercial with Squaw's Nate Holland as told by his buddy Ralph Backstrom.

• Fritz Wenck has taken the helm of the Lake Tahoe Community College board.

• As a part of an ongoing initiative to support area nonprofits, Lake Tahoe Gaming Alliance and the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority donated $20,000 between four charities – Christmas Cheer received $10,000; Tahoe Youth & Family Services $5,000; South Lake Tahoe Women's Center $3,000; and Lake Tahoe Boys & Girls Club $2,000.

Opinion: Education key to Nevada's diversification

By Buck Wargo, Las Vegas Sun

The people who champion low state taxes as a way to recruit businesses to Nevada are undermining the state's future by not advocating what businesses really need for success: better schools.

That is the conclusion reached by 40 community leaders who examined the role of education in diversifying Nevada's

economy.

If low tax rates were the key to attracting businesses, Silicon Valley-style economic clusters would be sprouting in Nevada rather than in Northern California, Seattle, Boston or North Carolina's Research Triangle, the group said.

"Touting ourselves as a low tax state as the only reason people want to come here has proved to be a failure," said John Restrepo, principal of Restrepo Consulting Group and a member of the study group. "If low taxes were all we needed, and we have been touting that, we wouldn't have a 15 percent unemployment rate."

The group's report, "Nevada: 50th in the Nation for Education," emanated from a round-table discussion among representatives of banking, architecture, law enforcement, education, real estate and government.

Read the whole story

Finding uses for gray water

By Susan Carpenter, Los Angeles Times

About 50 percent of the water used inside U.S. homes can be reused to irrigate landscapes and flush toilets, according to a greywater report released by the Oakland-based Pacific Institute last week. The Overview of Greywater Reuse examined the application of greywater systems worldwide to determine how the wastewater generated from sinks, baths, showers and clothes washers could be reused to reduce demand for more costly, high-quality drinking water.



“In California, there are a lot of reasons why we’re looking for new and innovative water sources, including the legal restrictions that are coming to bear on our ability to move water around the state,” said Juliet Christian-Smith, senior research associate at the Oakland-based research institute. “Climactic changes are occurring…. We are looking at a future with less of a natural reservoir in our snow in the Sierras and less water available from the Colorado River system.”

In 2009, California modified its plumbing code to allow the reuse of certain types of gray water. The Pacific Institute was interested in examining how that change might affect the state and aid its development of a “soft path of water management.”

Read the whole story

Opinion: Importance of reading to children

To the community,

Reading aloud is one of the most important things we can do to help young children eventually learn to read. Together with community partners, First 5 El Dorado promotes early literacy through reading programs that develop both pre-literacy skills and children’s love for books. These programs have been extremely successful, and have grown to meet community needs. Between September 2009 and May 2010:

* The Ready to Read @ Your Library Project provided early

literacy services to approximately 4,400 children newborn-5 years of age and their parents, teachers and care providers through library storytimes and outreach visits to preschool and childcare sites throughout the county. Storytimes were offered in English and Spanish.

* Storytimes for young children were provided at the main library in Placerville; Cameron Park, El Dorado Hills, Georgetown, Pollock Pines and South Lake Tahoe branch libraries; and at Northside School in Cool.

* Library staff visited 127 preschool sites where children listened to stories and each month preschools received a free book or puppet to support ongoing literacy activities.

The reach of storytime extends beyond the library walls. In 2009-10:

* 75 percent of parents who answered the First 5 El Dorado Parent Survey reported reading to their children every day. Families that attended Ready to Read programs at the library were even more likely to read to their children, with 85 percent of this group reporting that they read to their children each day.

Together our community can help ensure that all children have the foundations for reading.This issue is dedicated to information and resources on early literacy.

Sincerely,

Rick Alford, First 5 El Dorado

Google opens world's forests for all to see

By Suzanne Bohan, Contra Costa Times

CANCUN, Mexico – With Google's new Earth Engine, anyone will be able to view forest conditions worldwide.

When it launches next year, the online tool will provide satellite imagery of forests and will reveal where these woodlands have been razed or degraded by logging.

With Earth Engine, small nations, nonprofit groups, independent researchers and everyone else will be able to assess an environmental crisis of growing magnitude: deforestation. No longer will these groups have to rely on a handful of distant academic or government labs to access the information.

"It's transformational," said Greg Asner, a scientist with the Carnegie Institution for Science at Stanford University, shortly after he described the application Dec. 2 at the United Nation's climate summit in Cancun, Mexico, which ended Friday.

Asner flew to this resort city to announce the successful download of 26 years of data from Landsat, the oldest Earth-observing satellite, into Google's computers. By next year, Asner expects that software he developed for monitoring deforestation will be integrated into Google Earth Engine for public use. Anyone with Internet access will have a free view of forest conditions dating as far back as 1984.

Read the whole story

Truckee continuation school singled out by state

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

Rocklin's Victory High School and Truckee's Sierra High School have been named two of the state's model continuation schools.

The campuses made a list – released Friday by state Superintendent Jack O'Connell – of 27 continuation schools that should serve as models to the rest of the state for their programs to help struggling students stay in school.

Read the whole story

Weather historian to delve into Sierra's winter wonders

By Susan Wood

Think globally, act locally.

Weather historian Mark McLaughlin is expected to bring this mantra to life when he addresses an extremely topical topic on Thursday at the Explore Tahoe in South Lake Tahoe.

McLaughlin has the spotlight for the center's second annual winter speaker series with his talk called "Reign of the Sierra Storm King," an overview of how the last 150 years of

winter weather in the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range tells about life at Lake Tahoe and the evolving climate.



Mark
McLaughlin

Topics that evening will include the Donner Party, the storm of the century in the winter of 1951-52, along with the tropical weather conditions associated with El Nino and La Nina, the latter of which Tahoe is experiencing. The lake is located on the north-to-south cusp of seeing unusually wet or dry, cold or warm conditions associated with the equatorial weather phenomena. This year's La Nina is expected to bring more extremes across the United States like El Nino did the previous year. The Pacific Northwest has already experienced wetter than average systems this winter as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicted.

If there's one thing weather as a science can prove over time, long-term theories are "not all things to all people" or even places, McLaughlin explains.

The author and commentator who's made appearances on CNN, the Weather Channel and History Channel said he tries to take recent information released from the UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and be a bridge in deciphering these theories for the average weather watcher.

For example, he's noticed that since 1962 the lake level snowpack at Tahoe has diminished more than two weeks earlier each year. However, in the higher elevations such as Donner Pass, this is not the case. The legendary mountain region

remains a place to be reckoned with in the winter, he said.

The winter of 1951-52 brought record snowfall with such magnitude, traffic in and out of the South Shore was cut off, a drop shipment of supplies was made from the outside world and residents dug out of their second story windows to get out of their homes. Some attend a reunion each summer to mark the occasion. The adults have looked back at that time as hard labor. The children at the time have rejoiced over sledding down the roofs of their houses.

Explore Tahoe Recreation Coordinator Lauren Thomaselli insisted the winter speaker series and specifically McLaughlin's talk that kicks it off fits well into the center's format and mission of blending environmental education with recreation.

"It's really to provide ways to get (people) connected with our area," she said.

The Dec. 23 talks starts at 6pm. A $5 donation is requested. Refreshments will be served.

Budget gifts: Magazine subscriptions for library readers

The Friends of the Library South Lake Tahoe Branch wants you to know of another gift under $20 that many, many people will enjoy – adopting a magazine subscription for one year at the county library.



The following titles are available for adoption now: *Snowboarder, Powder, Cooking Light, Popular Science, Latina, Budget Travel* and *Mother Earth*.

This holiday week the library at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd. is open Tuesday and Wednesday 10am-8pm.

For a great last minute gift to friends, family and the community please ask about adopting a magazine at the front desk.

Auditor warns El Dorado supes about pension liability

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County's auditor-controller has issued a warning to the Board of Supervisors about unfunded pension liability.

According to Joe Harn's letter to the supervisors last week, the liability has more than doubled from June 2008 to June 2009, the most recent reported.

The current liability is $264 million, he said.

Read the whole story