Giants World Series trophy coming to Tahoe

The San Francisco Giants will launch a public tour of the World Champions trophy in early January. The trophy will travel throughout Northern California, Southern Oregon and Western Nevada. It will also travel to New York and Arizona.



It will be in the Lake Tahoe-Reno area Jan. 14-15. Exact times and locations will be announced in January.

Fans will have the opportunity to view the trophy in person and have their photo taken with it. The viewings are free to the public. Fans may purchase an official photo with the trophy through Printroom Photography.

Opinion: Time to discuss state employee benefits

By Joe Nation

Stanford's Institute for Economic Policy Research has issued two recent reports on the condition of public employee pension funds in California. The first identified a $425 billion funding shortfall for three state pension systems: the California Public Employees' Retirement System, California State Teachers' Retirement System, and the University of

California Retirement System. The second report found a nearly $200 billion shortfall for local government pension systems.

Both reports focused on the overall financial health of pension systems in California but did not touch on retiree benefit levels. It’s time to begin that conversation.

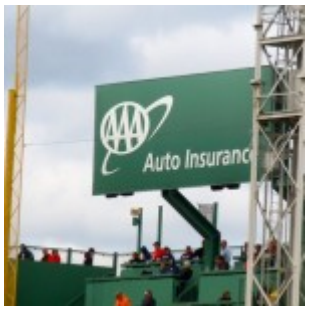
Discussing public employee retirement benefits is dangerous politically. So let’s start with the legal status of benefits owed to public employees.

Benefits to public employee retirees are legally protected. Period. Case and contract law guarantee retirement pay, even in the obscene cases where public employees double dip (i.e., collect a large pension from one or more employers and work at full salary for another). If the public is angry about benefits levels or double dippers, we shouldn’t blame public employees, but the political leaders who approved benefits that are both excessive and unsustainable.

I may have a unique perspective on this issue because every member of my immediate family has worked in public service. (My mother is a retired school librarian; my younger brother works as a firefighter/paramedic; an older brother was a high school science teacher; and my father retired from a public university.) They and all public employees are owed what we have promised them.

Joe Nation, a former Democratic state lawmaker, is a professor of the practice of public policy at Stanford University.
Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• AAA is ending its Saturday hours starting in January at most of its offices in the Tahoe region. However, the Sparks, Truckee and Reno Damonte Ranch offices will still be open Saturdays.

• Brandianne Ledbetter has left Outside TV to start her own company in South Tahoe – Princess Productions.

• *Saveur* magazine has listed El Dorado County's Cedarville Vineyard's 2008 Grenache in their list of "65 California Reds to Drink Now".

• South Lake Tahoe mystery writer Todd Borg is offering a writing course in Folsom Feb. 4-6. Details are on his website.

• Dec. 20 is the last day to register to vote for the Jan 4 special election to fill the state Senate seat of the late Dave Cox.

• Claire Champlin and Brook Roberts of Reno finished second in the season finale of the reality show "The Amazing Race."

S. Tahoe City Council violates Brown Act at first meeting

By Kathryn Reed

On the first day on the job, Claire Fortier learned it takes more than desire to get what she wants as an elected official.

During council member comments Dec. 14, she proposed forming a citizens' committee to look into what happened to the stalled Lakeview Commons project.

"I feel like we are not going to be transparent unless we look at what was done," the South Lake Tahoe councilwoman told her peers. She wants to ensure awarding of future bids doesn't wind up in court with the judge overturning the work of the city.



Work on Lakeview Commons was stopped by court order. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Before such a committee is formed, Mayor Hal Cole said he wants the matter to be discussed in closed session.

"I looked at the judge's decision and didn't see malfeasance," Cole said. "Before there is a witch hunt or a group of citizens (is formed) I would like to see it in closed session."

Councilman Tom Davis believes the report provided by City Attorney Patrick Enright before taking office was sufficient.

“I know what happened and I’m satisfied,” Davis said on his first day back on the council after a six-year hiatus.

The odd thing about this exchange is the council is not supposed to discuss items not on the agenda. A simple show of hands is how things get on a future agenda. This was a clear violation of the Brown Act – the California open meeting law.

If council members are going to discuss things, then the public has a right to comment. The public was not allowed to comment Dec. 14 on Lakeview Commons. A change in the agenda must be done 24 hours before the meeting.

Their exchange was deliberation – which is completely illegal.

At no time did Enright try to put a stop to the discussion. He would be the one to do so. He is also one of the city employees who the judge was highly critical of and might have much to lose if the matter were looked into by an independent party.

According to the First Amendment Coalition’s website, “Either a citizen or the district attorney may sue to compel the local agency to comply with the Brown Act; obtain a ruling that a particular practice of the local agency violates the Brown Act; or obtain a ruling that the local agency is violating the free speech rights of one or more of its members in seeking to silence that member. Gov’t Code section 54960(a).”

Fortier said she is willing to hear what is said Jan. 11 when Lakeview Commons is slated to be on the agenda in closed and open session before pressing harder on her request. Closed session will be at 8am, with regular session commencing at 9am – both at Lake Tahoe Airport.

At this meeting the council will likely vote on whether to start the bid process over or award it to Clark & Sullivan, the firm that prevailed in court.

Fortier’s concern is with accountability.

No one in the city has publicly been reprimanded for what the judge ruled as a severe mishandling of the bid process on the $6 million project near El Dorado Beach.

Holland 5th in qualifications in snowboardcross

By Lindsey Sine, U.S. Snowboarding

TELLURIDE, Colo. – Falling snow had nothing on Nick Baumgartner of Iron River, Mich., Wednesday as the World Championship bronze medalist led the U.S. in first during the qualifications for the Visa U.S. Snowboardcross Cup at Telluride Resort in Colorado.

Baumgartner led the way for 11 U.S. men into the final round, with Nate Holland of Squaw Valley in fifth, Seth Wescott of Sugarloaf, Maine, in seventh to round out the U.S. men in the top 10.

Sitting lower in the rankings headed into the second qualification run, Baumgartner decided that even with the extra snowfall, he was going to try a different strategy for the race, and it paid off.

On the women’s side, Lindsey Jacobellis of Vermont and Callan Chythlook-Sifsof of Alaska laid down a solid run time to finish fifth and sixth respectively.

The top 32 men and 16 women will go on to compete in the Visa U.S. Snowboardcross Cup on Friday.

Official results, Visa U.S. Snowboardcross Cup, Telluride, Colo., Qualifications

Men

1. Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, MI

2. Robert Fagan, Canada

3. Alberto Schiavon, Italy

4. Jake Holden, Canada

5. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA

—

7. Seth Wescott, Sugarloaf, ME

14. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA

16. Alex Deibold, Manchester Center, VT

17. Graham Watanabe, Sun Valley, ID

19. Ross Powers, Stratton Mountain, VT

26. JJ Tomlinson, Park City, UT

27. Jayson Hale, Sierraville, CA

28. Jonathan Cheever, Saugus, MA

—

31. Alex Tuttle, Sugarloaf, ME

Women

1. Dominique Maltais, Canada

2. Alexandra Jekova, Bulgaria

3. Helene Olafsen, Norway

4. Maelle Ricker, Canada

5. Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton Mountain, VT

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6. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK

Retailers have difficulty keeping Twain's new book in stock

By Gina Kim, Sacramento Bee

Death may be the impartial friend – who treats the soiled and pure, rich and poor, loved and unloved equally – but Mark Twain transcends the grave with his autobiography, which has become the sought-after holiday gift of the year.

Published the stipulated 100 years after his no-longer-an-exaggeration of a death, the "Autobiography of Mark Twain" debuted at No. 2 on the New York Times best-sellers list last month and has remained in the top 10 since, landing at No. 5 this week.

Surprised retailers haven't been able to keep the dictionary-size tome on their shelves or in warehouses, relegating many would-be purchasers to waiting lists – or inflated prices reaching $750 on Amazon.com.

"We've got 10 orders waiting to be filled," said Stan Forbes, co-owner of the Avid Reader in Sacramento, which expects its supply to be replenished at midmonth. "It's a phenomenon …

like the interest in opening a time capsule.”

Read the whole story

Flooding possible in Tahoe, valley areas with incoming storms

With a severe winter weather storm approaching the Sierra Nevada this weekend, Douglas County Sheriff Ron Pierini is advising residents of potential flood activity.

The National Weather Service reports that heavy precipitation is likely in the Central Sierra and Western Nevada. The storms are predicted to begin Friday and continue through the beginning of next week. With heavy precipitation expected from the storm, there is a potential for area flooding.

While the full impact of rainfall from this storm is uncertain, it is expected to be heavy in areas of elevation below 7.500 feet. With area snowpack starting at 5.000 feet, these rainstorms have the potential to cause the lower elevation snowpack to melt. With soils already heavily saturated due to above normal precipitation since October, the potential for flooding exists.

Persons with homes or structures in the Carson Valley located near rivers, streams, creeks, canals or other moving waterways should take steps to mitigate the chances of flooding. This includes cleaning tumbleweeds, branches, leaves and other debris from the waterways. Residents should stay aware of the latest weather forecasts from the National Weather Service

throughout the weekend.

Current stage flow and river forecast information is available for many rivers and streams in Eastern California and Western Nevada online, then clicking on the area of interest.

Citizens are reminded that if immediate emergency services should be needed during this weather event, they should call 911. The non-emergency line is (775) 782.5126.

Tahoe's Kashima returning to top form after last year's injury

By Freddy Perryman, U.S. Ski Team

MERIBEL, France – Hannah Kearney of Vermont and Patrick Deneen of Washington kept the overall World Cup lead Wednesday with strong second place finishes in Meribel. Bryon Wilson of Montana rounded out the men's podium in third.

This is the first time the U.S. has had two athletes in yellow at the same time since 2007 when Shannon Bahrke of Tahoe City and Nate Roberts of Park City wore the yellow jersey together.

Deneen was edged out by France's Guilbaut Colas, earning his 10th World Cup victory, in the finals 18-17. Deneen was first across the line, but Colas had better air and turns to take the win.

Good news for the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team Wednesday also came from Sho Kashima of Stateline who finished 20th. After a season ending injury last year, Kashima is recovering ahead of

schedule.

“He’s doing great” says U.S. Moguls Coach Garth Hager. “He’s right in the mix, back to his old air plan and performing well.”

On Dec. 17, the FIS Freestyle World Cup is making its first moguls stop in China.

Official results, FIS Freestyle World Cup, Maribel, France, Dual Moguls

Men

1. Guilbaut Colas, France

2. Patrick Deneen, Cle Elum, WA

3. Bryon Wilson, Butte, MT

4. Sergey Volkov, Russia

5. Alexandre Bilodeau, Canada

–

9. Jeremy Cota, Carrabassett Valley, ME

17. Joe Discoe, Telluride, CO

20. Sho Kashima, Lake Tahoe, CA

21. Jimmy Discoe, Ridgway, CO

–

40. David Digravio, Farmington, ME

Women

1. Yulia Galysheva, Kazakhstan

2. Hannah Kearney, Norwich, VT

3. Justine Dufor-Lapointe, Canada

4. Ekaterina Stolyarova. Russia

5. Regina Rakhimova, Russia

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12. Heather McPhie, Bozeman, MT

18. Laurel Shanley, Squaw Valley, CA

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DNS: Heidi Kloser, Vail, CO

DNF: Eliza Outtrim, Steamboat Springs, CO

Christmas caroling on the South Shore

Join Sierra Community Church for an evening of Christmas caroling Dec. 21st from 6:30-8:30pm, in the church parking lot located at 1165 Sierra Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

Get in the Christmas spirit with singing, hot chocolate, coffee and cookies, and then help spread the good cheer throughout the Sierra Tract neighborhood. Everyone is welcome.

For more information, call (530) 544.7055.

CASAblanca at the Lake

CASA El Dorado presents the 4th annual CASAblanca at the Lake.

The Feb. 4 event honors El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury. It starts at 6pm at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline.

The evening will include dinner, wine, live entertainment, silent and live auctions.

Tickets are $125 per person. All proceeds benefit CASA.

RSVP by Jan. 21 to (530) 622.9882 or friends@casaeldorado.org.