Sierra, Northstar on TransWorld Snowboarding's Top 10 list

The 2011 *TransWorld Snowboarding Resort Guide*, which hits newsstands this week, lists Northstar and Sierra-at-Tahoe resorts among the Top 10 Overall Resorts in the United States.

"To make it as one of the 10 best a resort has to rank high in both the park and pipe categories, as well as in other crucial areas such as nightlife, snowfall, vibe, lodging, food, et cetera," explain the editors of *TWS*. "All the other stuff that matters when you're looking for the best shred experience possible."



Bashful terrain park at Sierra is one reason TWS likes the resort. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The rankings speak to the commitment by both resorts to creating and maintaining innovative freestyle terrain that appeals to an ever-growing demographic of skiers and snowboarders, resort officials said.

Designed, built, and maintained throughout the season by the lead innovators in the industry – Snow Park Technologies (SPT) – the freestyle terrain at both resorts offers an experience that caters to the young and old, first-time jibbers and seasoned park riders, families and college students alike.

Both resorts were also recognized as among the Top 10 Best Parks in the nation, earned by scoring high in specific categories like jump and rail design, grooming, variety of features, overall vibe, and park challenge.

The cumulative rankings for Sierra-at-Tahoe are:

* No. 7 Overall Resort

* No. 10 Best Parks

* No. 4 Best Value

* No. 7 Best Vibe

The cumulative rankings for Northstar-at-Tahoe are:

* No. 6 Overall Resort

* No. 6 Best Parks

* No. 9 Best Pipes

Heavenly's new leader bullish on ski resort's future

By Kathryn Reed

Pete Sonntag comes across as a man who would rather be

answering questions on a chairlift in between runs than sitting in his spacious office.

As the new leader of Heavenly Mountain Resort, he's eager to get on the mountain – he skis and snowboards. After all, the former Vail ski and snowboard school director has only skied his mountain 1½ days.



Heavenly GM Pete Sonntag is eager to make some turns. Photo/Kathryn Reed

When he spent the summer of 1997 in Reno many of his days were on the trails in the basin, climbing most of the higher peaks.

Having started his job in August, he's been familiarizing himself with the area via his running shoes and bicycles. He's passionate about cycling – road and mountain.

It's not just the outdoor terrain Sonntag is getting used to. He headed west knowing Lake Tahoe can be a difficult work environment.

"I did come in knowing there were challenges," Sonntag said in a wide-ranging sit down interview with *Lake Tahoe News*.

He believes the resort has a strong team in place so he's relying on those players to steer him through landmines before

he gets a feel for the lay of the political and regulatory landscape.

“I want to have a positive impact on our company and community,” Sonntag said. “I would say we’re in a period of transition in our company. We are actually looking to make the company stronger. That’s reflected in restructuring at the highest level.”

Sonntag reports to Blaise Carrig, former chief operating officer at Heavenly, who is co-president of the Mountain Division. Sonntag’s titles are general manager and vice president. He is running the day-to-day operation at the bi-state resort.

Sonntag says a similarity between them is being competitive. A couple things setting the two men apart are Sonntag will live at the lake, while Carrig lived in the valley. Sonntag has children – ages 6, 8 and 10. Plan to see the Sonntag gang at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena a lot – the kids are big into hockey.

Sonntag expects being in the community as a dad will allow him to hear plenty of “unfiltered feedback.”

He’s optimistic Heavenly will have another profitable winter. Although on-mountain figures were good for Vail Resorts last season, the company’s overall numbers were down because of the real estate sector.

Still, Sonntag believes the ski industry is rebounding.

“I feel like it’s the strength of the brand at each (Vail-owned) mountain, which is built on great guest service,” Sonntag said. “People still value time with their family. A ski vacation is incredible. It’s a valuable way to spend time with your family.”

Looking forward, Sonntag won’t point to what the next

improvement to the resort will be beyond the Feb. 1 opening of Tamarack Lodge near the top of the gondola.

“Every year we need to look at what needs to be done immediately, then three to five years, and what might be done in 20 years,” Sonntag said. “It’s an ongoing conversation. There are a lot of ideas.”

He said it would be a matter of prioritizing the ideas, and analyzing the impacts to the company and guests.

“We’re bullish about the future,” Sonntag said.

Chase: Real estate numbers improving in LT Basin

Third quarter sales figures in four major regions of Lake Tahoe plus Truckee continue to show a strong pattern of increased home sales.

Single family home sales in South Lake Tahoe, Incline Village, Tahoe City and Truckee saw significant growth in the first nine months of 2010.

“We are very pleased to see an increase two quarters in a row; however the median cost of homes are still tracking downward,” Sue Lowe, corporate broker and senior vice president of Chase International, said in a press release. “Buyers understand that this is the time to obtain the ultimate value in housing and are purchasing these incredible deals at rapid rates.

The units sold for the Lake Tahoe Basin are up 28 percent and sales volume is up 37 percent, according to Chase.

Chase reports on the South Shore, total sales volume is up 32 percent and units sold up 28 percent; Tahoe City, sales volume is up 67 percent and units sold up 46 percent; Incline Village, sales volume is up 28 percent and units sold up 27 percent; on the the East Shore of Tahoe sale volume is up 9 percent, units sold down 2 percent; and in Truckee, the sales volume of is up 9 percent and units sold is up 13 percent.

Book signing in Reno

Michele Copen, author of “The Heart Thieves: Enchanting French Bulldog Puppies”, will be signing her new release at Scraps Dog Company, 6120 Mae Anne Store at Robb Drive in Reno on Oct. 23 from 12:30-3:30pm.

Along with the book signing event, there will be a French bulldog costume contest with prizes.

The book is a full-color, limited printing, collector’s book.

The book has been created by the author and photographer of the multi-award-winning book, A French Bulldog for Every Season.

“My goal with this book was to take my artistic experience and style expertise and blend them with the love I have for animals in general and my passion for the French Bulldog breed in particular. I worked on the book part-time for three years. The result is my contribution to the world of French Bulldogs,” Copen said in a release.

Harrah’s eyeing becoming public company again

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A recapitalization plan by Harrah’s Entertainment Inc. to open the door eventually to sell public stock has been recommended for approval by the state Gaming Control Board.

Eric Hession of Harrah’s told the board it has reduced its debt from $25.8 billion to $20.8 billion, preparing the company for an economic recovery.

In Nevada, Harrah’s has casinos in places including Las Vegas, Reno and Lake Tahoe.

Hession and Michael Cohen of Harrah’s explained the transaction, saying the giant casino company has reduced its annual interest expense by more than $125 million and extended the maturity dates for the debt.

Read the whole story

Heavenly Ski Foundation looking for participants

The Heavenly Ski and Snowboard Foundation has opened registration for the 2010-11 Alpine, Freestyle and Snowboard Programs. With a variety of options from the One-Day Program to the Full-Time Competitive Program, the foundation has something for all ages and levels of skiers and riders.

Registration packets are available online, at the HSSF building, or by calling the HSSF administration office at (530) 431.7354. Those who register and pay in full now will receive the early registration pricing; prices increase $100 on Nov. 1.

The HSSF programs are divided by age and ability; prices may vary. The One-Day Program offers all ages and abilities up to 18 training days, primarily Sundays, December through March. A Heavenly restricted pass, equipment and gear are required. Alpine and Snowboard registrants may choose to participate in the Tahoe League and U.S.A.S.A. South Shore Series, respectively, for an additional fee.

In addition to the One-Day Program, the HSSF also offers Part-Time, Part-Time Plus (Alpine only) and Full-Time programs. These programs require additional commitments from both parents and athletes. With a longer season, December through as late as mid-May, these programs offer more time on the mountain with professional coaches and more participation in competitions. Dryland and gymnastics training, Sunday Fundays, night training, video analysis, pro clinics and more advanced competition training are some of the bonuses of these programs depending upon what is right for your young athlete.

With all programs the emphasis is placed on skiing and boarding preparation and equipment care, as well as focusing on physical and mental competition techniques. The programs also teach physical fitness through healthy activity and good eating habits while promoting the values of teamwork and good sportsmanship. Program costs range from $700 to $3,000 and scholarships are available; Snowboard Program pricing includes the cost of single or three-mountain pass options.

TRT speaker series focuses on winter experiences

The winter season is right around the corner, and soon the Tahoe Rim Trail will be under snow. But that doesn't mean you can't get out and enjoy it during the winter months.

What should you do? That's the focus of the TRTA's October Speaker Series. Learn how to survive an avalanche, the tricks of winter backpacking and find out the inside scoop on cross-country skiing and ski skating from three local experts.

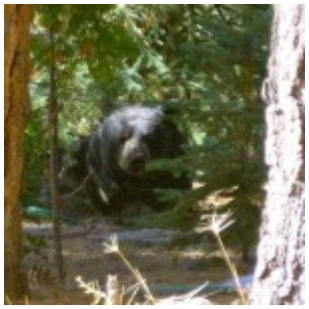
Oct. 14: "Cross Country Skiing and Ski Skating" by John Cobourn of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. A discussion of cross country skiing and snow skating and find out how these two seemingly distinct activities have a lot in common.

Oct. 21: "Cold Weather Camping" by Dave Hess, outreach specialist of REI Reno. Cooler weather and shorter days should not prevent you from enjoying the Tahoe Basin during the winter months. Go with confidence knowing that you are prepared for all conditions. Join REI camping expert Hess to discuss gear, clothing, personal comfort and safety considerations for your late season and winter adventures.

Oct. 25: "Avalanche Awareness and Safety" by Tim Farrar from the Slide Snow School. Are you ready to learn the decision-making skills and methods necessary for traveling safely in avalanche terrain? Look no further than this talk. Travel safely this winter season and learn how to avoid the dangers of avalanches.

All presentations are free and will take place at the DWR Non-Profit Center from 6-7pm at 948 Incline Way, Incline Village. RSVP to programs@tahoerimtrail.org or (775) 298.0012.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• A final decision on whether to allow bear hunting in Nevada in the spring and fall is expected to be decided by the state Department of Wildlife in December.

• Charter Communications is changing the TV lineup again. Customers on the South Shore in El Dorado and Douglas counties can expect the changes to begin Nov. 1.

• October's National Arts and Humanities Month is the largest annual celebration of the arts and humanities in the nation. For ideas about getting involved, visit the official site.

• Four out of five positions are up this November on the KGID board. Meet the candidates Oct. 12 at 5:30pm at the Eagles Nest (inside of Perennial Vacation Resort), 472 Needle Peak Road, Stateline.

• South Lake Tahoe City Council candidate Claire Fortier is having a series of meet and greets: Oct. 8 7:30am, Tahoe Java, Swiss Chalet Village; Oct. 15, 7:30am, Hot Gossip Espresso Bar, Bijou Center; Oct. 22 7:30am, Red Hut, Ski Run Center, Oct. 29 7:30am, Alpen Sierra Coffee Company, Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

• A formal announcement of South Lake Tahoe's next police chief is a few weeks off, according to City Manager Tony O'Rourke. Potential candidates are still undergoing background checks and results will not be in until about Oct. 14.

Teens co-host political forum, Dems get out the vote

Publisher's note: ***This forum is also sponsored by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and Tahoe Daily Tribune.***

To the community,

The Boys and Girls Club Teen Enterprise is hosting a City Council Candidates' Forum on Oct. 13 at 6pm at the club at 1100 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

They have asked us to do voter registration at the event, so this would be a great chance to help register people so they can vote on Nov. 2 and also see the candidates for yourself.

There will be a spaghetti dinner for $5 per person preceding the forum. That starts at 5pm. If you'd like to help at the registration table, please let me know. I'll be there to set up around 4:45pm.

For those who have seen parts 1 and 2 of the documentary "The Power of Nightmares" at our last two meetings, we'll be showing part 3 on Nov. 10. I'll have more information about a location in a couple of weeks.

I hope we see you next Wednesday.

Judy Williams, president Lake Tahoe Democratic Club

’11 Amgen bike tour to encompass much of Lake Tahoe

The 2011 Amgen Tour of California, the largest cycling event in America, will start at Lake Tahoe, officials announced today.

Lake Tahoe’s first involvement in the race will feature more than a lap and a half around the lake beginning at the California-Nevada border in South Lake Tahoe with the Stage 1 finish at Northstar-at-Tahoe in Truckee. North Lake Tahoe also hosts the Stage 2 start at Squaw Valley.

The Amgen Tour of California covers more than 800 miles, traveling between 15 host cities over the course of eight days from May 15-22, 2011.

Last year’s date change from February to May allowed the Tour de France-style road race to visit locations that would not have been possible previously, including a visit to Big Bear Lake.

The race will travel through some of the state’s most scenic landmarks, with the overall finish in title-sponsor Amgen’s hometown community of Thousand Oaks.

The 15 official stage start and finish communities that have been selected for the 2011 race include newcomers: South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Squaw Valley, Auburn, Livermore, Claremont, and Mt. Baldy, along with return cities Sacramento, Modesto, San Jose, Seaside, Paso Robles, Solvang, Santa Clarita and Thousand Oaks.

“Whether it’s skinny or fat tires, Tahoe is a passionate biking community,” Carol Chaplin, executive director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, said in a prepared statement.

“Hosting the Amgen Tour of California, the country’s most prestigious bike race, will put us on the map as ‘must ride’ for cyclists while having a significant impact on the local and regional economy.”

Lake Tahoe is recognized for several annual summer biking events. America’s Most Beautiful Bike Ride has participants circumnavigate the lake the first weekend in June. Another chance to circle Tahoe’s 72-mile shoreline is during the annual Tour de Tahoe Bike Big Blue Race in mid-September. Late September brings the Tahoe Century Ride, which starts and finishes at Squaw Valley and features scenic routes and challenging hill climbs. The annual Lake Tahoe Marathon Week offers a bike race around Tahoe’s shoreline the end of September. Furthermore, the annual Death Ride course covers five High Sierra mountain passes. Tour de Nez offers significant professional stage races in the country taking place in 2 states: Nevada and California; the cities of Reno and Truckee, along the shores of Lake Tahoe, and up the mountains surrounding the resort at Northstar-at-Tahoe every June.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, are spearheading promotional and sponsorship efforts for the Lake Tahoe Stage 1 Start, Finish and Stage 2 Start, and will serve on the Amgen Tour of California Lake Tahoe Local Organizing Committee

In previous years, the race has drawn some of the world’s most renowned and respected riders, such as top Tour de France competitors, World Champions and Olympic medalists that include Lance Armstrong, Tom Boonen, Oscar Freire, Paolo Bettini, Fabian Cancellara, Carlos Sastre, Ivan Basso, George Hincapie, Mark Cavendish and Andy Schleck.

“The 2011 Amgen Tour of California route is going to result in an exciting and compelling race,” Lance Armstrong of Team Radioshack said in a release. “All of us at Team Radioshack

are looking forward to it.”

Returning as the title sponsor for the sixth consecutive year, Amgen will continue to leverage the race to raise awareness and support for people affected by cancer through its Breakaway from Cancer initiative.

Stages for the 2011 Amgen Tour of California include:

* Stage 1: May 15 – South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe in Truckee

* Stage 2: May 16 – Squaw Valley to Sacramento

* Stage 3: May 17 – Auburn to Modesto

* Stage 4: May 18 – Livermore to San Jose

* Stage 5: May 19 – Seaside to Paso Robles

* Stage 6: May 20 – Solvang Individual Time Trial

* Stage 7: May 21 – Claremont to Mt. Baldy

* Stage 8: May 22 – Santa Clarita to Thousand Oaks

For further information on the 2011 Amgen Tour of California, visit www.amgentourofcalifornia.com.