Buffet officially owns NV Energy

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

Billionaire Warren Buffett has completed his purchase of NV Energy, whose chief executive is retiring and being replaced by a Buffett underling.

MidAmerican Energy Holdings Co., owned by Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate, closed its acquisition of Nevada's main electric utility Dec. 19, at least a few weeks ahead of schedule.

Read the whole story

Bahrke 25th in Beijing aerials

By USSA

BEIJING -– Dylan Ferguson (Amesbury, Mass.) landed a fifth-place finish at the aerials World Cup inside the famed Bird's Nest stadium, the site of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games opening ceremony.

Ferguson took the top U.S. finish in the stadium, which was complete with a roaring crowd, music and light show. Canadian Travis Gerrits spoiled the Chinese podium sweep, winning the contest ahead of Chao Wu and Zongyang Jia.

Olympian Scotty Bahrke (Tahoe City) took 25th in Sunday's

event, with Nevin Brown (Streetsboro, Ohio) 27th.

Jitloff 5th in GS in Italy

By USSA

ALTA BADIA, Italy – Four-time World Champion Ted Ligety (Park City) was held to third Sunday in the Alta Badia giant slalom as Austrian Marcel Hirscher captured his second straight giant slalom win.

Midway through the eight-event Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom season, Ligety and Hirscher have each won a pair of races, however Hirscher leads this discipline standings by 60 points after Ligety did not finish the giant slalom last weekend in Val d'Isere, France.

Tim Jitloff (Reno) added an inspiring highlight to the day with a powerful fifth place finish from the 31st start position to match his career-best World Cup result.

Hirscher earned the wire-to-wire win ahead of Alexis Pinturault of France for his second straight giant slalom victory.

Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.), Warner Nickerson (Gilford, N.H.) and Robby Kelley (Starksboro, Vt.) did not qualify for the final and Brennan Rubie (Salt Lake City) did not finish the first run.

U.S. riders sweep halfpipe in Copper

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. -– Rookie rider Taylor Gold (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) led a U.S. sweep Dec. 21 with Greg Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) and Ben Ferguson (Bend, Ore.) in the halfpipe final at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix at Copper.

Gold put down his winning score during the first run of the competition after barley qualifying for the final in 16th. The entire international field was not able to top Gold's run, which resulted in his career-first World Cup victory.

All spots on the men's Olympic team are still up for grabs, and the competition will be at an all time high when the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix goes to Breckenridge Jan. 8-11.

Saturday's results kept Bretz in the lead in the qualification standings while boosting Gold into second above Northstar rider Shaun White, who chose not to compete Saturday in order to focus on the slopestyle competition on Sunday. Ferguson also moved up in the standings into third on Saturday.

Snow fell throughout the day, which made the halfpipe a bit slower than normal and prevented many riders from stomping tricks cleanly.

Hight 8th in halfpipe at Copper Mountain

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. -– Olympic gold medalist Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) mathematically clinched her spot on the 2014 Olympic halfpipe snowboarding team Saturday with her win at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix at Copper. Clark led a U.S. sweep of the halfpipe finals with Arielle Gold (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) and Gretchen Bleiler (Aspen).

Kaitlyn Farrington (Salt Lake City) and Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe) finished fifth and eighth.

With the rest of the field still in contention for the Olympic team, the competition will be fierce when the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix goes to Breckenridge Jan. 8-11.

The Olympic team will be formally nominated on Jan. 19, following the fifth and final qualifying event.

Mancuso doesn’t finish GS; Shiffrin 8th

By USSA

VAL D’ISERE, France – Slalom World Champion Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) finished a solid eighth Sunday in Val d’Isere to close the first half of the women’s Audi FIS Alpine

World Cup giant slalom season.

Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein won and posted her sixth World Cup podium of the Olympic winter, adding 100 points to her current overall lead over second place finisher Lara Gut of Switzerland.

In 12th after the first run, Shiffrin produced a flawless final run to jump four spots for the sixth giant slalom top 10 of her young career.

Lara Gut of Switzerland was second ahead of Sweden’s Maria Pietilae-Holmner.

Megan McJames (Park City) continued her momentum with 26th, her second straight giant slalom to score World Cup points.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was 24th after the first run, but skied off course early in the final. Resi Stiegler (Jackson Hole, Wyo.) did not qualify for the final.

Then and now: Train travel into the basin



Trains used to come from

Truckee to Tahoe City. Photo/Lake Tahoe Master Framing



The old railroad line is now a bike path. Photo/Google Earth

The black and white photo is hand-captioned “Engine #2 Along the Truckee River 1911.” Southern Pacific replaced the original narrow-gauge rails with standard gauge in 1926.

Those rails were removed permanently in 1942 for scrap iron needed during World War II.

The color photo shows today’s bicycle path on that historic rail bed, running along Highway 89 near Tahoe City.



Th



e two (blurry) sepia tone images are single movie frames from a 16mm travelogue filmed in 1930 (Lake Tahoe Historical Society Museum). The train would loop near Tahoe Tavern, meet the steamers Tahoe and Nevada on a pier at Tahoe City, and then make the 1-hour, 15-minute return trip to Truckee.

– Bill Kingman

A secluded snowshoe through Van Sickle



Mount Tallac from Van Sickle Bi-State Park. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Everything changes with a little snow and some things even get better – like the views from Van Sickle Bi-state Park.

While we are familiar with the trail, we were thankful others had gone before us. This way we didn't completely get lost – just a little sidetracked at the end.

This 725-acre park on the South Shore provides some stunning views of Lake Tahoe by snowshoeing just a short distance. The scenic outlook is 0.4 miles from the trailhead.



Sue Wood takes in the scenery along the trail.

The only problem this time of year is that it requires walking to get to the trailhead. The California Tahoe Conservancy and Nevada Division of State Lands, which own and operate the park, shut the gate in winter.

Sue and I walked in via Harrah's. There is a distinct trail almost directly across from the hotel-casino's back parking lot. It was a bit precarious to cross the street without a crosswalk; I can't even imagine what it would be like if that road ever becomes a four-lane federal highway.

We saunter up a little hill and then go left on South Tahoe Public Utility District's road before we take a left onto the park's road. A trail sign clearly indicates where the path

really begins.

With part of the path last weekend a bit icy, it was great to have the claws of snowshoes to dig into the terrain. However, with the skimpy snow so far this season, patches of dirt had to be walked on, too.

Climbing to the vista is well worth the views of Tahoe and the mountain peaks. The casinos, Rabe Meadow and Round Hill stand out as well.

Tracks from other snowshoers, hikers and cross country skiers are evident. Even super wide bike tires have left their mark in the snow. Still, on a Sunday we saw one person on the main road and heard a few people ahead of us at one point. It mostly felt like we had the park to ourselves.



Lake Tahoe

It’s a great place for dogs, too.

Since the last time I was at Van Sickle more signs are posted telling people about the terrain as well as where to go. The Gondola Fire of 2002 is talked about because many of the still charred trees are in the park. The story of sugar pine plantings is also told.

We opted for a loop we had not been on, nor was there signage for it on our last excursion. We took the upper turnoff for the Cal/Neva Loop. It heads toward California, with a spur going to Saddle Road.

It’s quiet, even secluded. The pines at one point give a sense of being enclosed in some far-off winter wonderland. The snow is softer, powder-like. Fewer people have been here.

Starting after noon allowed the temps to be warmer and for the afternoon light to provide colors and contrasts different than what Mother Nature casts in the morning.

The lake is glass-like – inviting – if only it weren’t so darn cold.



Skiers ride the Heavenly gondola at the end of the day.

Soon we are reminded how close we are to civilization as the Heavenly gondola whirs above us.

We take the Barn Trail, knowing it will lead us to the main park road that will drop us off near the entrance where Park Avenue dead ends.

But we come to a fork and there is no sign, but tracks in two directions. Going forward is denser and intuitively the route to the old Van Sickle barn. We, though, go right where it is more open. Passing under the gondola again we know we are on the wrong path. We break trail a bit before hooking up with the STPUD road that will lead us back to where we started. It was fortunate someone had tied blue markers to trees.

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Notes:

• The Tahoe Rim Trail is offering a guided snowshoe in Van Sickle on Jan. 11 as part of National Winter Trails Day. More info is online.

Opinion: Tips for staying out of the ER this winter

By Warren Withers

Wintertime in Tahoe means skiing and snowboarding for visitors and locals alike. Few other places on earth have the abundance of snowsports opportunities that we enjoy in the Tahoe basin.

With all the excitement and fun, we can sometimes forget the few simple measures that can help us prevent the occasional, but largely avoidable injuries.



Warren Withers

Consider the following when you're headed out to your favorite resort so that your après ski plans do not include a trip to the ER.

· **Wear a helmet.** It is interesting to see the evolution of the use of the helmet in snowsports. It is such a simple device,

but it is still used and thought of perhaps the way we thought about and used seat belts in 1965: helpful, but optional. Like a seat belt, it does not protect against all forms of injury, but it will change the degree of injury you endure if you do fall and hit your head. For example, a moderate head injury without a helmet will be a minor head injury if you are wearing one. Once you start wearing it, you will never go back. They are comfortable, they keep you warm, and just like your seat belt, you will feel naked without it.

· **Use wrist guards.** These simple and inexpensive devices can be purchased at any sports shop, and like the helmet they can make the difference between a normal fall and a trip to the ER. These are especially useful for snowboarders who are just learning.

· **Understand resort boundaries and backcountry access gates.** This subject has evolved considerably in recent years. Now there are designated gates which you can go through at some resorts to access the "backcountry." This can be an amazing experience, but it is clearly an activity left to experts who know the full risk involved. When you cross these gates, you enter unpatrolled areas, and if you are injured or become lost, rescue can take a long time to arrive and is quite expensive.

· **Avoid "no go" areas at resorts.** Resort staff are experts at identifying when an area is safe and when it is not. When they mark an area off, usually with a rope or ribbon, it is for your safety, not because the skiing or snowboarding is so great there that they want to keep you away from it. This is a simple concept, but we see these boundaries ignored and the patient often regrets this decision.

· **Prepare for avalanches.** Avalanches get a lot of attention in the press for good reason. If you intend to venture into the backcountry, you must first know what you are doing. It is imperative that you take an avalanche course and wear and know

how to use a beacon. These actions will reduce, but not eliminate your risk. Avalanches inside resort boundaries are very unlikely, but just beyond that boundary line, the slopes of “steep and deep” snow call out to the powder hounds in all of us. But remember, boundaries are there for your safety.

We wish you all a safe and enjoyable winter.

Warren Withers is the medical director of Emergency Medical Services at Barton Health.

Holland returns to competition after surgery

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta -– Olympic silver medalist Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton Mountain, Vt.) made her overdue return to the podium Saturday with her first snowboardcross World Cup victory in nearly two years.

Jacobellis has been absent from the sport since January 2012 because of a knee injury.

In the men’s race, Alex Deibold (Manchester Center, Vt.) finished third, while Australian rookie Jarryd Hughes took the victory in his eighth World Cup start.

Nate Holland (Squaw Valley) finished seventh in his return to the World Cup after having surgery on his collarbone in the Montafon World Cup opener.

In only his eighth World Cup start, rookie Jarryd Hughes of Australia won the men’s race with Konstantin Schad rounding

out the podium.

Faye Gulini (Salt Lake City) finished seventh in Saturday's race, her best result so far this season, while Callan Chythlook-Sifsof (Girdwood, Alaska) finished 24th and Jacqueline Hernandez (Londonderry, Vt.) finished a career-best 29th.

In the men's race, Alex Deibold (Manchester Center, Vt.) finished third, the first American male to get a podium this season. It was also Deibold's second career podium in an individual SBX event.

Nick Baumgartner (Iron River, Mich.) was the next best U.S. finisher in sixth place, while Trevor Jacob (Golden City), Jonathan Cheever (Saugus, Mass.) and Mick Dierdorff (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) took 10th, 16th and 27th respectively.