Wescott, Holland take snowboard cross title

By USSA

TELLURIDE, Colo. – Olympic champion Seth Wescott (Sugarloaf, Maine) and X Games champ Nate Holland (Squaw Valley) combined to take the team SBX title at the Paul Mitchell Progression Session in Telluride on Dec. 15.

It was the second straight weekend U.S. Snowboarding has triumphed in a FIS Snowboarding World Cup team event, with Holland combining with Hagen Kearney (Telluride) last weekend in Austria. For Wescott, it was a victory sweep after winning the USANA Snowboardcross Cup on Friday.

Canada's Dominique Maltais and Maelle Ricker clinched their first victory in a team race.

Ski report: Snow in the forecast

Winds could impact operation of upper mountain lifts by this afternoon.

More snow is predicted throughout the day.

Here is the Dec. 16 ski report.

— Curtis Fong

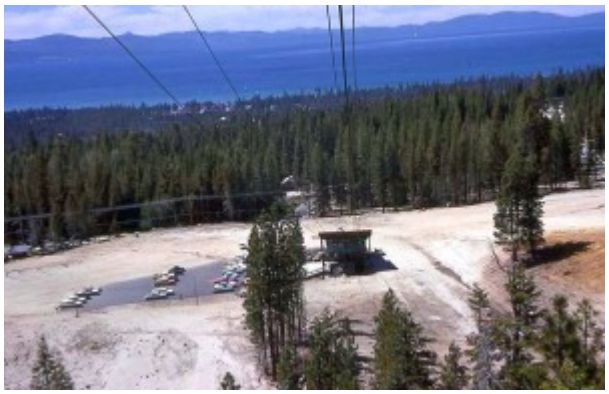
Then and now: Tram a fixture at Heavenly for decades

In 1963, there was this new tram base plus a double-chair lift at the lodge (left of bottom photo) at the Heavenly Valley parking lot.

In 2012, Heavenly Mountain Resort now has 30 lifts in two states with 97 runs covering 4,800 acres.

— Bill Kingman





Scientists worry about long-term effects of changing levels of algae, oxygen in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – In the last four years the amount of algae found in Lake Tahoe has dramatically increased.

Why?

Scientists are still trying to figure that out.

Cells that are 5, 6, 7 microns in size that were not detected a decade ago are here.

“For some reason they have exploded,” Geoff Schladow, director of the Tahoe Environmental Research Center on the Sierra Nevada College campus, said during the Dec. 13 State of the Lake report.



Asian clams in Lake Tahoe create algae blooms as seen in the top right of this photo. Photo/LTN

The data pertains to 2011. These reports began in 2007, though issues surrounding Lake Tahoe's clarity have been studied since the 1800s.

Algae blooms are also related to the growing Asian clam population. While these creatures have not been found throughout the lake, pockets of them are on the southern end. The algae they produce washes ashore and contributes to the degradation of the beach experience because the pristine waters are anything but that in some areas.

Divers the first week of December finished laying 5 acres of organic material at the mouth of Emerald Bay in an attempt to smother the clams at that location.

One thing scientists are still trying to figure out is why lake clarity improved by 4½ feet in 2011 when it was one of the wettest winters on record. Normally wet years bring more sediment via runoff into the lake. Conversely, it's drought years that are usually good for lake clarity because fine particles are staying on land.

Climate change is something those who study Tahoe know is taking a toll. Each year the flow of stormwater runoff is measured.

"The peak has advanced two weeks," Schladow told the group of nearly 60 people. This means there is less snow in the mountains.

Records of air temperature also point to climate change, Schladow said.

Another measurement scientists look at is how often the lake mixes – as in the water at the bottom comes to the top and vice versa.

"As we go through the next century we will run out of oxygen at the bottom of the lake," Schladow said. "Less oxygen at the

bottom changes the chemistry at the bottom. ”

This could lead to more phosphorous and nitrogen being created. Those elements contribute to the decline of the lake’s clarity.

A cable is used to measure oxygen at the surface down to the bottom. Water temperature is measured, too.

“We are seeing how mixing changes oxygen (levels). Oxygen is the key variable for climate change,” Schladow said.

He is a believer that the lake needs to continue to be studied and monitored.

“If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it,” Schladow said in regards to needing to make sure the funding is in place to study the lake and then take the corrective measures to ensure its health.

Boys and Girls Club looking for interns

Lake Tahoe Boys and Girls Club is in need of interns.

Interns would be working through Lake Tahoe Community College.

Positions are: homework assistant, art program, sport and nutrition program, and marketing-public relations.

For more information, contact Tracy Owen Chapman at owenchapman@ltcc.edu or (530) 541.4660, ext. 294.

Vonn talks about her struggles with depression

By Elizabeth Leonard, People

Lindsey Vonn seems to have it all.

As the most decorated skier in U.S. history, Vonn's easy smile and record-decimating athletic career have made her a fixture on podiums, magazine covers and multi-million dollar endorsement deals. But life off the slopes wasn't always so rosy.

In an exclusive interview with *People*, the Olympic gold medalist, 28, discloses that she's quietly suffered from depression for many years and currently takes an anti-depressant to help manage her symptoms.

"Everything about my life seemed so perfect to people. But I struggle like everyone else," Vonn confesses.

At one point in 2008, she says, "I couldn't get out of bed anymore. I felt hopeless, empty, like a zombie."

But these days, Vonn is happier than she's been in a long time. "I feel like I just needed to get everything off my

chest," says the ski racer, who filed for divorce late last year from her husband Thomas Vonn, also her longtime manager and coach.

With the winter race season under way – Vonn nabbed her 57th World Cup win on Dec. 8 in St. Moritz, Switzerland – she's hit a new groove.

"All the parts of my life are finally in sync," she says. "I accept who I am, and I'm moving forward."

Reconnecting with what makes Tahoe fun

With all the craziness in the world, we agree with Anthony Cupaiuolo of First Track Productions in South Lake Tahoe that a fun video is in order.

Considering he has cousins in a neighboring school in Connecticut and didn't know for hours if his family was OK, he has room to speak. And his cousin's husband was one of the first responders to the school shooting on Dec. 14.

He offers this video to bring some smiles to faces when the world makes it so hard to smile:

– Lake Tahoe News staff

Banks want to alter 2011 Nevada foreclosure law

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

Foreclosures in Nevada could spike next year if lawmakers and banks roll back a bill passed in 2011 that played a large role in stymieing banks' attempts to retake homes from Nevadans, according to the state's banking association president and housing analysts.

But more foreclosures aren't necessarily a bad thing for Nevada's housing market, at least in the long term, according to housing analysts.

Banks are in talks with Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and lawmakers about how to amend the state law that slowed foreclosures to a trickle in fall 2011.

Although foreclosures since have risen, they're still about a quarter of where they were before the law went into effect.

At issue is Assembly Bill 284, a measure passed by the Nevada Legislature in 2011 and signed by Gov. Brian Sandoval that forces banks to prove they have the legal right to foreclose on a particular home before they take action. Most important, the law requires bank workers to sign an affidavit that they have personal knowledge of a property's document history, or they will face criminal or civil penalties.

Democratic lawmakers and Cortez Masto, a Democrat, who helped pass the bill, said the law was intended to uphold the integrity of the legal process and protect homeowners from banks wrongfully foreclosing on homeowners without having necessary paperwork.

Cortez Masto has said it was never intended to prevent

legitimate foreclosures.

But after the law took effect in late 2011, foreclosures in Nevada – which previously led the nation in foreclosures – ground to a halt.

In August 2011, banks issued 5,350 foreclosure notices in the state, according to the Nevada Foreclosure Mediation Program. In September, there were 4,684 "notices of default."

In October 2011, when the law went into effect, the number dropped to 80.

Since then, the foreclosure filings per month have crept upward, reaching 1,417 in November.

That is proof, according to some consumer advocates, that banks are figuring out the paperwork behind home loans that had been sliced and diced into various investment instruments at the height of the housing boom. That slicing and dicing is what made it so difficult to determine which entity could legally foreclose on a home.

Many housing analysts believe the law is stalling legitimate foreclosures and creating an artificial, short-term boost in housing prices.

Cortez Masto has created a working group involving the state's largest banks to discuss possible changes to the law in the next legislative session.

That group includes bankers, servicers, title and other real estate interests, as well as consumer representatives and lawmakers.

"We do not anticipate recommending repeal of any of the current provisions of the law," she said in the statement. "The working group is attempting to clarify some of the terms in the law."

She said it’s still unclear what recommendations the group will make to lawmakers.

Bill Uffelman, president and CEO of the Nevada Bankers Association, which lobbies the Legislature, said banks were not looking to repeal the entire law.

“The Attorney General’s Office and affected parties are working to change the affidavits so it’s workable, without fear of criminal or civil liability,” Uffelman said.

“Just amend it,” he said. “The notion behind AB284 wasn’t bad. The policy’s fine. Let’s fix the application.”

Some housing analysts say the law has allowed some Nevadans to live in their homes without paying a mortgage. Banks, confounded by their own shoddy paperwork and the state law, aren’t able to foreclose for months or years. Economics analyst Jeremy Aguero this fall labeled them “strategic squatters.”

This shadow inventory – of homes headed for almost certain foreclosure – has loomed over the seemingly positive news of slightly increasing home values and the rise of new housing construction.

John Restrepo, principal of RCG Economics in Las Vegas, called it “a bit of an artificial spike not likely to be sustained as it is today, depending on how the law is changed.”

The politics of easing restrictions for banks are dicey and likely to face opposition.

Sen. Tick Segerblom, D-Las Vegas, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he’d listen to Cortez Masto, a fellow Democrat.

But, he said, “I’m extremely reluctant to change anything that everyone agrees has raised property values in the state of Nevada.”

He said if banks can’t foreclose, it’s their own fault for losing track of the paperwork.

“If it comes down to a homeowner who had a mortgage, or a bank – who has the right to be there? I’ll go with the homeowner,” he said. “I’m not worried about the banks. They made their beds. They can sleep in it.”

Uffelman, the banking association president, said banks have been focused on meeting the terms of the National Mortgage Settlement – the $26 billion settlement that requires banks to take such actions as principal reductions, short sales and forgiveness of second loans. But soon, their focus is going to turn back to foreclosures.

“The reality is foreclosures are going to start again, probably sooner rather than later,” he said.

Save money by registering now for 2013 Lake Tahoe Marathon

The Lake Tahoe Marathon on Dec. 15 opened registration for the Sept. 27-29 events.

Discounted (25 percent) early bird registrations will be taken until 8am Dec. 18.

A 20 percent discount continues through the end of December.

More info is online.

White overcomes conditions to win Dew Tour halfpipe

By USSA

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. -– Despite battling snowy conditions and a slow halfpipe Shaun White, who trains at Northstar, and Kaitlyn Farrington (Bellevue, Idaho) came out on top at Dew Tour halfpipe finals.

“After coming off a knee injury this summer I am glad to be on top. I feel great and I am pumped for the season. This is the road to Sochi,” White said.

Farrington debuted back-to-back 900s for the first time in her competition run. White sported an enormous double McTwist 1200 in his first run that scored a 95.25.

Louie Vito (Sandy, Utah), the defending Dew Tour champion, had an impressive first run that scored a 90 and went for a double 1200 in his second, but did not land on his feet.

U.S. Snowboarding’s Maddy Schaffrick (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) after battling two consecutive injuries soared to third with a huge front-side 720.

Noticeably absent from the podium was Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) and Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe) who struggled with speed in both their runs.