Lecture about John Muir

Robert Hanna will give a presentation Nov. 16 on John Muir and the continuing legacy with his work in keeping the state parks open.

The free event will be at 7pm at Unity at the Lake, across from the Rec Center in South Lake Tahoe.

RSVP to (530) 541.1027.

Opinion: Placer County is moving forward

By Jennifer Montgomery

Placer County's budget picture has changed dramatically since I joined the Board of Supervisors in January 2009.

When I arrived, the budget news was dire, the result of the persistent and growing economic slowdown.

At my second board meeting, we approved four mandatory unpaid days off for most county employees and several other budget adjustments to eliminate a mid-year $9.5 million revenue shortfall. The following month, we received a report that predicted the county would continue to face operating deficits for several years.



Jennifer Montgomery

Today, many fiscal challenges remain, but we see light at the end of the tunnel. Revenue is beginning to bounce back, though not fast enough to keep pace with projected cost increases. As staff likes to say, we are tiptoeing, rather than sprinting toward recovery.

As board chairwoman, I am pleased to present this state-of the-county series to give the public a clear picture of where Placer County has been in recent years, where it stands today and how we are planning for a stronger, more stable future.

The last four years have been extremely challenging for the County and I want to be sure everyone fully understands the magnitude of the issues we've faced, and will continue to face.

In hindsight, there are things that we might have handled differently, but we did learn from our mistakes along the way and succeeded in preserving the County's fiscal health, protecting core services to the public and avoiding the large-scale layoffs that many nearby local governments experienced.

I am particularly pleased at how well the board, management and staff worked together to move Placer County through tough times. We struggled at times – we did not rehire unfilled positions, we had to cut hours to certain services and had to put many projects on hold because of budget constraints. But through hard work, commitment to serve the public, internal compromise and sacrifice, we are in a better place than we

might otherwise have been.

A few statistics help tell the story.

Property tax revenue, the county's leading source of discretionary revenue, is projected to drop by about 1 percent this fiscal year. If the projection proves accurate, annual revenue from that source will have dropped $16.4 million, or 12.4 percent, since 2007-08.

Since 2007, during a time that demand for services remained the same or grew, the size of the county workforce has fallen 15.4 percent to approximately 2,150 filled positions largely because of a hiring freeze. On the other hand, the county has laid off only about 25 employees during that period.

One of the keys to the county's ability to stay above water while dealing with the economic slowdown has been a far-sighted approach to budgeting, service delivery and infrastructure planning.

In 2003, for example, the board adopted policies that place a high priority on budgeting conservatively to give the county flexibility to handle revenue and cost fluctuations; using one-time revenues for one-time costs, rather than ongoing expenses; and relying on a pay-as-you-go approach as much as possible to keep the county debt load light.

When the recession appeared on the horizon, Placer County acted quickly and decisively.

The board approved a hiring freeze as part of a drive to cut costs and avoid layoffs. It asked employees to pay larger shares of their pension and health premium costs, and created a two-tier pension system that pays new hires less generous benefits, but ensures that benefit costs can be sustained in the long term. People are staying healthy, living longer and collecting benefits longer, which add long-term costs to the County's retirement projections.

The county tried new innovative, cost-effective approaches to providing services and has implemented almost 150 suggestions from a County Cost Savings Task Force.

While Placer County has put some road, building, equipment maintenance, and other projects on hold, our success in dealing with the recession is particularly impressive because we continue to provide all mandated public services, have found ways to handle increased demand for many optional services, and made progress on badly needed construction projects. Those achievements will be my focus in part two of the series.

Jennifer Montgomery is chairwoman of the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

Nevada working to bring major sporting events to the state

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

With the U.S. Olympic Committee giving up on a U.S. bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, a coalition of winter sports enthusiasts will focus instead on attracting other sports competitions to Nevada, including the possibility of bringing a curling event to Las Vegas.

Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki, who heads the Nevada Tourism Commission, said a group composed of several members of the Reno-Lake Tahoe Winter Games Coalition have met twice informally to explore strategies once the U.S. Olympic Committee officially agreed not to pursue the 2022 Games.

“It was always part of our conversation that the journey was well worth the effort, regardless of not capturing the Olympic dream,” Krolicki said after Wednesday’s Tourism Commission meeting.

“While the U.S. Olympic Committee has made decisions to postpone bidding efforts, we thought it was terribly important to stay on this path of securing sporting events,” he said.

The fledgling sports commission is expected to be a private nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing elite international sporting competitions to Nevada. Initially, the group, comprising primarily winter sports boosters, would focus on winter events in the Lake Tahoe area, but it would expand to include summer events in the future, he said.

The state has hosted Junior Olympic cross country skiing events, and resorts also have worked to lure downhill competitions to the state’s ski slopes.

Krolicki said he couldn’t give details, but at the commission meeting said there are efforts being made to attract a major curling competition to Las Vegas.

Curling is an Olympic event in which players slide stones across a sheet of ice to a target. After a curler slides a 38- to 44-pound stone across the ice, two “sweepers” with brooms attempt to alter the state of the ice ahead of the stone to speed or slow its movement.

The marketing of winter sports in Nevada dominated the meeting, and the commission received several reports on strategies to attract ski enthusiasts to Lake Tahoe.

The Winter 2012-13 media strategy is part of a $1.5 million marketing plan within the state’s controversial $3 million contract with Burson-Marsteller of New York.

The Tourism Commission will work with Burson-Marsteller to

leverage social media posts and amplify content from outdoor recreation and travel sites.

It also will work on target audiences with a household income of $100,000. Commission officials said their primary market will be Southern California winter sports enthusiasts.

South Lake Tahoe airport passes FAA inspection; major changes in the works

By Joann Eisenbrandt

Even though the Lake Tahoe Airport has not had scheduled commercial air service for more than a decade, the city has retained the airport's FAA-issued Part 139 Air Operating Certificate. This is required for airports serving scheduled air carrier aircraft to remain ready for the return of commercial service.

To obtain Part 139 certification, commercial service airports agree to meet specific operational and safety standards for the upkeep of the physical plant, to maintain accurate recordkeeping by the airport proprietor and fixed base operator (FBO), and to provide for adequate firefighting and rescue equipment and proper safety training for all personnel.

FAA inspections to ensure compliance are conducted annually, problems noted and time frames for correction given. On Aug.

27, 2012, Elizabeth Louie, FAA airport certification safety inspector from the Los Angeles Airports District Office, conducted the Lake Tahoe Airport's yearly Part 139 Airport Operating Certificate inspection.



Lake Tahoe Airport officials want to make sure all the FAA certificates are in place so commercial air service could return. Photo/LTN file

Last week, a rumor began circulating that the airport had failed to correct problems, specifically related to fire suppression equipment, by the deadline, and that the Part 139 Air Operating Certificate had been pulled. *Lake Tahoe News* and the city received inquiries.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry responded, "Somebody is certainly calling people and saying things that are not true. They're trying to stir the pot. I don't know what the source is, but it's disheartening."

FAA inspector Elizabeth Louie later confirmed, "This was a normal inspection. There are some 'housekeeping' items that need to be addressed, but the [Lake Tahoe Airport] certificate was not pulled."

The annual inspection included a review of airport and FBO

files and logs; checking the runway and taxiways for correct slope, pavement condition, markings, lighting, and signage; inspecting rescue and firefighting equipment and reviewing personnel training records. The fuel farm and mobile fueler's fire suppression equipment (maintained by Mountain West Aviation, the airport's FBO) was also checked. A post-inspection briefing was conducted with airport management and a "letter of correction" sent noting any violations.

"This is normal," Airport Director Sherry Miller told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Every airport goes through this exact same thing and gets a list of corrections."

Noted this year was the need to perform a live fire drill, to light all the windsocks on the runway at night and ensure all fire suppression equipment was BC, not ABC (ABC extinguishers are corrosive to planes), and was currently certified and properly tagged. Last year's inspection requested development of a wildlife hazard assessment and management plan. Miller noted the city's fire extinguishers are all now correct, the live fire drill has been done and the runway windsocks are all lighted. The wildlife management plan will be put in place in the next several years – a timeframe acceptable to the FAA.

The remaining unresolved issue is with Mountain West Aviation's fire suppression equipment. The FAA correction letter states, "Mountain West Aviation (FBO) has expired fire extinguishers in the fuel storage area …. The mobile fueler's fire extinguishers have no tags." Miller adds, "[Michael Golden] has been notified that he's in noncompliance. He has the right kind (of fire extinguishers) on the fuel trucks … but the fire suppression system at the fuel farm has not been certified every year by a licensed certifier."

Golden, president of Mountain West, disagrees. He told *Lake Tahoe News* that all his fire suppression equipment, "is current. We received a letter two years ago from Sherry [Miller] to change the fire extinguishers from ABC to BC and

we did. Last year we were notified that our fuel truck meters were not certified. They have been certified. We haven't received anything verbally or in writing (from this year's inspection) that we're out of compliance."

1992 Airport Master Plan Settlement Agreement expires

Having a current Part 139 certification is crucial to the city's future plans for the airport. Officials have been actively seeking proposals for scheduled commercial air service, using smaller, quieter, new-generation aircraft, with the initial focus on routes to Los Angeles and San Diego. The last 20 years saw a number of short-lived, largely unsuccessful spurts of commercial service from a variety of airlines. The city points to the 1992 Lake Tahoe Airport Master Plan Settlement Agreement as a main cause for these failures.

This agreement among the city, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, California Attorney General's Office, League to Save Lake Tahoe and FAA resolved a swarm of lawsuits over noise restrictions and other operational issues at the Lake Tahoe Airport. It included a master plan and environmental impact report, and created the regulatory framework governing airport operations for 20 years. On Oct. 8 it expired.

A key issue discussed in the past was brought to the forefront by the expiration of the Settlement Agreement. Must the city prepare a new Airport Master Plan before reinstituting commercial air service?

"The only environmental document we have right now is the EIR completed in 1992. It's still a viable document." Miller notes. "If we wanted commercial service now, we must operate under those documents, even if the SA has expired, because that EIR says what can and can't be done."

In July, Julie Regan, TRPA's external affairs chief, expressed her agency's viewpoint, "If the current (master) plan expires

before a new plan is in place, the status quo would continue, i.e., the city would continue to operate the airport as a general aviation facility until a new plan is developed and put in place."

General aviation airports do not have scheduled commercial air service.

Kerry, at the time, disagreed, "We don't have to wait for a master plan to be completed to bring in commercial service."

The city has not had additional discussions with TRPA about this question, but has decided to prepare a full master plan study. It recently secured needed FAA funding and put out a request for qualifications for consultants to complete the document.

Master plan costs will be between $450,000 and $500,000, with federal funding paying 90 percent and the city 10 percent, and will take about a year and a half to complete. Three responses to the RFQ have been received, a committee has been formed to review them and make a recommendation to the City Council, with potential selection at the Dec. 11 council meeting.

But what happens if the city receives a serious proposal for commercial air service before the master plan is completed? There isn't a simple answer.

"If somebody wants to propose service," Kerry states, "they would have to meet the thresholds that are required. What those thresholds are … that's a long conversation. We'll do what's required to be done, but it would depend on what's proposed. It's too broad a question to answer without having a specific proposal."

When asked if such a proposal were imminent, Kerry replied, "We have had someone interested, but we're not sure if they're just kicking the tires or are going to give us a proposal."

Potential outsourcing of airport management operations

As important to the city as securing commercial service is the need to control costs. Serious reductions in overall city staffing, and a reconfiguration and consolidation of duties have already taken place. Outsourcing of airport management may be the next step.

On Oct. 9, the city put out a request for proposals inviting, "submissions from qualified and interested airport managers or management companies who will manage and operate the city's FAA certificated airport … serving both general aviation and commercial aviation operations."

The city's goals, as stated in the RFP, are to increase the number of airport users, eliminate the city's subsidy of airport operations, maximize the facility's revenue potential and take advantage of all available and creative marketing opportunities.

The deadline for RFPs is Oct.31. They will be evaluated by a selection committee, interviews conducted and an award of contract potentially approved by the City Council on Dec. 11.

The transfer of management would begin within 60 days with a 36-month contract, with an option by the city to renew the agreement for two additional 12-month periods for a total of 60 months. All airport functions and staffing would remain basically the same – but would be performed by management company employees, not city staff.

Kerry emphasized this RFP process may not actually result in any changes to current airport management.

"Don't presume any specific action will be taken regarding the RFP. Putting out an RFP does not guarantee a specific outcome. It provides an opportunity to assess management and operations solutions," Kerry said.

The city could choose to reject any and all proposals, even from fully-qualified bidders, or to modify, postpone or cancel the RFP. Kerry declined to make any additional comments about the RFP, the options for current city airport employees, or elaborate on specifics regarding the city's plans until the bidding process has closed.

While not all city employees appear aware of the RFP, current Airport Manager Miller sees value in it. "This is a good process to go through and the city and the public will get some good information from it."

The privatization of airport management was suggested several years ago by former City Manager Tony O'Rourke in his report to the City Council at its March 15, 2011, meeting. It was proposed as part of the city's five-year financial plan for, "structurally reducing the city's personnel costs."

This change has become a more common choice for airports, the Minden-Tahoe Airport among them. It has contracted out all airport operations and staffing to ABS Aviation Management.

In 2009, Douglas County was notified by the FAA that its ordinance imposing weight restrictions on aircraft wasn't appropriate under federal regulations, and unless it was changed, federal funding to the airport would stop.

"This led," as Douglas County Manager Steve Mokrohisky explained, "to an extensive public engagement process to figure out exactly what type of airport we wanted, which was a self-sustaining, general aviation airport focused on soaring, sport flying and corporate aviation."

While the ordinance was being revised, the airport manager left and the county contracted with ABS Aviation Management for airport management services for an interim six-month period while recruiting nationwide for a new county airport manager. Bobbi Thompson was the contracted airport manager with county staff remaining in the other positions. After the

recruitment period, Mokrohisky was unsatisfied with the applicant pool.

“We didn’t want to settle. We were pleased with the very good service we’d received from Bobbi and decided to ask ABS to make a proposal,” Mokrohisky told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In February 2011, the Douglas County signed a two-year agreement through January 2013 with ABS for overall airport management, with a yearly savings in airport staffing costs of $50,000. Airport staff are all now ABS employees.

“They are all residents of Douglas County. Their business cards say Minden-Tahoe Airport, not ABS. From the public standpoint, there is no difference, other than the quality of service they’ve received. We’ve done a 180 at our airport and are now back on the map internationally as one of the top two locations for soaring. “

County airport employees all had the opportunity to apply for positions with ABS, and all who did secured them. Mokrohisky adds that even though airport operations have been outsourced, county oversight remains.

“We still have a Board of Commissioners. I oversee the airport manager. She comes to all my directors’ meetings, and as before, issues related to airport leases, changes in fees, standards, rules and regulations require approval by the Board of Commissioners,” he said.

“The city (of South Lake Tahoe) did inquire of the county how this has worked,“ Mokrohisky added. “This is a great example of a time when privatization works well in the private sector. … The Minden-Tahoe Airport is the only financially self-sufficient general aviation airport in the state of Nevada.”

USFS schedules controlled burn on West Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations in the Timberland area of the West Shore on Oct. 23.

Crews anticipate burning 3 to 10 acres per day, for a total of 10 to 20 acres, conditions permitting.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed.

To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, No. 6.

Other federal, state and local fire management agencies may also be conducting prescribed fire work during this period.

Tornado warning issued for Sierra foothills

The National Weather Service in Sacramento has issued a tornado warning for northwestern El Dorado County, Nevada County and Placer County until 7:15pm Monday.

At 6:26pm the Weather Service Doppler radar indicated a severe thunderstorm capable of producing a tornado near Auburn moving northeast at 25 mph.

Other locations in the warning include but are not limited to Cool, Lake of the Pines, Applegate, Alta Sierra, Colfax, Grass Valley, Weimar and Foresthill.

When a tornado warning is issued based on Doppler radar it means that strong rotation has been detected in the storm. A tornado may already be on the ground or is expected to develop shortly. If you are in the path of this dangerous storm, move indoors and to the lowest level of the building. Stay away from windows. If driving, do not seek shelter under a highway overpass. The safest place to be during a tornado is in a basement. Get under a workbench or other piece of sturdy furniture. If no basement is available, seek shelter on the lowest floor of the building in an interior hallway or room such as a closet. Use blankets or pillows to cover your body and always stay away from windows.

Emile Allais – ‘father of modern skiing’ – dies at age 100

By Douglas Martin, New York Times

Émile Allais, a daring champion French skier who helped shape his sport by developing and popularizing a new style of skiing in the 1930s – keeping the skis parallel – as well as by coaching Olympic teams and designing ski equipment, died on Wednesday in Sallanches, in the French Alps. He was 100.

The French Skiing Federation announced his death, prompting Jean-Claude Killy, the French skier who dominated the sport in the late 1960s, to hail Allais as “the father of modern skiing.”

For all his many victories on the slopes, Allais failed in perhaps his final challenge: his bet that on his 100th birthday he would beat his cardiologist down Valle Blanche in Chamonix, one of the great Alps ski runs. He stopped skiing a few years ago.

In 1934, Allais became the first French skier to win a major event, placing first in the combined event – a downhill run and two slalom runs – at Hahnenkamm at Kitzbühel in the Austrian Alps.

In the 1937 world championships, he won gold medals in the downhill, slalom and combined, becoming the first man to win both downhill and slalom races in a major championship. That year and the next, he was the world’s all-around champion skier, the first man to hold the title in successive years.

His daring, almost reckless-seeming style of skiing was legend. He once did a somersault in an event and landed on his

skis without losing time. The *New York Times* once described him as “a congenital candidate for the suicide club” and marveled at how he often seemed out of control before miraculously recovering.

He awed competitors. A German skier was quoted by the *Times* in 1937 calling Allais “the greatest all-around skier the world has ever known.” Killy said Allais had taught him to take risks.

His most far-reaching contribution to the sport came in the late 1930s, when he helped develop and popularize the new method of skiing with skis parallel to each other rather than angled inward in a V shape. The French Skiing Federation soon adopted that as its official style.

In the 1940s and ’50s, Allais coached the French Olympic team for seven years, and the Canadian and American teams for one year each. He helped found the École Française du Ski, which became one of the world’s largest ski schools.

Allais made a business career out of skiing as well, opening a resort in Chile and helping to develop others in France, including Courchevel. He designed skis, goggles, aerodynamic pants and some of the first ski boots to fasten to the skis. His goal, he once said, was to help skiers experience the “sense of speed and the sense of freedom” that had so captivated him as a youth.

He spent considerable time in the United States, as the first ski school instructor at Squaw Valley and a teacher in Sun Valley, Idaho, where one pupil was the movie producer Darryl F. Zanuck. Brigitte Bardot and Cary Grant were also among his pupils.

Émile Allais was born on Feb. 25, 1912, in Megève, in the Mont Blanc region of the French Alps. His father, a baker, was killed in World War I. His mother remarried and went into the hotel business. An uncle who was a mountain guide made skis

for him, and by 8 he was an adept skier. At 17, in 1929, he competed in his first race.

In 1932, Allais's racing career was interrupted by compulsory military service, which he accomplished by serving with the French ski corps. Returning to the slopes, he finished second in the downhill and the combined event in the 1935 world championships.

In 1936, at the Olympics in Germany, Allais won a bronze medal in the slalom with a dramatic run that provoked clamorous cheering. Hitler went to congratulate him personally. "He looked harmless enough," Allais recalled years later.

World War II and a broken ankle ended his ski racing career.

Allais's first wife, Georgette, died in 1970. He is survived by his second wife, Mireille, and his daughters, Karen and Kathleen, both of whom skied for the French national team.

At 90, Allais broke his shoulder in a collision with a snowboarder. But he returned to the slopes after recovering, and kept skiing into his late 90s.

Minden airport hangar expansion under way

By Northern Nevada Business Weekly

Construction is under way on an ambitious plan to boost general aviation space and services at Minden Tahoe Airport.

Piñion Aero Center LLC, a group of three private investors, has a plan to erect as much as 1 million square feet of

aircraft hangar and light industrial flex space at Minden Tahoe Airport.

The Piñion Aero Center will start with a much more modest beginning, though: 12 T-hangars for general aviation aircraft and three more hangars to house gliders. The initial phase encompasses 7,374 square feet.

General contractor Pinecrest Construction Development of Reno has erected much of the steel framework, and the hangar doors were scheduled to be installed last week, says Floyd Rowley of Johnson Group, who is handling sales and leasing of the hangars.

Rowley says the developers have floated the idea to increase hangar space at Minden Tahoe Airport for about 10 years, and as the economies of California and Nevada slowly recovered ground lost over the past four years the project finally took shape.

“The developer believes that given the strength of the economy in California and the apparent resurgence of the Northern Nevada economy there will be a demand for these hangars and people resume migrating here from California,” Rowley says.

The hangar space could prove attractive to general aviation enthusiasts from Incline Village, Glenbrook, Zephyr Cove and throughout Northern Nevada, Rowley says. Hangars are priced at about $89 per square foot.

Piñion will sell individual hangars subordinate to a master lease with the airport or lease space outright. Future development is contingent upon demand for initial phases of the project, Rowley adds.

Sierra starts season with competitive ‘snowball fight’

Dodge, dive, dip, duck, and dodge Sierra-at-Tahoe style.

The first Sierra Snowball Fight will use the classic childhood game dodgeball to reconnect powder hounds and celebrate the upcoming winter before the lifts start spinning.

The Nov. 8 event is for all ages to compete in a variety of quirky games.

The event will take place at Brothers Bar and Grill in South Lake Tahoe starting at 7pm.

Grab five friends today and start training to be crowned Snowball Champions. Team space is limited. Sign up by calling (530) 543.3139.

Celeb golf regular Rypien wants to join Champions Tour

By Scott Hanson, Seattle Times

You’re one of the greatest athletes in Washington state history, you’ve quarterbacked a Super Bowl winner and your foundation just donated $3 million to a Children’s Emergency Center at Spokane’s Sacred Heart Hospital.

Having just turned 50, what do you for an encore?

Try to make it on golf’s Champions Tour, of course.



Mark Rypien wants to do more than play at the ACC each year at Edgewood Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

That was the goal for Mark Rypien, who spent a week this month at the first stage of the 50-and-over Champions Tour qualifying school in Murrieta.

“I love challenges, and this Q school is a challenge,” said Rypien, a star at Shadle Park High in Spokane before going to Washington State and the Washington Redskins.

It was more of a challenge than he might have thought. Rypien opened with an 81 after a double-bogey on his first hole, but he got progressively better, shooting 77, 75 and 71 on the final three days.

Although Rypien wasn’t one of 14 players who advanced to the final qualifying (he tied for 25th in a field of 47), he was pleased with the improvement.

“The first day I was over my head, and then I started playing golf,” he said. “These guys are just amazing. I didn’t make my first birdie until the 12th hole of the second round, and I

started to wonder if there were any birdies out there. And the leaders are shooting 67 – now that's golfing your ball."

Rypien, who also starred in baseball and basketball at Shadle Park (he led the basketball team that beat Mercer Island in the controversial 1981 state championship), discovered when he was young he had a natural golf swing.

After getting drafted by the Washington Redskins in 1986, he lived a couple of blocks from Reston National Golf Course in Virginia. After finishing his morning work, he would walk to the course, carrying his clubs.

"It was a great chance to meet people, and I went from a 15 handicap to a 7 in one summer," he said.

His pro football career took a little longer to take off. He didn't play in a game in his first two seasons, but after starting six games in 1988, he became the team's full-time starter the next five seasons.

Rypien led the Redskins to the 1992 Super Bowl title and was named the game's MVP. He also played in two Pro Bowls before finishing his career in 2001.

Meanwhile, his golf game continued to improve. He won the inaugural Celebrity Golf Championship at Lake Tahoe in 1990, and finished second at the tournament this past summer.

That was just the continuation of good play this year, according to Rypien, who has all the competition he wants from his brother Tim, whose handicap is two shots better than scratch.

"I was playing well, creeping to 50, and it's the youngest I could ever be at Q school, so I decided to see what it looks like," he said.

Before Q school, Rypien talked with Rick Rhoden, the former major-league pitcher who spent time on the Champions Tour. He

also found inspiration from John Brodie, the former 49ers quarterback who played on the Champions Tour for 14 years.

Rypien did well enough last week to try qualifying again next year, but he vows to be more prepared. When winter hits in Spokane, he quits playing, and he even takes time off in the summer.

“I will need to play and practice more,” he said.

It’s not like he has trouble finding things to do, between tutoring his nephew, Brett Rypien, Shadle Park High’s star quarterback, and working with the Rypien Foundation, which provides assistance for families battling childhood cancer.

Rypien began the foundation six years after losing his 3-year-old son, Andrew, to cancer in 1998.

“It’s the most rewarding thing that I do,” Rypien said.

But he knows his game has to get better to make the Champions Tour.

“These guys out here are really, really good,” he said.