

Bring your friends – interactive gaming hits Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Ships ablaze and sinking fast. Winning poker hands with only four cards showing. Fast, fun and competitive.

These machines are part video game, part slot machine. It's definitely interactive because they can't be played alone. While they are considered skill-based, fast reaction time is the biggest asset to winning.

And, yes, it is all about gambling.

Harrah's Lake Tahoe is the first casino in Northern Nevada to have skill-based gaming. The two machines just arrived and are near where the escalator to/from Harveys is located.

It's easy to see how these games could be addicting in the same fun manner that a video game can be. The difference is that those games often take a quarter to play and these are \$2 a pop. (Harrah's can raise or lower the minimum bet, but not players.)

"We want to be at the forefront of new and exciting gaming. We want to stay current and competitive," Nick Breaux-Fujita, Harrah's regional vice president of marketing for Northern Nevada, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Interactive gaming is the latest rage in the casino industry.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

The devices came to Tahoe before Reno because this is a bigger tourist market when it comes to gaming. And that means people are not usually solo gamblers, as is the case with locals.

Two to four people may play at a time on each machine. It can be friends or strangers. Everyone stands, which makes it different from any slot machine and many table games. The social nature of the games sets them apart from any other games in the casino – even craps. They really aren't like anything else on the casino floor.

The amount players can win is randomly chosen by the machine, though there is always a chance to recoup at least a little more than the \$2 bet. The maximum win increases with the number of players, with \$480 being the most per game if four are playing.

Gamblit Poker is a bit like Texas Hold'em. While understanding poker is not necessary, it does help. There is a cheat sheet each player may use to know the various poker hands, but the

game moves too fast to look at in the moment. Each player is given two cards from a single deck. A card is turned over in the center and players “grab” it to add to their hand. Once a player has five cards then the game speeds up to the final seven or 11 cards (depends on the number of players). It’s a race and gamble to know which card to take. Best poker hand wins.

The skill involved is knowing which cards to select, being able to react fast, knowing what opponents have in order to “steal” a card they’d want, and deliberately filling out the hand to speed up the game.

Remember, this is all electronic. It’s touch screen action. No one is actually dealing the cards.

Cannonbeard’s Treasure is similar to blackjack in that players are trying to reach a certain number and if they go over they bust. The difference is the game’s computer decides what the number is and if players will get three or four cards. Cards 2-10 are face value, jack-queen-king are 10 points, and aces are one or 11. The machine does the counting – at least the total. Players need to be able to add what’s in their hand and the card being dealt.

Again, speed is important. And when a player has the maximum number of cards the dealing goes faster with a limited number of cards until the game is over.

The winner’s ship shoots cannons at the losers. With enough of those cannon balls, the ship eventually sinks.

Both are manufactured by Gamblit, which has other games in the production line. Gamblit launched the machines five weeks ago at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas. They are at five properties in Vegas, one in San Diego and now in Stateline.

Little touches to the machines include drink holders and USB ports to charge a phone.

The machines will be on the casino floor at Harrah's in Stateline for the summer. If they are popular, Harrah's plans to create an interactive area with the focus being "the casino of the future." It would mean leasing more machines, maybe putting in Ping-Pong and air hockey and the like, along with food and beverage service.

While the thought was these games would cater to millennials, casino managers are finding that age is not a factor in those who want to have some fun.

Sierra bighorns on ledge of breakthrough

By Tom Stienstra, San Francisco Chronicle

From a perch above a boulder-strewn ravine, we peered with binoculars up canyon walls and across a steep jumble of rocks and dirt for endangered Sierra Nevada bighorn sheep.

The arrival of spring in the high country is when Sierra bighorns feast on fresh, water-saturated forage in the front country of the Eastern Sierra Nevada outside Bishop.

To some, the spike in population seems to have come out of nowhere. In the late 1990s, about 100 Sierra bighorns were thought to be left on the planet; the latest count was roughly 600.

Read the whole story

Calif. weighs aggressive climate change measures

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Faced with a presidential administration that's dialing back climate change policies, California is getting even more aggressive on battling greenhouse gases.

Electric utilities in California already are working to generate half of their power through solar and other renewable energy sources by 2030, one of the most aggressive timetables in the nation. Now the leader of the California Senate is pushing a plan for utilities to go completely renewable by 2045.

Separately, Democratic lawmakers are doubling down on California's cap-and-trade carbon market, unveiling a proposal that could increase the cost of emitting greenhouse gases for cement makers, food processors and even motorists.

[Read the whole story](#)

SLT pot shop's future tied up in bankruptcy court

By Kathryn Reed

A bankruptcy judge in Reno may decide the future ownership of

the strip of commercial space in South Lake Tahoe's Bijou Center that houses a medical marijuana dispensary.

Lawyers for Patty Olson want all agreements with Cody Bass to be terminated and for Bob Hassett to be the owner of the parcel. A hearing is set for later this month.

Attorneys Kevin and Tricia Darby, who are representing Olson, did not return multiple calls.

For years Olson has owned this swath of land, as well other parcels in the area. She and Bass, who owns the Tahoe Wellness Cooperative, have been at odds for about a year. Bass believes the agreement he has with Olson to buy the commercial and residential properties for \$4.2 million is still valid. Not true says Olson's lawyers.

Bass stopped paying rent in March 2016. A court order mandated he pay the \$10,200/month rent. He has not consistently done so, according to court documents.

He filed a countersuit contending breach of contract. Bass was not available for comment.

Complicating the matter is that Bass is operating his shop without a permit from the city because he's supposed to have the landlord's permission. He no longer does. That issue is slated for a hearing in El Dorado County Superior Court next month.

Depending on what happens in bankruptcy court, the city dispute could just go away.

Olson, who had lived in the city for decades, now resides in Reno. She filed for chapter 13 bankruptcy earlier this year after her Tahoe properties were foreclosed on.

Court documents say the commercial property and the residence on Bal Bijou Road have a value of about \$3.5 million.

On March 8 of this year Hassett offered Olson \$2.35 million for the commercial property with the contingency all matters with Bass are resolved and that the property not need more than \$400,000 in repairs.

Olson would be able to pay her creditors if the sale to Hassett goes through.

Hassett runs the neighboring marina at Timber Cove, along with Camp Richardson and Lakeside marinas, as well as being the concessionaire at Round Hill Pines. He operated Meeks Bay marina until it was closed. After making public in **December** that he was in escrow on Olson's former house, Hassett no longer speaks to *Lake Tahoe News*.

Wet winter will delay Nevada's wildfire problems

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Moisture from Nevada's historically wet winter will tamp down wildfire risk during early summer months.

But once the vegetation that's turning much of the Silver State green dries out wildfires could be bigger than normal. That's according to a wildland fire outlook from the National Interagency Fire Center.

The outlook forecasts wildfire danger through August throughout the United States.

Read the whole story

Nev. bear biologist bites back at critics with lawsuit

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

A Nevada bear biologist who's been subjected to heated online attacks is striking back in court.

Carl Lackey, a biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife, filed a lawsuit claiming critics used Facebook in a "vicious and calculated effort to damage his reputation and jeopardize his employment."

The suit names the leader of the Bear League, an animal rights group, and two other people who Lackey claims are responsible for Facebook pages that are rife with attacks.

[Read the whole story](#)

SLT cop not indicted in shooting, civil case resumes

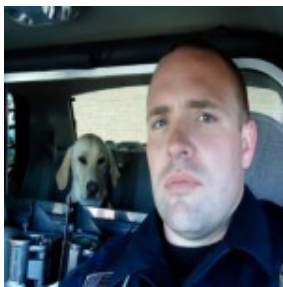
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By Kathryn Reed

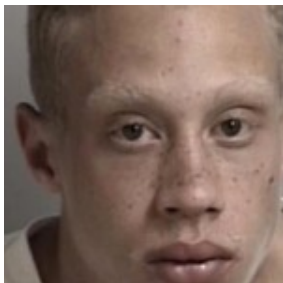
A grand jury has decided there is not enough evidence to indict a South Lake Tahoe police officer who fatally shot an unarmed man in June 2015.

With that decision, it means the civil suit can proceed.

“I am confident we will prevail,” attorney Dale Galipo, who is representing the victim’s mother, *told Lake Tahoe News*. “In a civil case the only thing a family can seek is monetary compensation. But what is even more important than money is some accountability and responsibility on behalf of the officer and department, and they don’t want to see it happen to someone else’s child.”



Josh Klinge



Kris Jackson

On June 15, 2015, Officer Josh Klinge killed 22-year-old Kris Jackson of Sacramento. Klinge said he thought Jackson had a gun when he fired the single bullet into the suspect’s chest as he was escaping through a window at the Tahoe Hacienda Motel on Lake Tahoe Boulevard.

Klinge had been on paid administrative for about a year. This was at taxpayers’ expense. The department is not able to fill his position until it is determined what his future status will be. The 37-year-old had 10 years of experience before joining the South Lake Tahoe department in January 2015.

"He is not working currently. Beyond that I'm not really able to explain or give you more details. We will wait for all the legal processes to be resolved," Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Jackson was on criminal probation at the time of the shooting. On June 1, 2015, he had been arrested by South Lake Tahoe police officers for allegedly possessing several baggies of cocaine, scales and packaging materials. On May 21, 2015, he had been arrested by local officers on a Sacramento failure to appear warrant related to a drug possession charge.

The civil suit was filed in federal court in Sacramento in early 2016. It had been stayed while the grand jury process was going on.

El Dorado County used a **court ruling from this year** to convene a grand jury in this case with the possibility of charging Klinge with the unlawful use of deadly force.

El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson chose not to comment.

One of the problems with grand juries is oftentimes the documents are sealed, as is the case with this officer-involved shooting. No one knows who was interviewed, what was said or if there might have been even the appearance of favoritism toward one party or another based on evidence, witnesses and the line of questioning.

Galipo is trying to get the grand jury record unsealed, and is hoping it will be made public and not just for his eyes.

Jackson's father, Patrick Jackson, is represented by attorney Michael Haddad. The two attorneys are working together.

And while Galipo generally finds police officers do a good job, he said they need to be held accountable when they cross the line.

“Who is going to police the police?” Galipo asked.

Depending on how the civil case goes, Galipo said there is the possibility Klinge could face federal criminal charges.

South Tahoe elects favor sales tax to fix roads

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe has the opportunity to raise more than \$2.5 million a year that would be spent exclusively on roads.

The City Council on Tuesday heard results from a March poll that was conducted by a consulting firm to gauge the likelihood of whether voters would approve a one-half percent sales tax hike. The results show voters are likely to say yes. The council is expected to make a decision in June about whether to place the question on the November ballot.

The state sales tax rate today is 7.25 percent. It is 7.75 percent in South Lake Tahoe. Measure Q passed with 58 percent of the vote in November 2004 to increase the sales tax by one-half cent. Those dollars go to the General Fund.

What is different with the proposed half cent hike is that it would go to a dedicated source – roads. This is why a two-thirds voter approval is needed. There would be no sunset for the tax.

That increase would equate to another 50 cents on every \$100 spent on taxable goods. Groceries and health care are not taxed. Locals and tourists, who use the roads, would be paying for their upkeep through the sales tax. It is estimated

visitors would pay 75 percent of the tax collected.

If approved, the tax would go into effect 30 to 60 days after the vote. The city could go out to bid in the winter and have a substantive roads project starting in summer 2018.

Ten years ago is when the public works department started the drum beat for a dedicated revenue source for roads. The council is finally listening.

The horrific conditions of city roads were exposed to an even greater and wider extent this winter. The roads are more like a mountain bike park.

Jim Marino, assistant public works director, told the council "the benefits of a dedicated source are long-term strategic plans and achieving that." In some ways it's a piecemeal approach today, without his department able to make substantive gains.

Marino estimates with a known dollar amount being available every season it would take four years to stabilize the roads. In year six or seven, the paving index should start to increase.

Working with utility companies as they make infrastructure improvements would help leverage city money to get even more work done.

The lodging association supports this tax because it will go just to roads. All the potholes make the area look like a poorer community and gives the city a negative reputation, according to Jerry Bindel. Real estate agent Adele Lucas said bad roads also affect her business.

Former Councilwoman JoAnn Conner questioned how the survey came about. **Lake Tahoe News** wrote about it in March. She also believes last fall's vote shows voters don't want a sales tax increase of any kind.

Measure U needed only a simple majority, but lost with only 42.26 percent wanting it. That half cent tax would not have been allocated to anything in particular. However, an advisory measurement showed voters did support roads if the money were to have been dedicated.

Councilwoman Wendy David said it is time for the city and council in particular to take action and take responsibility for the roads. "I believe this is a case when you don't go forward with roads, you go backward."

Consultants from True North said 68 percent of the 353 registered voters who were polled favor the tax hike if used for roads, to fix potholes, and to improve safety for drivers-pedestrians-cyclists.

A concern is that older voters are the ones most likely to show up in November, but they are the ones less likely to support a tax hike. That is something to be addressed in marketing the measure.

The survey also showed a majority support a separate roads management authority to oversee that the money is spent as voters expect it to be.

Nevada revenue higher than originally projected

By Seth A. Richardson, Reno Gazette-Journal

Lawmakers got some good news on Monday when economic projections for the state anticipated \$100 million more in revenue for the Nevada than previously expected.

The Economic Forum, a nonpartisan group who analyzes and estimates how much money the state has to spend, projected \$95.7 million more in state revenue over the next biennium than their initial forecast in December.

Chief Economist Bill Anderson and Daniel White of Moody's Analytics say wages are increasing, bringing commodity prices and tax revenue with them.

Read the whole story

Mosquito season about to begin in Tahoe-Truckee

By Kathryn Reed

Get out the bug spray – mosquito season is likely to be pretty bad in the Tahoe-Truckee area.

“I would definitely say that with a snowpack this year that is more typical of what winter up here should look like, that we are anticipating a more typical mosquito season, which will feel like increased numbers compared to the last handful of drought years,” Angella Falco, field station manager in Tahoe for Placer Mosquito & Vector Control District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Mosquito larvae was evident in late April in Placer County with ponding water in various locations.

“This is going to be a bad year for mosquitoes, so we all have to work together. First and foremost, dump any standing water or any objects that can trap or collect water,” Krista Jenkins, district manager for Douglas County Mosquito

Abatement District, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Mosquitoes can breed in small amounts of water like planters, bottle caps, tires, buckets and etc.”

The district was formed in 1969 at which time the Lake Tahoe and Topaz areas of Douglas County were and still are not included. When the West Nile virus hit Douglas County in 2005, the district and Douglas County signed an agreement for services. That contract ends this fiscal year.



Standing water is where mosquitoes like to breed. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Normally mosquito breeding sites in Douglas County are monitored starting April 1. The long winter didn't allow that to happen.

“Temperatures of both the air and the water play a big role in how the larvae stages advance. The cooler the temperature, the longer it takes the larvae to mature into flying adults, which is a good thing for us,” Jenkins said. “We cannot treat running water. When the water stops flowing and settles in the low areas or accumulates into catch basins, that is when our

job begins. Emergence of the adults can happen from that point on. It all depends on the habitat of each breeding area.”

Vector control officials use what is considered an environmentally-friendly larvicide at Lake Tahoe. This is to prevent the larvae from hatching. If that doesn’t work, then an adulticide is used. This is a chemical that is released into the air.

“There are certain protocols to follow for this to happen and we are very strict about following them,” Jenkins said.

This month is when people throughout the Tahoe-Truckee area are bound to start noticing the pesky biting machines.

“With continued storms well into spring, it’s hard to estimate when adults will begin to emerge, but safe to say that mosquitoes will be found from mid- to late May, well into July based on the current snowpack,” Flaco said. “The lower elevations around the Lake Tahoe and Truckee areas will melt and produce first, and areas in and around the Soda Springs, Serene Lakes and Sugar Bowl areas producing in late spring.”

Residents are encouraged to call their county vector control office if standing water lingers, especially into the summer.

Dumping any water that has collected in containers is encouraged. This is to eliminate breeding zones. Mosquitoes can lay their eggs in the tiniest of areas.

Once they are hatched, mosquitoes are most active at dawn and the first two hours after sunset.

Authorities recommend applying insect repellent containing EPA-registered active ingredients such as DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to repel the insects. Wearing pants and long-sleeved shirts is also advised. Repairing torn window screens will keep the skeeters out.

Mosquitoes can carry the West Nile virus. In 2016, there were

442 confirmed cases of the virus in 30 counties throughout California, including one case in El Dorado County. Statewide there were 19 human deaths.

In the Carson Valley, there were three human cases of West Nile in 2016.

“We really have two mosquito seasons up here, snowmelt season with its handful of species, then changing over to our summer mosquitoes during the warm months,” Falco with Placer County said. “Our agency has an extensive surveillance program that includes assessing mosquito larvae and adult mosquito abundance in the spring through the summer. We do extensive treatment for mosquito larvae in snowmelt pools in the spring as well as catch-basin systems in the spring and summer. We also respond to reports of mosquitoes and dead birds. In the past several years of our enhanced surveillance in the Tahoe area, we have not found West Nile virus infected mosquitoes. Hopefully, this remains the case, but there’s no way to predict what the upcoming season may hold.”

Dogs and cats can become infected with West Nile virus, too, but they do not suffer the severe symptoms like humans, horses, and birds.

“We also trap mosquitoes on a regular basis to not only monitor the adult population, but to more importantly have the adult mosquitoes tested for the West Nile virus. This is also part of maintaining our protocols,” Jenkins said.