Coming soon to casinos: Betting on yourself

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Coming soon to Nevada casinos: slot machines that feel a lot like arcade or video games. The Nevada Gaming Commission recently approved regulations for skill-based slot machines in an effort to help the casino industry appeal to younger, more technologically savvy customers.

The regulations create three categories: traditional chance games, skill games in which a player's ability determines the outcome, and hybrid games in which a combination of chance and skill affect the result.

The skill-based rules have been in the works for months, after the state Legislature approved a bill directing regulators to encourage "innovative, alternative and advanced technology" in casino games. The measure was pushed for by the Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers, which represents slot machine companies.

Read the whole story

UNR lab plotting regional seismic faults

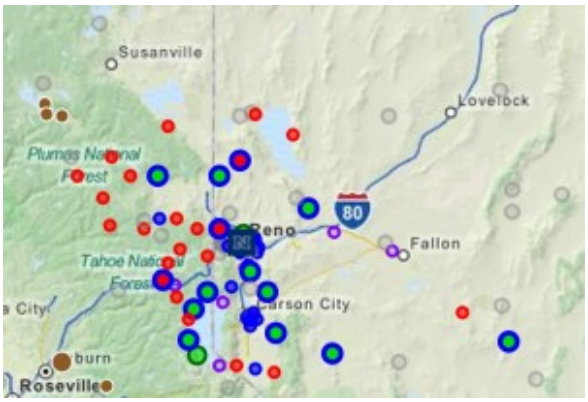
By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Technology is continuing to bring clarity to the seismic world, though not yet to the extent where temblors

can be predicted.

LiDAR provides images and data that otherwise could not be ascertained or would take an exhorbitant amount of time to collect.

“It has immediate scientific value for tectonic analysis and mapping,” Courtney Brailo explained at a talk earlier this month at the Tahoe Environmental Research Center in Incline Village. “We can measure change as it happens.”



Seismic activity is normal throughout the Sierra. Map/UNR Seismology Lab

Brailo is a UNR graduate student working at the Nevada Seismological Lab.

By using LiDAR the lab has been able to document known faults and has discovered ones in the region that were previously unknown.

LiDAR uses lasers and GPS. It can be used on land or underwater. There is satellite, aerial, terrestrial and mobile scanning LiDAR.

Brailo explained how filters could get rid of vegetation on the ground, allowing scientists to get a better view of the terrain via the LiDAR method. This can provide better information at times than being in the field, especially

because it is accurate up to centimeters.

“We are seeing things we’ve never seen before. We can see bare earth in Alpine terrain,” she said.

Brailo added, “We can scan 1,000 kilometers a day. It’s quick compared to other standards.”

The UNR lab has been using LiDAR since 2005. In 2010, it was used to map the entire Lake Tahoe Basin – including the faults on the South Shore as well as at Mount Rose. Today, Brailo is focusing more on the greater Reno area. Through her work corrections have been made to previously documented faults and she has documented a new one.

Having baseline data helps scientists measure change going forward. This includes movement in the faults, measuring offset drainage and what the plates look like.

LiDAR can also be used to help engineers and government entities know where it might be more or less dangerous to build based on potential seismic activity. Digital elevation models can be created. Fire crews have used LiDAR to map tree density. It can be used on buildings. It’s the technology that was tapped a few years ago to make sure the space shuttle could be trucked through the streets of Southern California.

Action-sports icon dies parachuting at Squaw

By Powder

Erik Roner, father, husband and beloved member of the action-sports community, has tragically died after a parachuting

accident this morning in Squaw Valley.



Erik Roner died Sept. 28 parachuting at Squaw Valley. Photo/ Nitro Circus

As a member of a small four-man team of parachuters jumping as part of the opening ceremonies of the fourth annual Squaw Valley Institute Celebrity Golf Tournament, Roner descended into the drop zone but was off target and hit a large tree.

According to witnesses, Roner was suspended by his chute 25-30 feet off the ground for at least 40 minutes until emergency crews could reach him. He was then transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead. Cause of death is still unknown.

Read the whole story

Tourists hang in balance as

Congress mulls shutdown

By Harriet Baskas, CNBC

Gerda Stoof was delighted last week to be looking up at the 60-foot-tall stone faces of Mount Rushmore National Memorial near Keystone, South Dakota. She and her husband made a pit stop on their drive home from visiting new twin grandchildren in Ontario.

“I’ve heard about this all my life and have always wanted to see it,” said Stoof, a native of Alberta, Canada. They were unaware that if they’d shown up a week later, the gates to the site of the iconic granite sculpture may have been locked.

That’s because if Oct. 1 rolls around without the nation’s lawmakers settling a budget for the new fiscal year, there may be a partial government shutdown that would affect the nation’s more than 400 national parks and historic sites—including federal agencies that support tourism.

If there is a partial shutdown, it would cost the U.S. travel sector at least $185 million per day in lost economic output, U.S. Travel Association economists estimate. That could also lead to the loss of 530,000 travel-related jobs due to temporary layoffs, reduced wages and fewer hours worked.

Read the whole story

Hospitals see uptick in

cycling injuries



A cyclist gets air at the Bijou Bike Park. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

On opening day of Bijou Bike Park people were calling it the "bone yard" even though no ambulances were needed.

The description had to do with the tricked out features and the potential for injury.

Hospitals in the U.S. saw the number of bike injuries double between 1998 and 2013, according to the American Medical Association. And it's not just young people who are getting hurt; the biggest increase was for those 45 and older.

When it comes to cycling deaths, fewer children died in the last four decades, while deaths for those between the ages of 35 and 45 tripled, according to Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Barton Memorial Hospital is not seeing quite the same trend with injuries. In 2012 the South Lake Tahoe facility recorded 63 hurt cyclists where trauma care was activated or the patient was transferred for additional care. That number does not include minor or non-trauma injuries. There were 41 in 2013 and 66 in 2014.

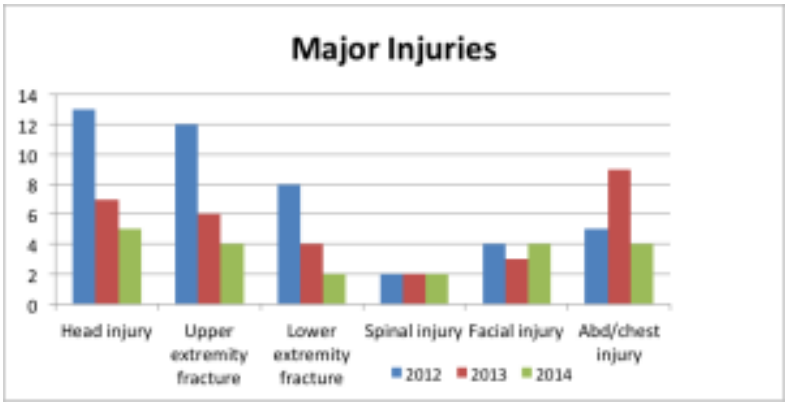
Of those injuries the ages are broken down as follows:

	2012	**2013**	**2014**	
0-10	7	1	6	
11-20	11	4	10	
21-30	6	18	8	
31-40	12	5	8	
41-50	12	3	12	
51-60	9	6	14	
61-70	5	2	7	
71-80	1	2	1	
Total	**63**	**41**	**66**	

“Riding a bike properly fitted to an individual can reduce crash potential as well as musculoskeletal problems. Not having proper conditioning or training relative to the demands of the trail or road ride chosen can certainly increase chances of an accident. For example, if someone is severely taxed by the uphill portion of a mountain bike ride, their agility and reaction time is likely to be affected on the downhill portion where speed increases and quick reactions are important,” Lance Orr, Barton emergency physician and medical director of the Emergency Department, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In 2012 and 2013 about three-fourths of the injuries were sustained by men. That number grew to 80 percent in 2014.

Barton is seeing fewer head injuries because more people are wearing helmets. Still, they are the predominant injury.



Source: *Barton Health*

“A large percentage of road bike accidents involve vehicles and these accidents can be severe,” Orr said. “From my perspective as an emergency medicine physician, a fair number of bicycle accidents that occur in town involve consumption of alcohol on the part of the rider. That is an uncommon issue for the distance road biker or typical mountain biker.”

Equipment beyond a helmet can be helpful when mountain biking. Even some of the people at the bike park are wearing pads.

“Padded equipment and full face helmets can reduce injuries even for the average rider provided vision and mobility are not impaired by the equipment,” Orr said. “Sometimes using additional equipment can have the opposite effect and lead riders to feel they can tackle a ride they previously felt was beyond their ability level.”

Locals had been dominating the Barton ER visits, but that changed in 2014 when 59 percent of the injuries occurred to visitors. In 2012, it was 63 percent locals in the ER with bike injuries, and 68 percent in 2013.

First aid kits are not common among cyclists, so treating wounds immediately doesn’t always happen.

“I always carry a roll of white athletic tape. You can tape up cuts with it and, if you know, you can fashion a splint using sticks,” Lars Ensign, a Barton ER doc, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The doctors recommend using clean water to wash out abrasions or lacerations.

When it comes to learning what to do on the trails, the docs recommend a clinic, watching YouTube videos and progressing on courses – like the multi-level Bijou Bike Park.

‘Mini-Mousehole’ to benefit Truckee pedestrians, cyclists



A tunnel for non-motorized traffic will improve safety in Truckee on Highway 89. Photo/Caltrans

By Barbara Barte Osborn, Sacramento Bee

There’s a “light in the tunnel” for the Truckee-Tahoe area’s numerous bicyclists and hikers, who have long had to negotiate Truckee’s 25-foot-wide, 1928 Mousehole tunnel on Highway 89.

A smaller tunnel just for them was punched through east of the Mousehole last week, and a paved pedestrian/bike trail through

it, connecting West River Street and Deerfield Drive, is expected to be finished early next summer.

Although the tunnel phase is now completed, Truckee and Caltrans officials advise that much work still needs to be done before it will be safe for the public to travel through.

Read the whole story

Fantasy sports and the cost of weird gambling laws

By Neil Irwin, New York Times

Sports leagues in the United States, and the networks that broadcast their games, prefer to pretend that everyone watching their games does so for the pure love of competition, the occasional nonchalant reference to the gambling point spread by a football announcer notwithstanding.

But as anyone who has turned on a television during sports programming in the last few months knows, there is a boom in “daily fantasy sports”sites. They offer the prospect of six- and seven-figure prizes in contests based on the statistical performance of a roster of athletes the entrant chooses in a wide range of sports, with the NFL the most popular.

DraftKings and FanDuel have quickly become among the biggestadvertisers on TV and the Internet, with scenes of fantasy players celebrating their winnings. The companies have entered partnerships with teams and attained billion-dollar-plus valuations from prominent investors that include pro football franchise owners.

An entire industry has emerged out of a legal loophole for something that looks a whole lot like sports gambling, which is illegal outside of Nevada and a few other states.

Read the whole story

Pro sports venues beckon Tahoe-ites



Misaki Doi is ready to crush the ball at the Bank of the West tournament in Stanford. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

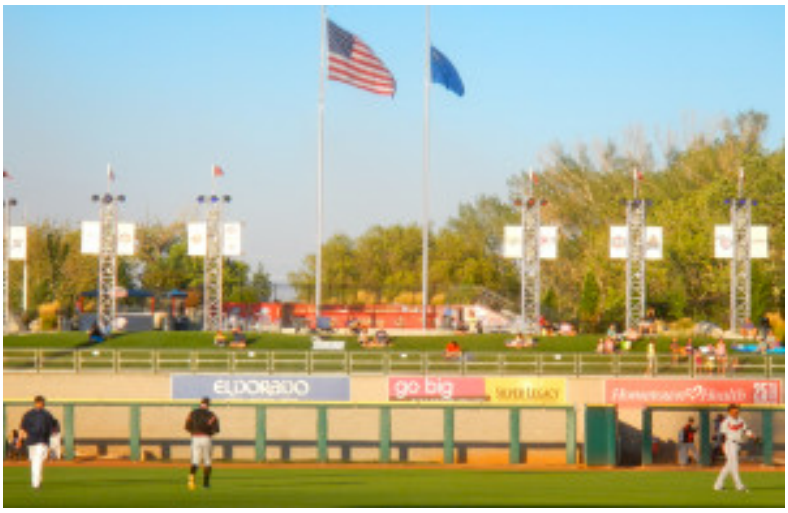
By Kathryn Reed

Appreciation of athleticism, physique, conditioning, speed, eye-hand coordination, fluid-graceful movement, mental

toughness – those are some of the advantages of watching professional sports live compared to sitting in front of the television.

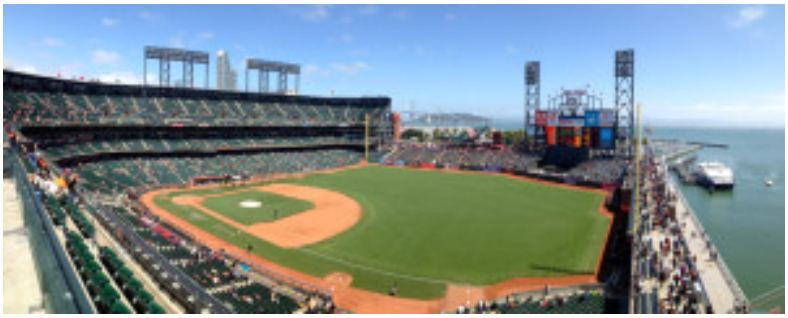
There are things to hear and see, and nuances that TV cameras don’t capture.

Watching professional sports does not have to break the bank. There are a plethora of opportunities throughout the year for people in the Lake Tahoe Basin to watch the pros.



Reno Aces seats include an outfield grass area. Photo/LTN file

AAA baseball is east (Reno) and west (Sacramento) of here. An advantage to the minor league ballparks is they are much more intimate than the big leagues’. It’s reminiscent of going to spring training in Arizona, only cheaper.



AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants, has views of more than just

the field. Photo/LTN file

Still, two Major League Baseball teams are an easy drive – the A's in Oakland and Giants in San Francisco. It's possible to do a down and back without incurring the cost of a hotel room.

A couple years ago the Giants instituted a program where games are valued based on the opponent. This brings the price down when they play a team like the Florida Marlins and up when the LA Dodgers are in town. What it does is make professional baseball affordable.



Stanford is an intimate venue for the Bank of the West tournament. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

While pro football is expensive, there are two teams within driving distance to Tahoe – the Raiders in Oakland and 49ers in Santa Clara.

Taking youngsters to see pros can inspire them to excel in their respective sport. There may be a teaching moment about sportsmanship or strategy; it's also a chance to witness idols or up-and-comers in action; it may even be an opportunity to

get an autograph.



Forty-niner great Steve Young mixes it up with fans at the ACC celebrity golf tournament. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

One of the best places to get a signature is at the American Century Championship. The annual celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline brings out a mix of retired and active athletes, albeit golf is not what brought them fame. Even so, the play is impressive by the top third of contenders.

To see an entire field of serious golfers, one only needs to head to Reno for the annual Reno Tahoe Open. This is a PGA stop. The U.S. Open has been played in San Francisco. Then there’s always the option to take a little longer road trip to the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.



Live sports allows fans to see the intensity of athletes like Madison Keys. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Sticking with Reno, each June it hosts a rodeo. Each October is the Grand National in Daly City. While the whole cowboy thing isn't a big deal in the basin today, there was a time when it was the norm. Getting around on horseback was common and dairy cattle filled the meadows.

Reno also often has professional boxing. There was a time when the South Shore did, too.

The Bank of the West Tennis Classic at Stanford University, which started in 1971, is the longest running all women's tennis tournament in the world. The stadium is intimate. It's easy to see muscles flex and faces contort with exertion.



Andrea Petkovic’s ripped physique is even more evident in person. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Former world No. 1 Lindsay Davenport is on the practice court coaching Madison Keys. They are so close it’s like fans can practically touch them.

It’s ***free*** to watch the doubles being played on the outside court.

World Team Tennis is played in Citrus Heights each summer. It’s fast, loud, and has different rules like playing let serves. Each team has a recognizable pro play for a season. It was the Bryan brothers’ doubles team who played down the road

this summer.

Other opportunities include soccer – San Jose Earthquakes; basketball – Kings in Sacramento, Warriors in Oakland; hockey – San Jose Sharks.

All of these venues are much grander than anything the basin has to offer – except for the ski slopes, which are steeped in history and if others have their way, could see the Winter Olympics in 2026. Each year the resorts bring more competitions to the area, potentially inspiring the next Jaime Anderson or Maddie Bowman.

And while few recreational athletes will turn pro, watching professional sports – especially live – can be invigorating and inspirational.

New Calif. water bond seeks to plug funding holes

By Rory Carroll, Reuters

California environmentalists plan to file a new water bond proposal with the secretary of state next week, a measure backers say will provide critical money for programs that were under funded by the $7.8 billion bond passed by voters last year.

The exact amount of the new water bond has yet to be determined but will be less than $5 billion, Jerry Meral, director of the California water program at the Natural Heritage Institute, told Reuters this week.

If backers can collect the necessary number of signatures, the

proposal will be put to voters during the November 2016 election, when voter turnout is expected to be high.

Read the whole story

Survey: Big drop in uninsured Nev. kindergartners

By Michelle Rindels, Reno Gazette-Journal

An annual health survey of Nevada kindergartners shows a big drop in the percentage of children without health insurance, a change that researchers attribute to more use of Medicaid benefits.

The seventh annual report from the Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, showed 7.6 percent of kindergartners were uninsured last school year, down from 12.6 percent a year earlier.

The survey found that the number of children receiving Medicaid rose about 5 percentage points year-over-year to 31.3 percent, while the number of children with private insurance dropped about 1.5 percentage points to 48.4 percent.

Read the whole story