Blaze at Bijou doesn’t hinder golfers

By Kathryn Reed

Play was not interrupted as engines rolled across the fairways of Bijou Golf Course on Thursday.

The smell of smoke drifted toward Happy Homestead Cemetery as crews about a quarter mile away on the South Lake Tahoe course put out the small fire.



CalFire Capt. Nathan Barcklay makes sure water gets to the buried hot spots. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Although South Tahoe, Lake Valley and Forest Service personnel responded, CalFire did the bulk of the work.

Capt. Nathan Barcklay took a hoe-like hand tool to the smoldering debris as he showed firefighter Chris Perondi how to break up the wood so the water gets in deeper.

Corey Nicholson took a chain saw to some of the wood, while

Spencer Ray hosed down the 20-foot-by-20-foot area.

“There’s a bunch of willows and a downed old Jeffery. It’s snaking down in the duff,” Marty Scheuerman, South Tahoe division chief, said of the fire.

A type of biodegradable foam was used on the smoldering mess because the wood absorbs it better.

“It works great when you have duff like pine cones and with things that retain heat. It cools it better (than water),” Scheuerman said.

The crew had the scene cleared a little more than an hour after the 5:18pm call Aug. 12.

Authorities speculate a cigarette probably started the fire.

John Poell with Lake Valley Fire Department left that call to cross Al Tahoe Boulevard where U.S. Forest Service workers saw smoke in the woods by their office and behind Lake Tahoe Community College.

Tree thinning crews had been in the area all day as part of a several hundred-acre project in the city. It’s possible their equipment got hot and started the small burn.

A small plume of smoke was rising. Poell turned the scene over to South Tahoe firefighters when they arrived. Forest Service crews assisted them.

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Stateline, Carson casinos do well; state gaming win not good

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – Casinos on the Las Vegas Strip suffered their lowest monthly gross win since 2003, with players of baccarat, blackjack and craps winning more than usual in June.



The 37 casinos, which account for more than 50 percent of the win in the state, captured $382.9 million, off 7.6 percent for the month. One bright spot was the “other” category in sports wagering, which rose 220 percent, a good part of it due to betting on the World Cup.

The state Gaming Control Board reported today that every casino market in Clark County suffered a drop in gambling win during June with downtown Las Vegas getting hit the hardest, at 11.6 percent.

Read the whole story

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130 wild horse caught in roundup

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

SUSANVILLE – It wasn’t a simple, orderly process, but the

federal government’s controversial wild horse roundup started Wednesday in northeastern California with few of the problems that opponents decry as they try to put a stop to the practice.

Roughly 130 horses were herded into pens by a helicopter buzzing in the rugged, high-desert sky near here, and at times it was far from a pretty sight.

The wild animals kicked hard at the steel railings and horse chutes they were driven into and occasionally turned on each other with bared teeth that left some with large patches of skin gone.

Read the whole story

Gaines going after Cox’s Senate seat

By Kathryn Reed

It’s possible Lake Tahoe will have a new assemblyman and state senator in a matter of months.

Ted Gaines, who currently represents the area in the Assembly, is running for the seat of the late state Sen. Dave Cox. Cox died in July at age 72.

Gaines, R-Roseville, is wrapping up his second term in the Assembly and will be on the Nov. 2 ballot seeking a third term.



Ted Gaines

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for a special election for Jan. 4 to fill the remainder of Cox's term. The primary to determine who appears on the Jan. 4 ballot is Nov. 2. The top vote-getters from each major party will battle it out in January.

Assemblyman Roger Niello, R-Fair Oaks, is also expected to run for Cox's seat.

Three terms is the maximum anyone can serve per term limit regulations. State senators may serve two four-year terms.

Since California voters approved term limits 20 years ago it has been common for musical chairs to be played with electeds going from one chamber of the Legislature to the other for a possible 14-year stint in state politics.

Results-driven city manager takes helm of South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Results. That is how Tony O'Rourke wants his tenure as city manager of South Lake Tahoe to be judged.

Part of Day 3 on the job was spent speaking to Soroptimist

International of South Lake Tahoe during the group's weekly lunch at Harveys. Looking out and down from the 12th floor setting it was inevitable someone would pepper him with a question about the stagnated convention center project.



South Lake Tahoe City Manager addresses the Aug. 11 noon Soroptimist meeting. Photo/Kathryn Reed

He didn't have much of an answer, other than to say the concept is great, and two hotels and a convention center would be an asset to the community.

What the public tends to forget is the city – neither elected official, nor paid staff – can get the project moving. It's stalled in bankruptcy court.

But if it does come to fruition on O'Rourke's watch, maybe future Soroptimist meetings could be conducted where the service club is headquartered – South Lake Tahoe.

Soroptimist Deb Howard asked O'Rourke to give specifics about the challenges and opportunities he sees.

Immediately he said the airport – where his office is.

“I’m not familiar with any other destination with an airport in the middle of it,” O’Rourke, 55, said. “It would be a great opportunity to get commercial service.”

He said this is one of the first things he wants to talk to the City Council about – pursuing the return of commercial flights into Lake Tahoe Airport. He mentioned Mammoth as an example of a ski town doing booming air business.

In Beaver Creek, where he was executive director of Beaver Creek Resort Company, he said 70 percent of visitors flew in. International travelers tended to stay 10 to 14 days and spend more money compared to weekend warriors. He added that tapping into the Mexican and British markets would be huge for the South Shore – “they love alpine skiing” – he said.

O’Rourke is well aware of what is going on in the city, or not, as the case may be. He did his homework before interviewing. On Monday he met with all the department heads as a group. One-on-ones are going on the rest of this week.

“I like the idea there are challenges. I’m not a caretaker,” O’Rourke said.

He wants to engage the community in the direction the city should go, then create a strategic plan with a handful of achievable goals.

The avid outdoorsman said having 60 percent of the council changing after the Nov. 2 election is not a concern because boards and councils change all the time. He said if goals are outlined, this reduces personal agendas council members may want to promote.

“You need to create a shared vision. What do you want to become?” O’Rourke said. “There is no substitute for results. Are you really achieving anything?”

His contract is for three years, but the disgruntled public is

apt to want results well before the council considers an extension.

But O'Rourke also pointed out it's easy to criticize and that if the public wants change, it should be in the game and not on the sidelines or playing Monday morning quarterback.

"No one person can make a difference, it has to be collective," O'Rourke said.

Kings Beach water storage tank about to be built

Bids for a 1.3 million gallon water storage tank came in well below what North Tahoe Public Utility District board of directors was ready to pay.

At the Aug. 10 meeting directors awarded the $1.76 million project to Paso Robles Tank Inc. This is more than $250,000 less than engineers estimated.

This project includes the construction of a 1.3 million gallon water storage tank, booster pump station, water lines and all appurtenances at the end of Canterbury Drive in Kings Beach. This tank will bring the district into compliance with current standards for water storage based on use and potential fire flow needs. The tank was an integral part of the need for the 2007 rate increase.

Related to this project, the board heard an update from Craig Hill of Northcross Hill and Ach and Andy Hall of Jones Hall on the status of the district's financing for the water tank and the other 15,000-plus linear feet of water line that are being

installed within the district this year. The district intends to fund $4.5 million in project costs. The annual debt service is estimated to be $550,000 to $575,000.

Northcross Hill and Ach are soliciting interest from financial institutions in providing the financing for these projects. The financing will come from a financial institution such as a bank or from the general public through an investment banking firm through municipal bonds.

In addition to district funds, grants from the U.S. Forest Service through the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act are also being used for projects that qualify.

4-car accident sends 3 to hospital, closes Hwy. 50

Updated Aug. 14, 2010, 9:20am: ***The person flown to Renown Medical Center has been discharged from the hospital.***

By Kathryn Reed

Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe was closed for a couple hours Wednesday afternoon after a suspected drunken driver caused a four-car accident that sent three people to the hospital.

Eric Acri, 50, of South Lake Tahoe was booked into Lake Tahoe Jail on suspicion of felony drunken driving after the 1:39pm accident near Lake Tahoe Pizza Company.



CalStar takes an accident victim from South Lake Tahoe to Reno on Aug. 11.

This was the second of what would become three DUI crashes in the city limits in 31 hours.

Debris was scattered across the highway between D and F streets, as metal was crunched, airbags deployed and the jaws of life used to extricate the most seriously injured person. CalStar crews landed in the middle of the highway to have a faster transport time to Renown Medical Center in Reno.

Names of the three injured people were not released, but witnesses said they believe they are South Lake Tahoe residents.

Acri was driving toward Lake Tahoe Airport when his vehicle sideswiped a Toyota, taking off the side mirror, according to South Lake Tahoe police Officer Jake Herminghaus. He then rear-ends a vehicle, which causes that truck to swerve and spin into oncoming traffic, T-boning a GMC Sierra, Herminghaus said.

It was the driver of the small truck that hit the GMC who was airlifted to Reno. First crews had to cut off the driver side door to reach him.

Bonita Christensen, who is staying at the Silver Shadows Motel, said she helped two women get out of the GMC.

“They said they saw the car come over the line and tried to dodge it,” Christensen said. “It was so loud and horrific. Dust was flying.”

The impact was so great the left rear tire was several feet from where the GMC stopped.

Traffic was diverted on Bonanza Avenue for a couple hours while investigators did their work and then the cleanup began.

After that accident, South Tahoe officers responded to a DUI crash at Alma Street and Sierra Boulevard at 5:11pm. Nicholas Dellavin, 27, of South Lake Tahoe was arrested on driving under the influence charges. There were no injuries in the two-car accident.

On Aug. 10 officers arrested Nicola Foster, 34, of South Lake Tahoe on DUI charges after she allegedly did serious damage to three parked cars and a mailbox on Ruby Way between Wildwood Avenue and Ski Run Boulevard.

A citizen cut-off the vehicle and then officers arrived.

“The crashes, they are once in a while. We get two or three DUI arrests every day, but not crashes,” Sgt. Jeff Reagan said.

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Nevadans have greatest decline in personal income

By Sean Collins Walsh, Reno Gazette-Journal

Foreclosures, unemployment and as of Monday, personal income growth.

Another economic indicator shows Nevada was hit harder by the nationwide recession than any other state: Silver State residents saw the greatest rate of decline in their personal incomes, 0.9 percent, from the first quarter of 2008 through the first of 2010, according to the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The average Washoe County resident made about $3,000 less in total income during 2009 than he or she did in 2008.

Monday's numbers may prove the most recent recession to be Nevada's worst ever, said Mark Pingle, an economist at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Read the whole story

BLM to corral wild horses near Reno

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

SUSANVILLE – With a last-minute court challenge shot down, federal officials were preparing this morning to begin a roundup of thousands of wild horses and burros from wild lands in northeastern California and neighboring Nevada.

The effort, which will use helicopters to stampede the animals through the rugged area into specially designed trap sites, is part of a controversial Bureau of Land Management plan to severely reduce the number of wild horses and burros living in the area. Federal officials say the goal is to keep the

animals from overgrazing and depleting the sprawling Twin Peaks Herd Management area near here to protect both the land and the animals.

Horses trapped during the process will be held in corrals and later adopted out or shipped to federally funded holding areas in the Midwest.

Read the whole story

Deadline looms on decision to ban plastic bags in California

By Tim Sheehan, Fresno Bee

SACRAMENTO – "Paper or plastic" no longer would be a choice at grocery checkout lines under a proposed law to ban disposable plastic bags in California's markets and convenience stores.



Assembly Bill 1998 – written by Assembly Member Julia Brownley, D-Santa Monica – would make California the first state to outlaw the lightweight bags for grocers.

AB 1998 faces a Friday deadline for approval by a state Senate committee or it will die.

If the Senate approves the bill and the governor signs it, supermarkets and other large retailers that sell groceries would be barred from using the bags starting in 2012. The

prohibition would extend to convenience stores and smaller grocers in 2013.

The bill aims to reduce the amount of plastic that ends up in waterways and in the oceans, where it can harm marine life, and promote the use of reusable plastic or cloth bags or grocery bags made from recycled paper.

Read the whole story