

Crystal Bay Club owner buys auto racing's SCORE International

By Autoweek

Culminating a deal that has been in the works for the last year, Sal Fish, longtime president of desert racing sanctioning body SCORE International, has sold the organization to racer and businessman Roger Norman. The sale marks the culmination of a lifetime of work for the seller.

Fish got his start in desert racing when he was still in the publishing business. After a disastrous though entertaining attempt at the Baja 1000 as a driver in the early 1970s, he was hooked. He learned the race sanctioning trade under SCORE founder Mickey Thompson and took over the organization shortly afterward. Fish, who is 73, has run it for most of SCORE's 39 years.

"Next to my wife Barbara, SCORE has been the love of my life, my passion and I have left my blood, sweat and tears in the desert of Baja California, Mexico, and in the USA in Arizona, California and Nevada," said Fish in a SCORE release. "I believe fervently that this is the time to pass the torch to the next generation and Roger Norman is a great racer with a big vision, superb business acumen and I know I leave my 'baby' in good hands. I know I'll wake up tomorrow wondering what did I do, but I have had a phenomenal run and I wouldn't change a thing. I have been able to grow this sport to the level it has reached and now Roger and his team will take it to the next level. I have no regrets and I leave knowing I have left a good legacy for the sport to continue to move forward in for the next 40 years."

New owner Norman comes from a racing family. His father Don

entered cars in IMSA races, according to Norman's website. His stepfather is the late Unlimited hydroplane racer Bill Muncey. Roger Norman's first race was in a Class 1 buggy in the 1996 Best in the Desert Vegas-to-Reno. Within two years he was part of the legendary Rod Hall's off-road team. From there he ran in the Baja Challenge class before forming Norman Motorsports in 2008 to race in the showcase Trophy Truck class. As an organizer and sanctioning body head he resurrected the old High Desert Racing Association (HDRA) last year.

Norman owns, among other properties, the Crystal Bay Club Casino at Lake Tahoe.

"For me it's a dream come true," said Norman regarding his acquisition of SCORE. "Sal Fish is the godfather of this sport and it is an honor to move forward with the incredible legacy he has left our sport with SCORE International. We have been talking about this for over a year, but I knew I had to learn all sides of the sport before I could be in a position to make a solid offer to Sal.

"I have tremendous respect for the future of the sport and the leadership role of SCORE International," Norman said.

Norman has big plans for the sport, announcing three separate championships for 2013: HDRA, SCORE, and a new world championship. The world championship will be comprised of three HDRA races in America and three SCORE races in Baja. The World Championship is the culmination of six of the seven races of the HDRA and SCORE race series with the Tecate SCORE Baja 1000 (Nov. 14-17, 2013) in Ensenada, Mexico as the deciding factor with double points. The first race is the HDRA South Point Vegas 250, Jan. 12 in Jean, Nev.

Norman also has big plans for televising the sport.

"Races will be nationally televised in the U.S. and we will provide greater details of our plans over the next two weeks," Norman said. "The vision of a world championship will be

monumental for our sport. We will look forward to honoring the legacy of SCORE and the colossal contribution to our sport by Sal Fish at the SCORE Awards Night on Jan. 12.”

The awards night will be Jan. 12 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and Spa in Newport Beach honoring the Champions of 2012 and ushering in a new and exciting era for SCORE International.

Calif. lawmaker pushes for \$10,000 bachelor's degree

By Laurel Rosenhall, Sacramento Bee

With the cost of going to college already more than \$30,000 a year at many California campuses, is it possible to earn a bachelor's degree for just \$10,000 – total?

Assemblyman Dan Logue, R-Marysville, hopes so.

Borrowing an idea being promoted by Republican governors in Texas and Florida, the GOP assemblyman has introduced a bill that would create a pilot program in California for what he's billing as a \$10,000 bachelor's degree.

The degree would be available to students majoring in science, technology, engineering or math disciplines.

Assembly Bill 51 calls for closer coordination between high schools, community colleges and California State University campuses and targets three regions for the pilot program: Chico, Long Beach and Turlock.

Participating students would earn some college credit in high school through Advanced Placement classes and greater access

to community college courses.

The bill calls for participating community college students to go to school full time.

Tuition at CSU right now is \$5,472 a year. Books and campus fees cost another roughly \$2,000 annually. A statement from Logue said his proposed \$10,000 degree would include textbooks. It does not cover living expenses such as room and board.

"I hope my bill will be the beginning of a revolution to the very pressing issue of the costs of college that students face these days," Logue said in a statement. "We cannot expect today's students to have a higher standard of living than their parents if they continue to leave college saddled with so much debt."

Even on a topic as politically sympathetic as making college more affordable, it remains to be seen if the Republican's bill can make any headway in California's Democratic-controlled Legislature.

Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez has his own plan for lowering the cost of college – what he calls a "middle-class scholarship" program – and Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown has said he wants universities to increase affordability by doing more with online education.

CSU officials have not taken a position on the bill.

Logue's bill builds on efforts already under way in California to better streamline K-12 schools, community colleges and universities, said Judy Heiman, a higher education analyst with the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office.

"The bill also appears to draw on existing regional education partnerships, an approach we think makes a lot of sense," Heiman wrote in an email. "In addition, the incentives in the

bill for full time attendance would support current efforts to improve graduation rates.”

Man shoots himself in middle of street in S. Tahoe

Updated Jan. 6 6:55am:

One person is dead in South Lake Tahoe from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Shots rang out behind the Jack-in-the-Box north of Highway 50 at about 9:30pm Saturday after a fight between unknown persons erupted at an apartment complex near the streets of Rubicon, Brockway and Sussex.

South Lake Tahoe police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* that one man used a handgun to kill himself in the middle of the street and that the other was not wounded.

The incident is described as a “neighborhood dispute” between two men. The surviving individual told officers he went to his neighbor’s to a talk about a damaged vehicle. The man ran after his neighbor pointed a revolver at him. At least one shot was fired.

The suspect fled the scene on foot; returning not much later to the middle of Rubicon Trail as officers were setting up a perimeter and searching for him. Officers said the man shot himself in the head.

The identity of the deceased has not been released pending

notification of family.

[View Larger Map](#)

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Respect for Mother Nature helps ensure safe snow experience

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Snow – so beautiful, so tempting, so dangerous.

Drawn by its sparkling presence, thousands of outdoor enthusiasts will trek to the Sierra Nevada this season to experience snow's magic.

But with more than 16 feet of snow at many resorts so far, this season already has had tragic reminders that the mountains must be respected at all times.

An experienced snowboarder at Donner Ski Ranch and a ski patrol member at Alpine Meadows were killed in separate Christmas Eve avalanches. Earlier in December, a stranded motorist died in deep snow near Burnside Lake while trying to reach help.

“Mother Nature always calls the shots,” said Lel Tone, a longtime ski patrol member at Squaw Valley. “We do our very, very best and work hard to keep people safe, but there can be really hazardous conditions.”

The death of Bill Foster, a 53-year-old ski patrol veteran, hit home for many working in the industry. He was caught up in an intentional avalanche – triggered by explosives as a safety measure – that started higher and wider than expected.

According to reports, Foster had proper safety equipment. Rescuers found him just one minute after the avalanche and pulled him free in under eight minutes, but he did not survive massive injuries from the crushing snow.

“It’s so incredibly sad to lose a fellow ski patrol member,” Tone said. “It’s such a painful thing.”

Recently, Tone led a women’s avalanche clinic at Squaw Valley to help prepare fellow skiers for such dangers. Such safety education has become as important a part of snow sports as gloves and sunscreen. Several ski areas will host events this month as part of National Safety Week. Squaw Valley and other resorts also host free avalanche workshops. So do guide and gear companies. Some schools – such as Sierra College in Rocklin – offer snow-related safety courses, too.

“Safety – it’s something you can’t just say once,” said Troy Hawks, spokesman for the National Ski Areas Association. “You need to repeat the message in every form and fashion.”

Constant safety reminders nudge snow lovers to think before they swoosh.

“The No. 1 rule of our code of responsibility is ‘Always stay in control,’” Hawks said. “That means stay focused. That’s why there are safety reminders everywhere.”

Marking its 50th anniversary this winter, the NSAA has focused on basic safety initiatives such as helmets. Efforts have paid off. Two-thirds of all skiers wear helmets, Hawks said. Among children age 9 and under, 91 percent wear helmets while skiing or boarding.

Awareness of changing conditions can also play a role in staying safe. Roads can quickly become icy. Cars can become stuck or buried in snow.

“You’ve got to be really respectful of the weather at all times,” said Mary Bennington, executive director of the Tahoe Rim Trail Association. “It can change in a hurry.”

On Jan. 12, the Tahoe Rim Trail Association will host National Winter Trails Day at Tahoe Meadows with several safety clinics. Demonstrations include survival equipment and techniques such as avalanche beacons and building of a snow shelter. Geared for the whole family, the event also will have guided snowshoe hikes.

“We want people to be safe,” Bennington said. “People come up – not for skiing, but just to play in the snow. We see so many people come up here for a snow day totally unprepared.”

If your vehicle does become stranded, Bennington suggests that you stay put.

“Rescuers will spot your car before they see you,” said Bennington, who carries emergency supplies in her car including warm clothes, food, water and a blanket.

Timing is everything; that includes snow safety. Sunny, windy days after heavy snowstorms can unleash an avalanche.

“When you have those conditions, layers develop in the snow and it can set up for avalanches,” Bennington said. “It’s like little ball bearings between the layers. It can come down in a hurry.”

Avalanches killed 34 people in the United States last winter. About 90 percent of victims triggered the avalanche. Three out of four avalanche victims suffocate. The other 25 percent are crushed to death by snow.

“Fresh snow can look light and airy, but when it compacts,

it's very heavy," Bennington said. "After an avalanche, it solidifies."

Every second counts in snow survival. According to a recent study, the survival rate for individuals completely buried in an avalanche is about 40 percent after 15 minutes. Those survival odds drop to 25 percent after 30 minutes.

Those same survival figures can be applied to snow-immersion accidents such as slipping into a "tree well," an area of loose snow around the trunk of a tree that's otherwise enveloped in deep snow. Branches keep snow from accumulating close to the trunk, but create a treacherous hole.

Depending on the surrounding snowpack, tree wells can be 20 feet deep. Their victims often fall into these icy traps head first. According to another study, 90 percent of skiers or snowboarders who fall into tree wells can't free themselves.

"Tree wells can be particularly treacherous for snowboarders," Hawks said. "They can't release their equipment and they're upside down."

Since 1990, 15 people have died in California from tree well accidents at ski areas, more than any other state. Most of these accidents happen in late morning as skiers and boarders – looking for fresh snow – edge closer to the trees. And experts warn not to count on a cellphone to call for help if you're in trouble; coverage is spotty at best in most mountain areas. And that phone may be in a pocket you can't reach.

Instead, make sure to always stay in visual contact with a partner – never lose sight.

"It's the old buddy system," Bennington said. "Always have a partner."

Top Caesars exec leaves company

By Hoa Nguyen, Press of Atlantic City

Big D – as Don Marrandino was known when he ran Harrah's Tahoe and Harveys – stepped down as head of Caesars Entertainment properties in Atlantic City and Philadelphia on Friday, according to the company.

No reason was given for his departure, although company officials said in a release he was leaving to pursue new opportunities. Marrandino could not be reached Friday night.

The prolific Atlantic City native was named Caesars' eastern division president in 2009, returning to his hometown after working in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe.

With credentials that include singing backup vocals for Donny and Marie Osmond and friendships with celebrities, such as rock legend Sammy Hagar and country star Toby Keith, Marrandino was known for his sense of entertainment and ability to deliver popular acts to the resort.

This year, Caesars, under Marrandino's leadership, brought Guns N' Roses to the House of Blues in Showboat Casino Hotel as well as Van Halen and Madonna to Boardwalk Hall.

"Throughout his career with Caesars, Don has been a great partner and contributor, displaying a dedication to service and a knack for cultivating innovative entertainment strategies," Tom Jenkin, Caesars' president of operations, said in a release.

Lake Tahoe real estate market doing better

By Sanford Nax, Sacramento Business Journal

Home sales around Lake Tahoe increased in 2012, with a 34 percent gain in units sold and a 40 percent jump in sales volume, according to a year-end report released by Chase International of Lake Tahoe.

Tahoe City and Incline Village experienced the biggest jumps in sales, with 77 and 62 percent increases in volume, respectively, and 41 and 52 percent gains in units sold. Incline Village also was home to the sale of a more than \$25 million estate – the largest transaction in Lake Tahoe since 2008.

Sales of million-dollar homes increased 59 percent, with South Shore reaping the biggest benefits with a 100 percent increase. Million-dollar sales increased 71 percent in Tahoe City, 60 percent in Incline Village and 19 percent in East Shore.

“When you look at the numbers, it’s clear that the market is strengthening in all price ranges and with inventory continuing to tighten, we expect average and median prices to continue to climb,” said Sue Lowe, corporate vice president of Chase International. “Distress sales are also down substantially.”

Echo Lakes fuel reduction project could start in summer

About 100 acres in the Upper Echo Lakes area could be thinned beginning later this year.

It is likely to take six years for the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to do all the work. The project is intended to reduce the risk of wildfire and improve firefighting effectiveness.

Forest Supervisor Nancy Gibson recently signed off on the project. People have until early February to appeal the decision.

A portion of the project is in the Pyramid Roadless area. Brief closures of areas adjacent to the Pacific Crest Trail are possible. Resource protection measures are included in the project design to maintain the scenic nature of the trail, according to the Forest Service.

While cabin owners are responsible for their defensible space, the Forest Service is responsible for the wildland urban interface when it comes to fire safety.

Fuel reduction work would consist of cutting and hand piling brush and conifer trees up to 16 inches in diameter. Vegetation would be cut by hand, with chain saws or other hand tools. Piles would then be burned approximately one to three years later. Larger thinned trees would be made available for firewood.

Money from the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act is funding the project.

For more information about the project, contact Brian Garrett at (530) 543.2694 or go online.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Truckee man accused of stealing snowblowers

A Truckee man was arrested this week in a case involving the theft of several snowblowers.

In the last two months of 2012 suspects were specifically targeting Honda snowblowers, which are popular in the Truckee Tahoe area, and have an average retail price of \$3,000, according to Truckee police officers.

On tips from residents officers began an investigation that led to the arrest of Christopher David Nelson, 30, of Truckee on Jan. 2 on felony theft charges

Five Honda 828 snowblowers were stolen from Thanksgiving to Christmas. One snowblower was recovered and returned to the owner. The other four are unaccounted for.

Anyone with information about this case should call (530) 550.2323.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Body of missing Petaluma woman found

Updated Jan. 4 2pm:

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum said while there appears to be no foul play in the death of Petaluma resident Alyssa Byrne, the investigation is ongoing to determine how she ended up off the side of Pioneer Trail.

"There is conflicting information about this case. We aren't exactly sure what happened," Van Arnum said at a Jan. 4 press conference.

He said it's easy to become disoriented when hypothermia sets in, so that could be why she was in a location that would have been going away from the casino where she was staying. This is assuming she walked up Al Tahoe Boulevard from the SnowGlobe event at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Kim Miller-Byrne, mother of the deceased 19-year-old, had earlier told *Lake Tahoe News* that her daughter was not familiar with the South Shore. This could also have contributed to why she ended up between Al Tahoe Boulevard and Black Bart.

Van Arnum said it's also possible she left the college and trudged through the snow to get to Pioneer Trail. Her body was found about one-half mile from LTCC.

Search and rescue teams were expected today to comb the area where her body was found. It was an employee with South Tahoe Public Utility District in a truck who spotted the body and called authorities.

Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News* that it was frustrating to know that so many people drove by that spot since she was reported

missing three days ago. No one could see her because of the snowbank.

A forensic autopsy will be conducted in Sacramento this weekend. Toxicology reports take about a month to be released.

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By Kathryn Reed

The body of missing Petaluma teen Alyssa Byrne was found Friday morning just off Pioneer Trail.

Authorities say a utility worker discovered the body about 8:30am down a short embankment on the south side of the road.

A law enforcement official told *Lake Tahoe News* it appears the body had been there a couple days and that foul play was not involved. The body was fully clothed.

An autopsy will determine exact cause of death.



Law enforcement examine the area Jan. 4 where the body of Alyssa Byrne was found just off Pioneer Trail in El Dorado County. Photo/LTN

Byrne, 19, had been at the SnowGlobe music festival in South Lake Tahoe on New Year's Eve. She left before her friends did.

They were all staying at the Horizon hotel-casino in Stateline.

A friend had reported seeing her in the casino just past midnight on New Year's. However, officers began doubting whether it was actually Byrne who the friend encountered that night.

Law enforcement expect to have Pioneer trail blocked for the better part of the morning on the west end at Al Tahoe Boulevard and the south at Cold Creek/Black Bart.

The location is an easy walk from the music venue site at Lake Tahoe Community College, but would be the opposite direction of the casino had she walked up Al Tahoe Boulevard. Temperatures in the area have been below zero and hypothermia would set in fast.

Her father, Kevin Byrne, has been in town this week assisting with the search that has included more than 100 people, K-9 units and a helicopter. He was not answering his cell phone. The person answering the Byrne residence in Petaluma Friday morning said, "We are not taking any calls now."

Body found in El Dorado County

Rescue crews have located a body Friday morning near Cold Creek in El Dorado County on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.

It is not known at this time if it is that of missing Petaluma

teenager Alyssa Byrne.

Search and rescue teams had resumed looking for the 19-year-old this morning. They started at the site of the SnowGlobe music festival at Lake Tahoe Community College and went out from there.

Byrne had attended the event. Friends last had contact with her just after midnight on New Year's Day.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*