Hight takes second in halfpipe at U.S. Open

By Matthew Vanatta, Grind TV

After an exciting day of competition in the men's and women's slopestyle finals of the U.S. Burton Open in Vail on Friday, Saturday looked to be even more exciting with the men's and women's halfpipe finals taking center stage.

The pipe was looking pristine Saturday morning for the kickoff of the women's finals, and the women took full advantage.

Chloe Kim, the 16-year-old super phenom, was the rider to beat rolling into Saturday, but coming in hot on her heels was Elana Hight of South Lake Tahoe. Hight a veteran in the field was coming off of a recent X Games Gold Medal win, making her the most likely competitor to best Kim on finals day.

Hannah Teter of Meyers did not qualify for the finals.

Read the whole story

Skunk Harbor on snowshoes – breathtaking



Snow looks like frosting on the top of rocks at Skunk Harbor. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

In the distance a deep sapphire blue Lake Tahoe looked majestic. Up close the emerald cove was more rugged as the white caps hit the shore.

Seclusion mixed with vast views of Lake Tahoe – that's what the trek to Skunk Harbor is all about.

If only it had been warmer. But warmth and snowshoeing in winter are often elusive. Lingering on the beach this time of year is much different than in summer, not so inviting. Ice hangs from some of the rocks along the shore. About a foot-wide stretch of sand is exposed.



The structures at Skunk Harbor are not open to the public. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Remnants of Skunk Harbor’s past are visible. While the U.S. Forest Service now owns this swath of land on the East Shore, that wasn’t always the case. Stone buildings near the waterfront once belonged to George and Caroline Newhall. They used it as a second home for their San Francisco friends in the 1920s.

George Whittell then became the land owner. He once owned most of the East Shore down to Zephyr Cove.

Pilings for what once was a pier protrude from the water.

Last weekend there was no clear starting point with all of the snow. It was a pretty steep first 15 feet, then it flattens out.



Lake Tahoe in the distance near the start of the trail. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Fortunately, a snowmobiler had laid a track for us, as had other snowshoers and cross country skiers.

While I try not to go off trail for erosion reasons when it's dirt, with all this snow it was so inviting at times to break trail, traipsing through the virgin snow. Sometimes it was fluffy, other places it was crunchy.

No matter where one looked, it was a winter wonderland. It doesn't take long for Lake Tahoe to come into view. The openness of the trail in many ways made me feel like I was much farther removed from civilization than I was.

Tracks led up a knoll that we scampered up to get what was a stunning view of much of the lake.

It's unfortunate such a lovely place has such a smelly name.

It’s a gradual 1.5-mile descent from the highway to the beach. The uphill ascent doesn’t feel so gradual. The elevation change is 560 feet.



Sue Wood makes her way through mounds of snow down to Skunk Harbor. Photo/Kathryn Reed

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go east on Highway 50, up Spooner Summit.

Turn left onto Highway 28.

Parking is on the left in 2.4 miles. Nevada Department of Transportation clears the area so parking is not right on the highway.

New York-owned ski resorts to

go renewable

By Antonio Olivero, Adirondack Daily Enterprise

New York's state-owned ski resorts will use 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Friday.

Along with Whiteface, other ski resorts operated by the state Olympic Regional Development Authority – Belleayre Ski Resort in the Catskills and Gore Mountain in North Creek – have pledged to be part of the Climate Reality Project's "I Am Pro Snow" campaign.

The governor's office is touting that this initiative is part of Cuomo's Clean Energy Standard, which intends, by 2030, to have half of electricity used in the state to come from renewable sources.

Read the whole story

Report: End federal ban on sports betting

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

When President Barack Obama rolled out his March Madness college basketball bracket predictions on television every year, he acknowledged his participation in an illegal activity commonly enjoyed in workplaces nationwide.

Now, a nonprofit Washington think tank is criticizing the federal ban on sports wagering, joining the chorus of organizations seeking repeal of the Professional and Amateur

Sports Protection Act of 1992.

The libertarian-leaning Competitive Enterprise Institute planned to issue a 14-page report Thursday that questions how alcohol and tobacco consumption are banned in most businesses while another “sinful” activity, sports gambling, is embraced by workers and their CEOs, especially around Super Bowl Sunday and the kickoff of the NCAA tournament.

Read the whole story

Anderson second at Burton U.S. Open

By USSA

VAIL – Jamie Anderson (Meyers) scored her 11th Burton U.S. Open podium on Friday, with a second-place finish on the challenging Vail slopestyle course. Chris Corning (Silverthorne, Colo.) was the top American finisher for the men, with one of the best runs of his career, landing in fifth.

Anderson, who has never missed the U.S. Open podium in 11 attempts, was happy to make the podium, considering she was riding with an injury.

“I’m riding with a broken elbow right now, so I’ve been super mindful this week,” she said after her second run. “I wasn’t sure I was even going to compete, so I’m super happy to put a run down.”

Anna Gasser of Austria took her first U.S. Open title and Spencer O’Brien of Canada rounded out the podium in third.

Julia Marino (Westport, Conn.), who qualified through to the final in fifth, was forced to drop from Friday's competition after a hard crash in warm ups. She finished sixth overall.

Corning scored his best U.S. Open finish with fifth, but he rode much better than the scoreboard conveyed. His first run received the highest score, despite the fact that Corning upped the difficulty in his second, stomping a frontside 1620 off the final jump.

Mark McMorris of Canada took the win over Canadian teammate Mikey Ciccarelli and Sweden's Sven Thorgren in third. Red Gerard (Silverthorne, Colo.) also made the final, finishing seventh, while Brandon Davis (Big Bear, Calif) was 10th.

Lake Tahoe Relay taking on a beach theme

The Lake Tahoe Relay crew is moving the start/finish to the beach.

The June 10 event will start at the Tahoe Beach Retreat in South Lake Tahoe.

Lake Tahoe Relay is a relay race that consists of teams of seven, each running eight to 12 miles around Lake Tahoe.

This year there will be a single runner 72-mile ultra marathon and 2-runner teams' 72-mile relays. Each team member will run 36 miles, alternating legs as needed.

Registration is now open **online**. For more information, contact Sean at 530.545.0509 or runtahoe@outlook.com.

Weekend of snow in the forecast

A winter storm watch is in effect for the greater Lake Tahoe area from Saturday afternoon through Sunday afternoon.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for 1 to 2 feet of snow above 7,000 feet, and 10-18 inches elsewhere. The bulk of the white stuff is expected Saturday night into Sunday morning.

It should be a quick, windy event.

The storm is expected to be cold, so that is good news when it comes to runoff – there shouldn't be much.

One might call it a normal winter storm. Full sun should be back Tuesday after lingering showers on Monday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Star Guide: Gigantic clouds of the Milky Way

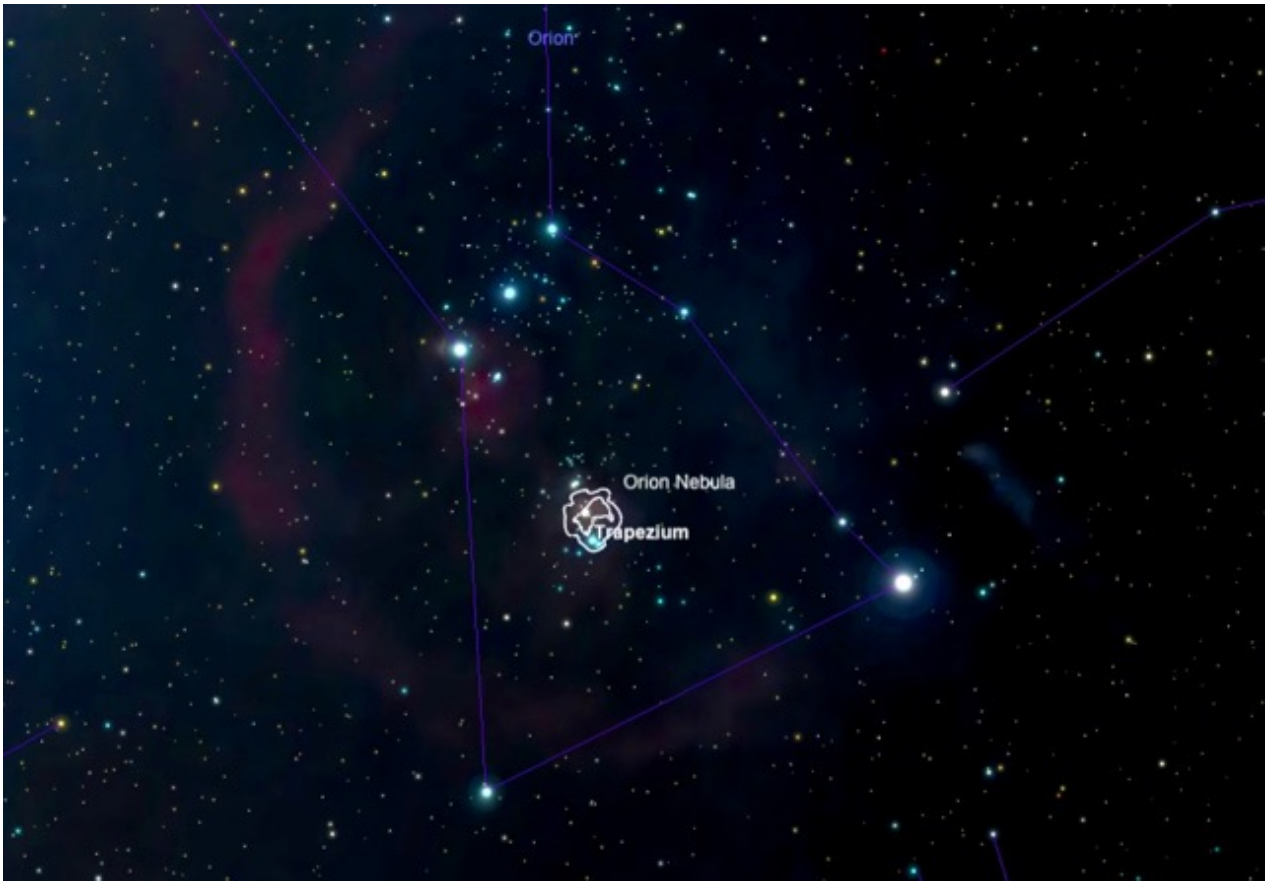
By Tony Berendsen

On Earth we can look out in the sky and see clouds in our

atmosphere. They are mostly made of water molecules in a gaseous state, and can be as large as a continent. They orbit the Earth as we are carried from day to night each day. From them we receive liquid water as rain.

In the evening, away from city lights through a telescope, we can see clouds in the Milky Way; molecular clouds. They are mostly made of molecular hydrogen in a gaseous state and are the largest objects in the Milky Way. They orbit the center of our galaxy every 250 million years. From them we receive stars.

The process of water precipitating from earthly clouds and the gravitational condensing of molecular hydrogen to form stars in space are very different processes. The water in a terrestrial cloud, under the right atmospheric temperature and pressure, condenses and falls to the Earth as rain. Within the arms of the Milky Way galaxy, in the extreme cold regions of molecular clouds, gravity works with destiny to form stars. As new stars begin their life of fusion, the resulting outward pressure disperses the remaining cloud around them and they emerge into view.



Orion Nebulae in the constellation of Orion. Photo/Simulation Curriculum

Molecular clouds are very cold, having temperatures ranging from about minus 440 to minus 370 degrees Fahrenheit, and their size can vary from a just a few light years up to 600 light years (one light year is about 6 trillion miles) with a total mass reaching several million solar masses. Molecular clouds with dimensions of more than about 15 light years are called giant molecular clouds.

Astronomers study molecular clouds to understand the process of star formation and the ever evolving state of mater in our galaxy. Sun like stars formed from clouds of hydrogen return about 50 percent back into the galaxy as planetary nebulae, giant stars release huge amounts of heavier elements as super novas, small stars hold on to their matter for great lengths of time, possibly as long as our galaxy has existed. Scientist believe about 95 percent of the matter from molecular clouds is recycled in a repeating process of forming generations of

stars.

There are many molecular clouds easily within reach of a gaze of a telescope. But, there is one 1,500 light years away that can be seen in very dark skies with the naked eye or binoculars; it’s called the great nebula of the constellation of Orion – M42. It’s located in the sword of the great hunter Orion just below his belt and is a favorite object for amateur astronomers.

M42 shines at a magnitude of 5.0, so it’s pretty bright. But since it’s a diffuse object you need an extremely dark sky to see it with the naked eye. You can find it with binoculars even if you are in a moderately light polluted area. To find it look in the early evening above the southern horizon about 8pm this time of year. The distinctive line of three stars of the belt will help guide your way, and as always the star gazing app Sky Portal is an essential resource to finding your way.

Once you have found the belt, look for a smaller vertical line of stars just below and a slight glow object within them. That glow is a giant molecular cloud, the Orion Nebulae, a member of the largest objects in the galaxy, and the birthplace of stars. If you have a telescope, the small group of stars in the middle of the nebulae are stars emerging from the cloud as the star cluster Trapezium.

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775.232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Sierra's terrain enhances learning experience



Sierra-at-Tahoe instructors Claude Gunsch and Neal Hamilton explain the basics. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – Straight-lining isn't an option for newbies learning to ski at Sierra-at-Tahoe. And that's a good thing because turning is often one of the most difficult things to learn.

A serpentine has been built into the slope of Broadway to ease first-timers into turns in a more controlled environment.

“Sometimes the most rewarding thing is when they come up and can barely walk, and they go down this and smile,” Claude Gunsch told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is Gunsch’s 28th season instructing at Sierra, something he has done part time all these years. “The serpentine gets people skiing automatically.”



Sana Pandey takes to skiing – and the magic carpet – fairly quickly. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

In many ways it is less daunting than the main ski hill where it's wide-open, full of lots of people and turning is optional. Snowplowing – or making a pizza or wedge in today's vernacular – eases beginners into the turn.

"You have the need for speed and the need for control," Gunsch said in explaining why it's necessary to make different size wedges.

All the basics are still part of the lesson – it's just the terrain that makes this so unique.

Terrain-based learning is what it's called, and aptly so. The terrain is as much a teacher as the person in charge. It's about a 3 to 5 percent grade, a football field or longer depending on what the groomers developed.



Courtney Ceccato went through the rope instead of around the curve. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

For Sana Pandey, 14, of San Jose having ice skated before

helped her immensely with balance and the sense of gliding on snow.

“I love it. It’s so much fun. It’s different than other sports,” Pandey told *Lake Tahoe News* after descending the serpentine. Her first day on skis was last month. She was quickly getting the feel for how to maneuver the two planks strapped to her feet.

Courtney Ceccato, 24, of Sacramento was happy for powder off to the side because that’s where she landed after taking one of the turns too sharply.



Claude Gunsch helps Sinda Potluri make it through the serpentine. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“I just have to learn how to get my balance and how to stop,” she said with a smile as she was also learning how to get up after falling.

Even though it’s possible to get to the serpentine from the

Easy Rider chair, the initial route is via the magic carpet. If a group progresses well, the chairlift is an option. The advent of these “carpets” allows for more actual ski time and no longer having to walk up the slope.

This area is reserved for teens and adults, while younger kids are on the other side of Sierra’s base lodge. They, too, have contoured routes to learn on, but scaled down.



The magic carpet makes it so beginners have more time actually skiing. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

While most people might think a honeymoon is supposed to mean being locked together with your spouse, not so for Wendy Kodur. The 30-year-old from Newark was excited to be on the bunny slope.

“He got me the lesson. I want to be able to catch up to him,” Kodur said of her husband.

Sinda Potluri, 29, of Tampa might be sticking to warm weather sports. After the initial instruction of going down the smallest halfpipe ever built she was having a hard time getting the feel of the skis and balancing. And this was before the serpentine. “I keep falling,” she said, so she wasn’t sure if she liked skiing.

But as anyone who has skied knows, falling is part of learning.

With the serpentine, the theory is it’s more fun and a faster progression to more advanced terrain.

How to choose the right snow shovel

By Jay Bouchard, Outside

Growing up in Goffstown, N.H., I watched my dad obsess about shoveling. The area gets approximately 70 inches per year, and my dad delights in getting rid of it. He estimates that he moves about 3,600 cubic feet of snow each winter and has hucked roughly 108,000 cubic feet since he moved there in 1987. For him, it’s a source of pride to have one of the cleanest driveways on the block. My dad also has no desire to

“disrupt the environment with a small, loud, emission-spewing machine,” otherwise known as a snowblower.

My dad’s go-to shovel is “whatever’s on sale at the local hardware store.” He’s not a brand-conscious shovel purchaser, but he’ll typically use a plastic, straight-shaft shovel with a metal strip across the front of the blade (to chop through ice).

But I wanted to know what the pros prefer. To find out, I called up some experts in the snow-removal industry.

Read the whole story