High-tech race to make adventure sports safe

By Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal, Outside

In their new book Stealing Fire ($28; Harper Collins) Steven Kotler and Jamie Wheal investigate the many ways people are now seeking out the heightened awareness of flow states—those ecstatic zones of pure focus where humans achieve ultimate performance. Some use psychedelics, others meditate or dance, and daring athletes practice extremely dangerous adventure sports. In this exclusive excerpt, the authors recount the tragic death of BASE-jumper Dean Potter, question why he and others are willing to risk everything in the pursuit of elevated consciousness, and explain how innovative technologies enable us to reach the same state without the without the life-and-death stakes.

The why was never in question. What happened? How it happened? Those answers remain unclear. But the why? For Dean Potter—it was never in doubt.

It was May 16, 2015, in Yosemite Valley, California, a nice spring evening, right on the edge of dusk. Potter, a record-breaking rock climber, slackline walker, and wingsuit flier, got ready for the evening's adventure. He was 3,500 feet above the valley floor, standing on the summit of Taft Point. Alongside his friend and fellow flier Graham Hunt—considered one of the best young pilots around—their goal was to leap off the edge, zip across the canyon below, and sail through a V-shaped notch in a neighboring ridge, above an ominously named cliff, Lost Brother.

Read the whole story

Wet weather may bring more invasive weeds

This wet weather brings the probability of increased noxious weeds, which are invasive weed species that can be detrimental or destructive to Nevada's landscapes.

Nevada is bringing attention to the weeds now because this is National Invasive Species Awareness Week.

"Invasive noxious weeds species like perennial pepperweed and purple loosestrife, grow well in wet soil conditions and can spread rapidly during flooding events," Sean Gephart, the Nevada Department of Agriculture's noxious weed coordinator, said in a statement. "It is extremely important for landowners to keep an eye out for weeds like these on their property to reduce the risk of spreading."

he Nevada Department of Agriculture provides numerous resources such as the Nevada noxious weeds quick reference guide, which highlights the most effective control measures for common species. In addition, staff is available to assist landowners when needed. The NDA **website** also provides a list of licensed control companies that help eradicate weed invasions.

Week is Feb. 27 through March 3.

Why the Squaw Valley Palisades are flat



A tunnel to the right is about 8-feet high and one-quarter mile long. Photo/Squaw Valley

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

Once you get to the top of the Palisades at Squaw Valley, you might wonder why the terrain becomes a perfectly flat area, about the size of a football field – but then again, maybe you are just thinking about which epic line to take.

The top of the Palisades, or geographically Squaw Peak, is accessible after a short hike from the Siberia chair lift and widely known for access to a set of six chutes. There are a surprisingly few records on how the set of cliffs was flattened.

In 1936, the Federal Aviation Administration designed a short-range navigation system called Omni Directional Radio Range (VOR) in which radio signals from a network of fixed ground radio beacons are transmitted to aircrafts and allow pilots to determine their location in the skies. By 1946 the system was deployed and VOR became the standard air navigational system

in the world used by both commercial and general aviation, according to Hardy Bullock, director of Aviation & Community Services at the Truckee Tahoe Airport. At 9,000 feet, Squaw Peak was the perfect place to put towers to direct airplanes to Truckee, the Bay Area, down toward Southern California, or up toward the Pacific Northwest – the only issue was the peak wasn't flat enough for the infrastructure.

Read the whole story

Skiers trigger avalanche at Incline Peak

A 75-foot-long, 150-foot-wide avalanche on Incline Peak was triggered by two skiers on Saturday afternoon.

They were at about 9,000 feet in the Mount Rose area on Feb. 25 at 1:30pm on a 40-degree slope. They were on the north side of the east ride.

"A crack formed perhaps 150 feet laterally and propagated for perhaps 75 to 100 feet before stopping on lower angle terrain. The slope was crowded by many skiers and riders so it seems fortunate the slide was not larger as it could have traveled downslope to a few other parties of backcountry skiers and riders," according to the Sierra Avalanche Center.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Squaw athletes finish with points in Norway

By USSA

KVITFJELL, Norway – One “crazy fast” turn got Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) off on the wrong foot in Saturday’s Audi FIS Ski World Cup downhill won by Norway’s home-crowd favorite Kjetil Jansrud.

Running the full-length 1994 Olympic downhill course, Jansrud edged out Italy’s Peter Fill by just 0.08 second. Switzerland’s Beat Fuez was third. Ganong was 17th, as Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) was the only other American in the points, finishing 19th.

“It was really fast, compared to the training runs starting at the top,” said Ganong, who finished eighth in Friday’s downhill run on the same track, but from a lower start position. “I knew the speeds would be faster going into the first turn, but they were way fast, like crazy fast, so I missed the timing completely on that first left-footed turn. I lost over eight-tenths to Jansrud in the first split, and I was only a second back at the finish, so just that one turn was my day.”

The rest of the Americans also struggled on the cold, hard track. Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) finished 41st and Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) did not finish following a scary crash after flying off a jump and into the safety netting. Goldberg was standing following the incident, but was taken off the mountain on a sled as a precautionary measure.

Women’s World Cup slides into Squaw

By Susan Wood

The best of the best in the world of skiing will descend on the home of the 1960 Winter Games in Lake Tahoe next month, with Squaw Valley set to host the sport’s premier event.

The top women’s alpine ski racers in the world are preparing for the Audi FIS Women’s World Cup giant slalom and slalom races along with other seasoned competitors for the Toyota ProAm Ski Challenge to round out the weekend’s festivities slated for March 10-12.

It’s difficult to gauge who will win the most from the endeavor.



“It’s with pride we bring World Cup skiing back to Tahoe.” — **Andy Wirth**, Squaw Valley CEO

Beyond California’s ski industry association, Squaw’s celebrity ambassador, and Truckee’s city officials, no one could be giddier with excitement than the ski resort’s head honcho Andy Wirth.

Squaw’s chief executive officer began the quest to host the event about three years ago with Olympic ski racer Julia Mancuso, whose home resort is Squaw.

Even an emboldened Wirth admitted to being skeptical because the FIS calendar is “tightly held.” Thankfully, he knew the right people and made it happen with Mancuso’s help.

It was like the spirit of Alex Cushing was smiling down.

“It’s with pride we bring World Cup skiing back to Tahoe. World Cup is very unique – it is to skiing what the Masters is to golf. And this is the last World Cup for women before the finals,” Wirth told *Lake Tahoe News.* The finals are set in Aspen March 13-19.

Wirth noted the event has a major purpose for him that goes beyond bringing an obvious enhanced image of Squaw Valley to the world.

“We want to inspire the next generation or two of ski racers from this mountain that come out to ski Lake Tahoe. We’re thrilled to host this,” the skiing enthusiast said, adding the move “has nothing to do with television exposure.”

“When we watch Mikaela (Shiffrin) and Julia come through that finish line – that makes it real,” Wirth said. Shiffrin is a favorite, along the racing circuit with Vail Resort’s Olympic medalist Lindsey Vonn and Mancuso.

The race route for GS and slalom will be set up off the Red Dog run, “the exact same track of the 1960 Olympics with a different gate and different turns,” Wirth said.

Wirth beefed up workers to manage the event with 2,500 paid staff and volunteers.

He expects his season passholders won’t be impacted as most of the mountain will be open for business – much the same way Wirth’s former resort Whistler was when it hosted the Winter Olympics in 2010.

Squaw’s chief anticipates more than 15,000 spectators in two days.



Red Dog will be reserved for World Cup athletes March 10-11. Photo/LTN file

An economic boost for region?

That's like music to the ears of Truckee Town Manager Tony Lashbrook, who expects a residual economic boost in the city on that weekend.

"We look forward to it. We're expecting downtown to be very busy. The hotels should be full. We're treating it like a holiday weekend. We may have traffic issues on (Highway) 89 and (Interstate) 80, but we have a heads up on that," Lashbrook told *LTN*. "But we have great snow, that's so nice to showcase."

Agreed says California Ski Industry Association officials.

"We are having an amazing season here in California, so it's a great time for this event to make its way west," association Executive Director Michael Reitzell told *Lake Tahoe News.*

He sees the same long-term benefit that Wirth does in getting the ski racers of tomorrow jazzed about someday joining the ski team – perhaps to compete in the World Cup.

Reitzell used Squaw Valley's own Travis Ganong as an example of a resort-bred men's downhiller who competes and wins in races.

"He, along with the fantastic women who will race at Squaw Valley in March, show every one of those young racers that reaching the top from California is possible," he said.

To be what you want to be

Just ask Squaw's own ambassador – Olympic gold medal freestyle skier and World Cup champion in mogul skiing Jonny Moseley.

The homegrown skier, who is considered one of the most influential skiers of all time, knows the dream and lived it. He single-handedly changed the sport of freestyle skiing – albeit quite different than the downhill discipline. Nonetheless, like Mancuso, Moseley honed his skills at Squaw Valley and believes Wirth is the right man to put on an event of this magnitude.

"As long as there's alpine skiing, people have wanted to go. It's World Cup or nothing," Moseley told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It's going to be a great event and provide income to the economy. The whole Tahoe area has Olympic high-end racers."

The last time World Cup was staged here was 1971.

Moseley offered a word of advice to the World Cup competitors.

"Keep in mind, I'm a freestyle skier. But from my general bank of knowledge in what I've seen on Red Dog is it has off camber features with many twists," he said as a quasi-skier scholar.

Moseley added the run makes for an interesting race considering it starts from the top of the chairlift.

The surface will command slick conditions, meaning cold enough temperatures to "impregnate water into the surface and freeze overnight," he said. The ski resort waters down the run before

a race to give it that slick feel.

“If we get an atmospheric river right before or throughout – that might be a problem,” he said of the latest meteorology term describing constant wet storms.

But it can’t be all serious work and no play. There are the parties. And then there are the sideshows.

Moseley and his Olympic gold medalist counterpart on the downhill side, Daron Rahlves – who retired a few years ago from sanctioned competition, plan to race after the World Cup races.

It’s like the battle of the ski legends, Olympic style.



Squaw Valley’s legend will grow with a new generation witnessing its iconic steeps. Photo/LTN file

Looking beyond

The whole World Cup series of events may also serve another long-standing purpose.

“Squaw getting the World Cup is huge news for our region in a

variety of ways. It’s a tremendous venue in that the Tahoe region continues to harbor the dream of bringing the Olympics to Lake Tahoe (again),” former Nevada Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki told *LTN* from Washington, D.C., by phone.

Krolicki, who also hails from Tahoe, serves as the chairman on the commission to deliver the Winter Games to the Reno-Tahoe region.

But timing is everything.

Since connected to the Olympic system, Krolicki added his group respects taking a backseat for the U.S. Olympic Committee with the Summer Games slated for 2024. Host countries don’t often get the Games back to back, but that doesn’t mean the idea has no chance of materializing.

Baby steps.

“For now, we’ll just tuck it away and hope there’s a way to host another Olympics. The World Cup showcases our region and infrastructure. This could be a piece of the puzzle as we go forward,” Krolicki said. “To have the world’s elite in Tahoe is an important part of the story going forward.”

Ganong 8th in downhill in Norway

By USSA

KVITFJELL, Norway – Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) felt all the good sensations of a solid run in Friday’s Audi FIS Ski World Cup downhill, a make-up race from the canceled December event at Lake Louise, Canada, leading the U.S. in eighth place.

Slovenia’s Bostjan Kline took his first career World Cup victory Friday, nipping Austria’s Matthias Mayer by just 0.19 seconds and Norway’s Kjetil Jansrud by 0.20 in second and third respectively.

Seeing and feeling the course are the two critical components of good ski racing. So when one sensation goes wrong, the other sensation of a finely tuned athlete usually picks up the slack. For Ganong, he felt like he put down a great run Friday, and indeed he did, but the seeing part didn’t go so well.

“I skied really well and it easily could have been a winning run,” Ganong said. “But on the third gate, I hit the gate and got snow in my goggles somehow. So it was like I was skiing in a blizzard. Every time I would hit a bump, the snow would go up and down inside my goggles. It was just kind of distracting the whole way down. But it was still really good skiing.”

Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) put down his second top-20 result of the season, finishing 14th. Bryce Bennett(Squaw Valley) and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) also snuck into the points, finishing 27th and 30th, respectively. Brennan Rubie (Salt Lake City, Utah) was 43rd and Tommy Biesemeyer (Keene, N.Y.) was 49th.

Austria’s Marcel Hirscher, who did not race Friday, continues to lead the overall World cup standings with 1,275 points. Jansrud overtook Italy’s Peter Fill in the overall World Cup downhill standings with his second-place finish. Jansrud (307 points) leads Fill (294), who finished 16th Friday, by 13 points.

U.S. women cite dangerous conditions, pull out of ski race

By Daniella Matara, AP

CRANS MONTANA, Switzerland – Lindsey Vonn wasn't about to risk another injury, and neither was Mikaela Shiffrin.

Vonn and Shiffrin, along with some of their American teammates on the World Cup tour, pulled out of the Alpine combined race on Friday because of dangerous conditions on the course. The first three racers all crashed, and one was taken away on a stretcher with a knee injury.

"For me I've had so many injuries, I don't need to risk anything today," Vonn said. "A lot of the other athletes and coaches were asking me to put pressure on everyone to try to cancel the race because it's too dangerous and I did my best but I just pray that no one else gets hurt today. I think it was a smart decision for our team to pull out of the race."

After Ilka Stuhec, Tessa Worley and Denise Feierabend all fell at nearly the same point in the opening super-G portion of the combined race, the event was postponed and the start was lowered.

Stuhec and Worley were able to restart but Feierabend could not because of her injury. Worley then crashed again on her second attempt.

Federica Brignone, who was second after the super-G portion, won the race, overtaking first-run leader Stuhec in the slalom. Michaela Kirchgasser was third.

"It was not easy for anyone," Brignone said. "The snow was really soft but I just told myself to start. If they say

there’s a race then I have to start and see myself. If it’s dangerous, I’m going to stop or go slower. It’s better to stay safe then do a race.”

Vonn said the race shouldn’t have gone ahead at all after several of the forerunners – including American teammate Julia Mancuso – crashed while testing the course as the snow began to melt in changeable weather conditions.

“First and foremost, if all of the forerunners are crashing and not finishing that’s a sign that something’s wrong,” Vonn said. “The forerunners are there for a reason. Julia was one of the forerunners, she told them and they didn’t listen.

“No. 2: Listen to the representatives. Sofia (Goggia) told them that it was not acceptable to race but they didn’t listen and now Denise probably blew her knee out because no one listened.”

The 32-year-old Vonn missed nearly two seasons of competition after injuring her right knee in Austria in 2013. She hurt the same knee in her comeback.

Vonn returned to competition last month after nearly a year out with knee and arm injuries.

“The problem is a lot of times people mistake our opinions as just whining,” Vonn said. “We’re women and we’re whining and we just need to suck it up and race, and that’s not the case. Probably more than half or the field has been injured before … it’s unfortunate that the FIS doesn’t listen to us.”

The U.S. ski federation announced that its team of Vonn, Shiffrin, Laurenne Ross, Jaqueline Wiles, Breezy Johnson and Stacey Cook would not compete. But Wiles, Cook and Johnson did start, with only Johnson finishing the opening leg. She was in 36th place after the super-G.

“It’s dangerous. I said before coming into this series,

knowing that the weather was supposed to be warm and maybe some snow and rain, that if it wasn't good, I'm not going to race," said Shiffrin, the overall World Cup leader. "I don't have enough experience in speed, but to be honest, it's just dangerous."

Shiffrin holds more than a 300-point lead in the standings over Stuhec and Goggia, the next active challengers. Defending overall champion Laura Gut, in second place, is out for the rest of the season after injuring her knee while training between runs of the combined event at the world championships in St. Moritz two weeks ago.

Goggia was also among the 16 skiers who did not finish the super-G.

Friday's race was rescheduled from Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, Austria. There is another combined race scheduled for Sunday, with a super-G on Saturday.

"It has to be everyone looking out for the most important thing, the athletes' safety," Vonn said. "I realize if the race is cancelled people lose money and the fans, I understand all of the politics, but there is no ski racing and there is no politics if we don't have safe athletes."

1,000-foot-long avalanche on Mt. Tallac



An avalanche this week at Mount Tallac occurred naturally. Photo/Sierra Avalanche Center

The Sierra Avalanche Center is reporting a significant avalanche on Mount Tallac on the Corkscrew path.

It was 1,000-feet-long, and 150-feet-wide. Trees with a diameter of 6 inches could be seen in the debris field. It occurred at about 6,800 feet.

“Interesting to note that despite the large size of this slide, it only occupied a small portion of the historical slide path and deposition zone,” the agency said.

The slide is believed to have occurred on Feb. 21 when much of the South Shore was getting rain. The bottom 500 feet can be seen under the new snow.

“The next few hundred feet became much faint and the top was impossible to discern under the new snow,” SAC said.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

TAMBA raising money to build trails

TAMBA is having a fundraiser Feb. 26 where Chris McNamara will show videos from some of the first wingsuit BASE jumps off major U.S. cliffs – and the 80-plus El Capitan climbing ascents that led to them.

Every dollar raised will build one foot of trail at Fallen Leaf Lake and Angora Ridge this summer.

Tickets are $25 and 100 percent of the money goes to the Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association to build trails. A limited number of tickets are available **online**.

Door open upstairs at Blue Angel Cafe in South Lake Tahoe at 6:30pm, show at 7pm, raffle at 8pm, silent auction closes at 8:30pm.