Incline to play as independent in football

By Jim Krajewski, Reno Gazette-Journal

Low numbers and a lack of experience will take Incline football out of the 2A and into independent status next season.

The Highlanders forfeited three games last season, at Battle Mountain, and home games versus 2A state runner-up Yerington and 2A state champion Pershing County, because athletic and school officials thought the games were not safe for the Incline players.

At the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association Board of Control meeting on Wednesday at the Silver Legacy, the members voted to allow Incline to play football as an independent team for one season in 2017.

Read the whole story

Supreme Court delays N.J. sports betting decision

By David Porter, AP

NEWARK, N.J. — Supporters of legalized sports gambling in New Jersey and several other states were dealt a no-decision of sorts Tuesday when the U.S. Supreme Court delayed a ruling on whether it will take up the states' challenge to a federal ban.

The court invited the solicitor general to file a brief on behalf of the government, which means a decision could take several more months.

The Supreme Court had been expected to include the sports betting case in its announcement Tuesday on which cases it will hear this year.

New Jersey is challenging a 1992 federal law that restricts sports betting to Nevada and three other states that already had approved some form of wagering.

In recent briefs to the Supreme Court, lawyers representing the state have argued the federal law violates the Constitution by preventing states from repealing their own laws.

Several states including Mississippi, West Virginia, Arizona, Louisiana and Wisconsin have joined New Jersey's effort.

President-elect Donald J. Trump hasn't named a new solicitor general yet. When Trump officially takes office Friday he will be the first U.S. president to have owned casinos. He has spoken favorably about legalizing sports gambling.

In a 2015 interview with Fox Sports 1, Trump indicated he wouldn't oppose sports betting or daily fantasy sports "because it's happening anyway."

Republican Gov. Chris Christie has championed New Jersey's effort in an attempt to use sports gambling revenues to bolster the sagging fortunes of the state's casino and horse racing industries.

The case has a lengthy legal history.

New Jersey voters overwhelmingly approved legalized sports betting in 2011 and the following year the state enacted a law allowing betting at racetracks and casinos.

The four major pro leagues and the NCAA sued to block that law from taking effect, arguing the integrity of their games would be threatened and there would be more incidences of game-fixing. A trial judge and, later, a federal appeals court ruled against the state.

Christie then signed a bill into law in 2014 that repealed prohibitions against sports gambling at casinos and racetracks. Repealing the laws instead of passing a new law was seen as a way to get around the federal law by not having sports gambling officially authorized by the state.

However, that challenge also met defeat at the hands of a federal judge in New Jersey and a federal appeals court in Philadelphia.

The Department of Justice, joining the sports leagues, has argued that since New Jersey's 2014 law authorizes gambling at racetracks and casinos by prohibiting it everywhere else, it amounts to state authorization and is a violation of the 1992 federal law.

Though exact figures are impossible to calculate, it's estimated tens of billions of dollars are bet illegally on sports annually in the U.S., with a sizable chunk handled by organized crime syndicates.

Nevada is the only state allowed to offer wagering on single games. Delaware, Montana and Oregon were exempted from the 1992 federal ban and are permitted to offer limited multi-game parlay pools.

Congress gave New Jersey a one-time opportunity to become the fifth state before the ban was enacted, but the state failed to pass a sports betting law in the required time window.

Anderson takes third at LAAX Open

By USSA

LAAX, Switzerland – Jamie Anderson (Meyers) scored a third-place podium finish at one of the most prestigious contests of the year – the LAAX Open – which served as a stop on the FIS World Cup Tour for the first time in 2017.

Julia Marino (Westport, Conn.) also had a strong showing for the women, finishing just off the podium in fourth. Red Gerard (Silverthorne, Colo.), who is fresh off his first World Cup podium at Kreischberg last week, was fourth for the men.

The podium was Anderson's third of the year, after a stellar December that featured wins in big air at the Toyota U.S. Grand Prix at Copper Mountain and slopestyle at the Breckenridge Dew Tour.

"I'm really happy," Anderson said of the finish. "It was a great contest, really progressive."

Enni Rukajarvi of Finland won the women's event, while Austria's Anna Gasser continued her highly successful season with a second-place finish. Also making a strong showing for the American women was Hailey Langland (San Clemente), who finished sixth as the youngest competitor in the field (16).

For Gerard, it was another excellent finish in a year that is proving to be a breakout one for the 16-year-old Coloradan. The strong Canadian men swept the podium–Max Parrot scored his second World Cup win of the season after winning the big air at the Copper Grand Prix, Mark McMorris was second and Tyler

Nicholson was third.

There’s no such thing as sidecountry

By Sage Sauerbrey, Moonshine Ink

Anyone who has spent a reasonable amount of time in the mountains can probably remember at least a few times when they made a real bonehead move and got lucky.

Even though the “sidecountry” – the out of bounds area surrounding a ski resort – may give the illusion of safety due to its proximity to controlled terrain, there have actually been more avalanche fatalities in the California “sidecountry” over the last 60 years than in the backcountry.

“It’s a false sense of security, I think,” said Randall Osterhuber, director of Donner Summit Avalanche Seminars. “You’re either in the backcountry or you’re not; you’re either on one side of the rope line at the ski area or you’re not.”

Read the whole story

Ganong 11th in Kitzbuehel

super G

By USSA

KITZBUEHEL, Austria – Austria's Matthias Mayer kicked off ski racing's Super Bowl weekend and whipped the home-country crowd into a celebratory frenzy with a victory in Friday's Audi FIS Ski World Cup super G. Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) paced three Americans into the top 20, finishing 11th.

Christof Innerhofer from Italy and Switzerland's Beat Fuez rounded out the podium in second and third respectively. Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) was 18th; Steve Nyman (Sundance, Utah) was 19th. A trio of Americans just missed the top 30 including Tommy Biesemeyer (Keene, N.Y.) in 33rd, Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) in 34th and Brennan Rubie (Salt Lake City) in 35th.

Friday's super G served not only as a World Cup race, but a chance for the American's to grab one more run to prep for Saturday's main event – the Hahnenkamm Downhill.

"After (Thursday) it was good to get a full run down the course and build a little confidence for (Saturday) and test out the body," said Ganong, who charged a bit too hard out of the gate in the final downhill training run.

"On a hill like this it's so hard mentally to be able to push and be confident," Ganong added. "After (Thursday's run) I kind of lost some confidence. Before the run (Thursday), I watched Stephan Eberharter's winning run from 2003 and he absolutely hammered. So I was inspired to try to push as hard as I've ever pushed before just to see what would happen and I got a little too excited – skied straight through the first gate. So I think it's just good to get that run done today and realize that I just need to relax and keep it simple, and not push too hard and just find the flow and go."

Nyman came out of the 51st start position to post his seventh career top-20 World Cup super G finish. He was was also the top finisher in Wednesday's downhill training run.

"I haven't had a great year in super G so far," Nyman said. "Just messing with skis and stuff and I got back on this old ski and it felt really comfortable in training the other day to where it was OK today. Best result of the year in super G for me today and hopefully it qualifies me for World Champs."

Austria's Marcel Hirscher was 24th in Friday's super G and increased his overall World Cup lead to 288 points over Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen. Norway's Kjetil Jansrud, winner of the last three three super G races, was ninth and maintained his overall World Cup super G lead with 329 points over Italy's Dominik Paris (192 points).

How ski retailers have evolved in the digital age

By Devon O'Neil, Powder

Ever since the traditional ski-shop business model—buy a lot of product and hope to sell it for twice as much—ran into the e-commerce meat grinder a decade ago, it has only gotten tougher for shops to exist, never mind thrive.

According to SnowSports Industries America, consumers bought nearly $1 billion worth of snow sports equipment online last winter, up more than 20 percent from four years ago. It is probably not a coincidence that more than 1,300 snow sports retailers—or about 20 percent of the total—have closed in the past six years.

In addition, direct-to-consumer sales have become more widespread by manufacturers, many of which have opened their own retail stores in ski towns.

Read the whole story

Nev. could get first new state parks in decades

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nearly 30 miles of river that's been largely locked away from the public could become a jewel of Nevada's state parks system.

It's one of two new parks included in the budget proposal by Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval, who announced the plans Tuesday in his State of the State address.

Read the whole story

National park visits hit record

By Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — Visits to U.S. national parks set a record in 2016 for the third consecutive year as landmarks such Zion, Yellowstone and Rocky Mountain experienced historic levels of

popularity that brought collateral headaches stemming from overcrowded roads and trails and increasing visitor misbehavior.

At many parks, visitors waited an hour or more in cars to get through entrance gates and then spent the day trying to outmaneuver fellow visitors for parking spots and room on popular trails. They left behind enormous amounts of trash and sometimes, human waste.

Encountering a crowded, Disneyland-like situation when people were expecting peaceful serenity can lead to aggression and bad decisions, park officials said.

“The level of frustration, we’ve certainly seen an increase in that,” said Kyle Patterson, Rocky Mountain National park spokeswoman. “Sometimes they take it out on each other and sometimes they take it out on park.

It created a good news-bad news story for park managers. They praise the increased interest but are struggling to preserve iconic mountains, slot canyons and wildlife habitat for future generations. The National Park Service budget has remained basically the flat, leaving parks to grapple with the problems without higher staffing levels.

“We love having people come to the park,” said John Marciano, Zion National Park spokesman. “But our No. 1 goal, our mandate, is to preserve the park into perpetuity and to ensure our visitors have a best of kind and safe experience.”

Overall visitation to national parks is on track to surpass 325 million in 2016, breaking last year’s all-time high of 307 million, federal figures show. The record-breaking three-year stretch came after parks visitation ebbed and flowed between 255-287 million for nearly three decades.

The National Park Service launched a major marketing campaign to celebrate its 100th birthday in 2016, including free passes

for every fourth-grader and their families. That renewed attention coupled with reasonable gas prices and an improved economy likely fueled the increase, said National Parks Service spokesman Jeffrey Olson.

The agency's "Find Your park " campaign will continue this year and officials expect to surpass 300 million visitors again even if there's no record, Olson said.

Absent December totals, the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona hit 5.9 million visits. Yellowstone, which stretches into Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, had 4.3 million visits.

The final year tally for Rocky Mountain in Colorado was 4.5 million. Zion in southern Utah had 4.3 million visitors — nearly double the 2010 total.

Cramming all those people into the narrow confines of Zion where most visitors want to see the same iconic slot canyons and trails has led many days to hour-long waits to get in the park, lots that fill up by 9 a.m. and crowded shuttles, Marciano said.

"Then, you hike like ducks in a row up the trail because there are so many going up the same trail," Marciano said. "That's not what we want."

One employee spent her entire summer hiking every day to the popular Angels Landing trail to clean and put more toilet paper in two portable toilets designed for 40 visits daily that had 200, he said.

Both Zion and Yellowstone are reassessing how to create better crowd plans and Zion is considering a reservation system for park entries and a daily visitor limit.

Even though it is prohibited, more people are taking dogs on trails in the Rocky Mountain park. Visitors are also parking cars on native vegetation or fragile alpine tundra and leaving

human waste right near backcountry trails, Patterson said.

This summer, the park on certain days for the first time limited the number of cars allowed on two popular roads, she said.

After Yellowstone hit 4 million visitors for the time in 2015, park spokeswoman Morgan Warthin said the park last year the "Yellowstone Pledge" urging visitors to follow guidelines that include not stopping on the side of the road to look at bears and staying on boardwalks. A man who stepped off a boardwalk died last year after falling into a boiling, acidic spring.

Yellowstone has also implored visitors to take "safe selfies" by staying far away from wild animals.

"That want that perfect picture so they're driven to get closer and closer to the point they're risking their own safety," Warthin said.

Late-season bear arrival at LTWC

A bear cub weighing about half its normal weight has been brought to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care to be rehabbed.

The 1-year-old animal is believed to have injured its head because it was found dazed, walking in circles round its mom near Quincy.

Veterinarian Kevin Willetts could not find anything wrong the cub other than weighing only 35 pounds.

While the little one is not very active, he is eating some and

is no longer going in circles.

This bear will stay at the South Shore rehab center through the winter, while the other bears will be released into the wild this week.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

E-sports on track to become $1B industry

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Less than two decades ago, e-sports consisted of a few dozen elite gamers gathering in warehouses to compete for modest-at-best prizes.

There were no televised events. No live-streaming or uploading the tournaments to YouTube. And of the fanfare, there was little.

But today, e-sports has climbed out of basements and warehouses and onto major cable networks such as ESPN and TBS and is on the verge of becoming a $1 billion industry.

Read the whole story