175-plus tennis players set for annual ZC tourney

A who’s who of the Tahoe-Reno region will descend upon the courts at Zephyr Cove next week for the 33rd annual Tahoe Tennis Classic.

More than 175 players from multiple states are entered into the all doubles tournament. The four-day tournament (July 28-31) has 11 divisions.

Spectators are welcome to watch the action for free at Zephyr Cove Tennis Club.

Young sensation Angelina Spinnato is likely to turn a lot of heads. The 12-year-old from South Lake Tahoe is starting to make a name for herself. She is partnering with Robin Twining in the women’s C division.

However, that duo could face No. 1 seeds Becky Darrow and Donna Rockwood. Rockwood was one half of the winning team in 2015.

Tournament director Bob Beutenmiller calls Ryan Johnston Tahoe’s most skilled player. Johnston, who recently won the USTA NorCal Grand Prix singles title, regularly plays in Sacramento and San Francisco leagues and tournaments. He will partner with Mohamed Irfan Lakdawala of San Francisco. Their toughest competition will come from the Reno duo of Jeffrey Mullen and teaching pro Craig Gorbach. Mullen is the highest rated player in the Reno area.

The women’s A division features last year’s runner-up as the early favorite: Carol and Holly Tretten, a mother and daughter team from Reno. Local teaching pros Ginny Ungar and Susan Cowan will give them tough competition.

The most balanced division this year will be the women's B division. Six teams have a legitimate chance to claim the championship: Mary Heller-Barbara Van Fleet, Maureen Snyder-Caryn Jones, Dawn Perkins-Carolyn Richert, Christy Wurster-Sara Catania, Joyce Youngs-Sally Huttenmayer and Kae Reed-Tracey Samoluk.

The largest event in terms of teams is the mixed doubles B division. A strong seeded team will be Lori and Tony Grbac from Roseville. Jim Bilicki and Lorraine Daniel from Rancho Mirage, Kathy Brown and Steven Reid from the Reno area, and Mark Silva with Christine Wurster from Placerville will dominate the division.

For a full list of the various divisions and competitors, go **online**.

There is also still time to enter. The deadline to do so is July 24.

The nonprofit Zephyr Cove Tennis Club Foundation runs the Classic and is responsible for the tennis facility owned by Douglas County. The tournament is the club's largest fundraiser, which allows it to provide an array of tennis opportunities for the public, including free junior programs.

Tevis Cup continues horse health research

By Marsha Hayes, Horse

When the 61st Tevis Ride commences early on July 23, about 170 horse and rider teams will head down the historic Western

States Trail across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountains in a challenging 100-mile journey. It will also allow equine researchers another opportunity to study elite endurance horses in a field setting.

Since 2012, and in addition to the required hands-on horse evaluations during the ride, researchers have drawn and analyzed equine blood samples at mile 36. They've been trying to uncover data that would objectively identify horses unlikely to finish the course within the allotted 24 hours.

Also since 2012, the researchers have reviewed the data after the ride and compared them with actual completion rates. They focused on potassium and chloride levels, which decrease as a horse sweats and serve as an indirect marker of hydration. In the first year, the team found that horses with specific potassium and chloride levels had a 25 percent event completion rate compared to a general completion rate of around 50 percent.

Read the whole story

Celebrities combine fun with serious golf



Steph Curry lines up his putt during the July 21 practice round. Photo/Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Steph Curry understands what it is like to be a fan. The basketball star is nutty about golf, being a fan of Jordan Spieth's. His wife just shake's her head when he spends six hours on the couch watching it on TV.

Where is he on a day off during the hoop season? On a golf course.

Curry, star of the Golden State Warriors basketball team, is back on the links for the 27th annual American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe. It was hard to miss him Thursday, as he had the biggest gallery. For the three days of the actual tournament, which begins today, Curry is likely to rival singer Justin Timberlake for the largest following.



Actor-singer Jack Wagner is ready to tee off. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On July 21, Curry was patient as the crowds swarmed and flung all sorts of paraphernalia at him to sign. Selfies were part of the requests, too. So was signing and throwing footballs on hole 17.

“I have much less confidence on the greens than I do on the court. Everybody asks like if putting is like shooting free throws. Like that six-footer for par or something like that,” Curry said. “It has a very similar kind of mindset. And it’s just you, the ball and the target.”

Fans were wearing a ton of gold and blue on Thursday.

But the No. 30 jersey wasn’t the only one in the crowd. J.D. Dostlik of Santa Cruz had a Jerome Bettis shirt on. He’s originally from Pittsburgh – where “the bus” made a name for himself on the gridiron. Dostlik was able to get a shirt signed for his friend Wendy Ocegueda of Chico.

Another woman told Bettis that without his play the Steelers would not have won the Super Bowl. He responded, “I’m not so sure about that.”



J.D. Dostlik secures a Jerome Bettis signature for a friend. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Other fans weren't too sure about some facts. One woman was overheard telling her friends that former Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann is who the Heisman Trophy is named after.

Former ace of the Atlanta Braves, Greg Maddox, had his caddy taking pictures on his phone at the driving range in an attempt to see how he was swinging.

The Golf Channel has its popular glass break challenge set up near the driving range. It took Mark Mulder, last year's ACC champion, two swings to shatter the glass.



Former football great Marcus Allen launches one down the fairway. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Jack Wagner, a two-time winner of this tournament, hammed it up a bit for fans on hole 10. He started singing for a group of women, using a golf club as a mic. For those in the bleachers he made a point to come close enough to be photographed.

One thing all the players won’t have to contend with is former champions Billy Joe Tolliver, Rick Rhoden and Dan Quinn.

The 86 celebrities gunning for a piece of the $600,000 kitty will begin teeing off at 6:30 this morning. The winner will be crowned Sunday.

Calif. giant trees cloned to combat climate change

By Scott Smith, AP

CAMP NELSON — At the foot of a giant sequoia in California's Sierra Nevada, two arborists stepped into harnesses then inched up ropes more than 20 stories into the dizzying canopy of a tree that survived thousands of years, enduring drought, wildfire and disease.

There, the arborists clipped off tips of young branches to be hand-delivered across the country, cloned in a lab and eventually planted in a forest in some other part of the world.

The two are part of a cadre of modern day Johnny Appleseeds who believe California's giant sequoias and coastal redwoods are blessed with some of the heartiest genetics of any trees on Earth — and that propagating them will help reverse climate change, at least in a small way.

"It's a biological miracle," said tree climber Jim Clark, firmly back on the ground and holding a green sprig to his lips as if to kiss it. "This piece of tissue … can be rooted, and we have a miniature 3,000-year-old tree."

The cloning expedition to Camp Nelson, a mountain community about 100 miles southeast of Fresno, was led by David Milarch, co-founder of Archangel Ancient Tree Archive.

The Michigan-based nurseryman preaches the urgency of restoring the Earth's decimated forests. In two decades, he says his nonprofit group has cloned 170 types of trees and

planted more than 300,000 of them in seven countries with willing landowners.

“It’s really a race against time,” Milarch said. “If we start right now, we can go after climate change and reverse it before it’s too late.”

Sequoias growing in the Sierra are among the biggest and oldest trees on Earth, some nearly 300 feet tall and up to 3,000 years old.

Relying on common sense that he says is being borne out by science, Milarch, 66, believes their size and robustness make them ideal for absorbing greenhouse gases that drive climate change on the planet. He likens them to people who drink and smoke all their lives, yet thrive well into their 90s.

One skeptic is Todd Dawson, a professor of integrated biology at UC Berkeley. He admires Archangel’s creative efforts but says it’s unclear whether the towering trees have superior genes or whether they were simply lucky not to meet the fate of a logger’s saw.

Chances are slim, he said, that cloning and planting a limited number of trees will cool the warming planet. He favors more sweeping approaches such as curbing the use of fossil fuels and protecting vast rainforests.

“That’s one of the things about global warming – it’s a global problem,” Dawson said. “You’re going to have to plant a lot of trees to combat global warming.”

A team of about a dozen expert tree climbers from across the country volunteered for the expedition in May to restock Archangel’s store of genetic samples. They risked their lives to climb to the ends of massive limbs, starting in the southern Sierra sequoia grove and winding up nearly 500 miles away in Northern California, where they carefully collected additional samples from coastal redwoods – a taller, thinner

cousin of the giant sequoia.

Clark wrapped the clippings he gathered in damp newspaper, placed them inside ice-filled duffel bags and boarded an overnight flight to the Archangel's lab across country in Copemish, a rural village in northwestern Michigan.

There, Clark and another propagation specialist snipped off some 2,000 shoots a few inches long and planted them in small containers of a peat-and-gel mixture.

Another 1,000 fingernail-sized bits of greenery were placed into jars containing a blend of seaweed-based gelatin and growth hormones.

The samples grow beneath purplish fluorescent lights under humidity and temperatures designed to encourage rooting. Cloning ancient trees is tricky business, lab workers say, and many samples don't survive.

Later this year, Archangel's team will come west to plant up to 1,000 sequoia and redwood saplings in a cool, damp region of Oregon where the trees will have the best chance to grow.

Bill Werner, a horticulture consultant based in Monterey, California, who has worked with Archangel, says that in the face of global warming, it's easy to dismiss the efforts of a "renegade" group that relies heavily on donations and volunteer nurserymen and arborists.

"That's not fair," Werner said. "It may be a drop in the bucket, but at least somebody's doing something."

Barkley: ‘Golf is fun until you hit somebody in the head’



Charles Barkley keeps a sense of humor despite being at the bottom of the pack each year at the Tahoe tournament. Photo/LTN file

By Scott Sonner, AP

Leave it to Charles Barkley to capsulize the challenges he and others will face atop the Sierra this weekend trying to keep their golf balls in the fairway, away from the galleries and out of the water during the 27th annual American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament at Lake Tahoe.

“Golf is fun, until you hit somebody in the head,” said Barkley, the Hall of Fame basketball player who’s a 6,000-to-1 long shot to win but still draws some of the biggest crowds at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course in Stateline.

Two-time NBA MVP Steph Curry, NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers, singer Justin Timberlake and comedian Ray Romano are among the more than 80 athletes and entertainers who tee off Friday in the 54-hole tournament running through Sunday.

Curry, who finished fourth three years ago in the tournament with a $600,000 purse, will be paired with his father, Dell, who played 16 years in the NBA, and fellow Golden State Warriors teammate Andre Iguodala.

“I haven’t heard my name called this many times in 14 years,” the elder Curry said while signing autographs after a practice round on Wednesday.

Tourney regulars and Hall of Famers Jerry Rice, Emmitt Smith and Marcus Allen are back again this year, along with more than a dozen past and present quarterbacks, including University of Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh, Carson Palmer, Ryan Fitzpatrick, Alex Smith, Doug Flutie, Jim McMahon, Joe Theismann and Steve Young.

Others in the field include former Vice President Dan Quayle, NASCAR driver Brian Vickers, Larry the Cable Guy, former “Saturday Night Live” star Kevin Nealon and Willie Robertson of “Duck Dynasty.”

Barkley said he tries to help newcomers understand it’s quite different than playing a round at their local country club.

“It ain’t like regular golf, because there are people everywhere,” he said during a recent conference call promoting the event. “And like I say, most of the guys will tell you they’re pretty good until they hit somebody. And then they get really nervous, because nobody wants to hit anybody.”

This year marks the 10th anniversary of one of the most infamous shots at the tourney where yachts and speed boats anchor along Tahoe’s south shore next to the par-3 17th and par-5 finishing hole.

Actor Matthew Settle’s slicing 5-iron on the 169-yard 17th broke a boat windshield in July 2006 – a shot playing partner John O’Hurley called a “flaming whoopsie.”

“I’ve seen broken windows on golf courses before but never on a boat,” O’Hurley said.

It wasn’t that strange to former NBA star Chris Webber, who once won a $50,000 charity bet with Barkley on who would finish last.

“I hit somebody in a boat a couple of years ago and they threw the ball back out like it was a home run at a baseball game,” Webber said at the time.

Barkley said, “I just hit people, I don’t hit boats.”

Star Guide: Preserving regional astronomical legacy

By Tony Berendsen

Passion is something we all have in varying degrees. Every once in a while we learn about someone with extraordinary passion who achieves something really amazing. Over the last couple weeks I’ve become reacquainted with a fellow ASN (Astronomical Society of Nevada) member Jay Lawson who has set the passion bar really high by completing an awesome project of great personal interest, and at the same time offering a gift to our community through the restoration of a part of Nevada’s astronomical history.

The story begins back in the 1930s when UNR Professor Bruce Blair founded the ASN.

Lawson recounts, “After Professor Blair passed away in 1949, his widow Rebecca and Dr. Everett Harris worked with ASN member and ATM (Amateur Telescope Maker) Carl Wells to build a telescope for an observatory on the UNR campus. Built from 1951 to 1953, the telescope and observatory was located at the current location of Lombardi recreation center at UNR. The telescope was a 6-inch, f/15 refractor with a Carl Zeiss objective. The telescope mount was made by Haines Scientific Instruments in New Jersey.”



Jay Lawson in the Blair Observatory with the Carl Wells telescope in Sparks. Photo/Ryan Berendsen

The observatory, located on the UNR campus, was open until 1967. Then it was demolished as part of UNR expansion. The observatory telescope, built by Carl Wells, was removed and stored in the basement of the physics building and later the Fleischmann Planetarium, until it found its way to Lawson’s house where he and friend Adam Kremers elected Lawson to put the observatory back together in his backyard.

Appropriately, Lawson is the current historian for the ASN.

I asked him why restore the Wells refractor?

“As the current historian for the ASN, I felt an obligation to preserve the memory and contributions of past ASN members like Professor Blair, Carl Wells, T.V. Frazier, Jessie Huntsman, Pete Gavazzi and others. Restoring the Wells refractor is part of that obligation. I built an h-alpha solar scope which is mounted to the Wells telescope and will be dedicating it to T.V. Frazier.” Frazier taught at UNR physics and had used the observatory.

“The telescope and observatory were part of many people’s lives in the ’50s and ’60s as interest in the space program and science was on the upswing. The fact that Professor Blair was nationally known in astronomy was no small feat. There is a tremendous amount of history associated with Blair, Wells, and this observatory,” Lawson said.

Lawson attributes his interest in astronomy to seeing the moon when he was young.

“I had first noticed the moon in the evening sky in 1962 when I was 4 and living less than a mile from the Blair Observatory. In about 1965, my father worked at Rocketdyne in north Spanish Springs testing rocket engines for the Gemini and Apollo missions, so there was a lot of interest in space exploration. One night I used a riflescope to look at Venus in the evening sky and saw that it was a crescent like the moon. I watched it for many nights and that year my parents bought me my first 60mm telescope from Sears. When I was 11 I wanted a larger telescope, so I mowed lawns all summer then sold my bike to afford to buy my next telescope, a 90mm one from Sears. When I got my first real job out of college, I bought a 6-inch Meade reflector, and in 1986 bought my 16-inch in anticipation of Halley’s comet. I could see it months before most people.”

The observatory is mostly used privately, but is always

available to members of the ASN with prior notification. Several times a year it is open to the public for special events like eclipses and transits. Notification of these public events are made on the Northern Nevada Astronomy Group **Facebook page**.

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

Lake Valley offering to chip slash piles

Lake Valley Fire Protection District is offering free wood chipping to assist homeowners with their efforts to reduce flammable vegetation and create defensible space.

This service is offered to resident serviced by Lake Valley and people living at Fallen Leaf Lake.

LVFPD is continuing to work with South Tahoe Refuse to offer two methods of slash disposal. The chipping program is no longer setting restrictions on pile sizes, however slash that can be easily wrapped in twine should be disposed of on regular trash days.

When the pile is ready, call 530.577.2447. Chipping is scheduled by zones, so it may take several weeks.

Meeting in Incline about future bike path

The Nevada Department of Transportation will host a public information meeting on July 26 to provide information about the Stateline-to-Stateline bike path that will be built over the next two to three years in Incline Village.

The meeting will update the community, and provide information on the project construction schedule and traffic impacts.

To project is a three-plus mile shared-use path from the south end of Incline Village to Sand Harbor State Park. An underpass will be constructed beneath the highway to bring the path from the east to west side of the road near the Flume Trail. Two new parking areas will be constructed near the Ponderosa Ranch and Tunnel Creek Café.

Centerline rumble strips and emergency roadside turnouts will also be added to Highway28.

In addition, water quality improvements such as enhanced roadside drainage inlets, sediment filtration systems and erosion control will be installed to help preserve the quality of stormwater entering Lake Tahoe.

The meeting will be held from 4-7pm at the Chateau, 955 Fairway Blvd. in Incline Village, with an informational presentation at 5:30pm.

Ex-pitcher, tennis pro favored to win ACC

Mark Mulder, the defending champion and former MLB all-star pitcher, and newly-retired pro tennis champion Mardy Fish are co-favorites to win the American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament.

Harrah’s and Harveys Race & Sports Book have Mulder and Fish at 3-1 to win the 27th annual competition at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course in Stateline.

The tournament is July 22-24.

Steph Curry, the NBA 2015-16 MVP, has entered the tournament and was placed near the top of the board at 6-1, with two-time champion Mark Rypien next at 9-2.

Among the other prominent players and their odds are: Marshall Faulk (15-1), Jerry Rice (25-1), Aaron Rodgers (25-1), Andre Iguodala and Roger Clemens (30-1), Justin Timberlake and Jerome Bettis (40-1), Dell Curry (50-1), Emmitt Smith (1,000-1) and Ray Romano (1,000-1) and Kevin Nealon (2,000-1). Perennial longshot Charles Barkley is 6,000-1. Among the other favorites are former MLB pitcher Eric Gagne at 5-1, two-time champ Jack Wagner and longtime contender Jeremy Roenick, both 7-1.

Researchers on brink of stopping tree-eating beetles

By Abby Hobbs, Deseret News

SALT LAKE CITY — Emerald ash borers are infesting states across the country, and they're on their way to Utah, officials said.

But researchers at BYU study may have found a way to eliminate the problematic pests.

The emerald ash borer was originally discovered in Michigan in 2002 and since has killed more than 50 million ash trees. Since entering Colorado in 2013, threats for the beetles moving to Utah have increased.

BYU researchers looked at beetle visual systems and found that the emerald ash borer and its relatives are unique in that they can detect blue light. The researchers say the findings could help insect prevention specialists find solutions to slowing the spread of emerald ash borers and even eliminating them altogether.

Read the whole story