Proven leader takes reins of Kirkwood

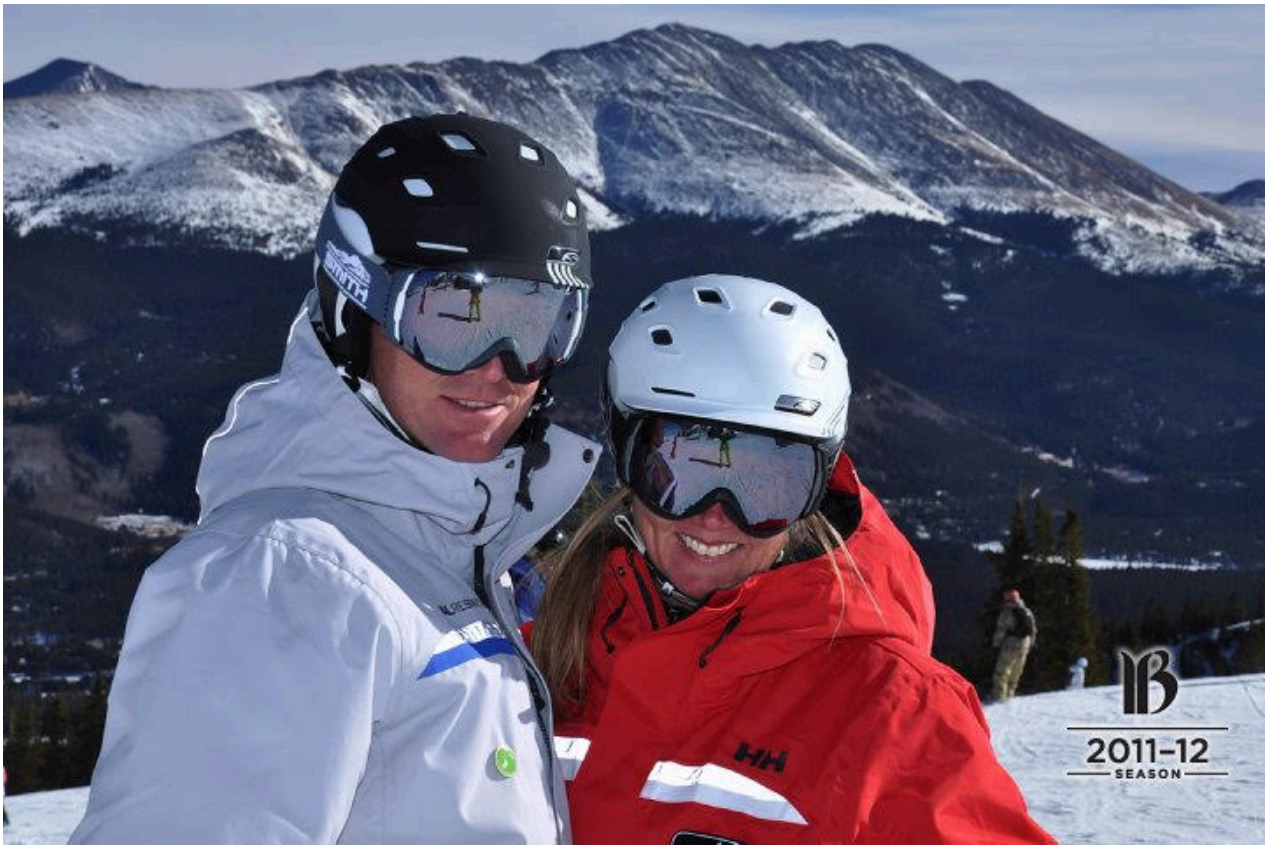
By Susan Wood

A ski area executive with deep roots in the industry was groomed by Vail to take the helm of the resort known for deep snow.

Doug Pierini returned to the Lake Tahoe region, coming on board Kirkwood Mountain Resort as vice president and general manager this summer. At 46, the former vice president of skier services at Breckenridge Mountain Resort in Colorado has a long history with ski resorts. Both resorts fall under the Vail Resorts' umbrella.

His parents were part-time ski instructors in upstate New York. Skiing the Catskills was a part of everyday life for Pierini (which means knowing how to ski on ice). He raced as a youngster, and after graduating from Rutgers University in New Jersey with a degree in economics, he headed west in search of the perfect turn.

He started in Jackson Hole, Wyo., where for a decade he worked in ski school and management. From there, he's worked stints at Alpine Meadows and Sierra-at-Tahoe, locally. Globally, he's also manned posts in the famed Portillo area of Chile, in addition to Mt. Buller in Australia. He's had jobs at Steamboat Mountain Resort in Colorado and Plattekill Mountain in New York.



Doug and Leigh Ann Pierini make skiing a priority for their family. Photo/Provided

In between assignments, Pierini served on the Professional Ski Instructor Association national team, where he developed ski technique and training programs. This means training the trainers. He also maintained the high honor of taking a slot on the National Alpine Team for the United States.

But it was his time at Breck that really showed off his skills in management as vice president of skier services.

One could call Pierini an expert at teaching wannabes the finer skills of skiing. He started instructing in the 1980s. About the only people whom he wouldn't recommend teaching are his own children, and the same advice holds true for other parents.

Still, when asked where his favorite place to ski of all is, he replied: "With my kids, anywhere they want to be." Pierini has a 9-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter.

Truly a family man, Pierini is all about nurturing the individual nature and spirit of a person.

The Volkl ski purist (he has owned five pairs) plans to do the same at Kirkwood, which for years has developed a reputation as a lone wolf in the Tahoe-area ski resorts. He said he's quite familiar with Kirkwood's unique character and plans to maintain it.

Pierini replaces Casey Blann, who has worked at Kirkwood, Heavenly and Sierra-at-Tahoe.

"Casey's an amazing guy with a good reputation. I feel honored to follow someone like that," Pierini told *Lake Tahoe News.*

As for Kirkwood's pending master plan, he agrees it "needs to be reviewed" but stopped short of implying Kirkwood needs a lot of change.

He wants to tap into Kirkwood stakeholders, community members and employees to get new ideas on how to proceed with the ski resort split between Alpine and Amador counties off Highway 88.

"Right now, we're going to move forward with what we have," Pierini said. "There's nothing glaring Kirkwood needs for now."

Some have long claimed the resort needs more high-speed chairlifts like Cornice, especially on the backside, but all will come with time. For now, Pierini sits in a pure get-to-know status and has met with numerous people since arriving.

And even his wife, a retired trainer from Keystone ski resort in Colorado, would like to get involved with the community. The family is also big on going out on the sailboat for a different kind of cruiser run.

Being family oriented carries over into his management style – in an egalitarian way.

“As a manager, I’m very team oriented. I place a lot of importance on having a strong team. It’s not all about me. I give a high standard on the brand and don’t like to settle for something mediocre,” he said of his expectations. “At the same time, I like to empower my team.”

The embracing of the team environment made him a good fit for Vail.

Pierini joined the Broomfield, Colo.-based ski industry giant team in October 2010 and hasn’t looked back.

“I like how responsible they are as a company. There’s so much they do for the environment,” Pierini said, further insisting the principles are part of the company mantra. “And it’s a leader in the industry with a ton of talent.”

Some would argue that Pierini represents that claim.

“He’s been in a key leadership role. Breckenridge is one of the most visited ski resorts in the country, so certainly he has a grasp of the business,” Vail Resorts Senior Advisor Blaise Carrig told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Carrig, who managed Heavenly Mountain Resort before moving up the Vail corporate management ladder until he fully retires in October 2017, is familiar with Pierini’s work. He pointed out his excellent attention to service and operational skills as traits that made Pierini stand out for Vail’s upper management.

“He’ll be great for staff and the community of Kirkwood,” Carrig said.

And the ski instructor known for his detailed training regimens was trained intensively himself.

Carrig cited how in 2010 Vail owned five resorts. Six years later, that number has more than doubled. The math adds up to the need for more chief operating officers.

And like most things Vail, there’s no stone unturned in terms of putting a tried-and-true structure in place to get the best leaders for the jobs.

Pierini went through Vail’s internal leadership program and embraced its VRV – Vail Resorts Vision. There are three steps named for scaling a mountain: Camps I, II and III.

“It’s a purposeful program. We’re very focused on successes – performance management successes with leadership development programs and peer reviews. Then we identify people we think have talent, have performed well and have the ability to take over more duties in the company,” Carrig said. “For Kirkwood, Doug rose to the top.”

Carrig wasn’t alone in his observations.

“Doug brings an impressive diversity of experience to his new role and leadership style that I’m confident will be a great fit at Kirkwood,” said Pete Sontag, chief operating officer at Heavenly and regional manager for Vail’s three Tahoe area resorts.

Tahoe celeb golf tourney not just about the guys

By Susan Wood

The American Century Championship at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course could be called a quasi battle of the sexes this year.

That’s because the women golfers are coming out in full force this year when the premier golf tournament is in play July 19-24.

Three big guns in the world of golf will be on hand to compete.

Heather LeMaster, the 2013 Women's World Long Drive champion, will make her first appearance in a big way by trying to establish a Guinness Book of World Records mark for the longest drive by a woman at an elevation above 6,200 feet.

Blair O'Neal, a former member of the LPGA Symetra Tour and Golf Channel television host, is also taking a shot at the record in her inaugural run.



Lisa Cornwell is returning to the ACC tournament next week. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Lisa Cornwell, who hosts “Golf Central” on Golf Channel, played collegiate golf and hopes to improve in her third attendance at the championship.

It’s one thing to have the U.S. Women’s Open, the premier event for female golfers, return to Northern California after last being held in 1982 in Sacramento and now for the first time in the Bay Area at CordeValle Golf Club in Santa Clara. But it’s quite another to have such a showing for women in a typically male-sanctioned event as the American Century Championship.

Having such high-profile female competitors following in the footsteps of soccer great Brandi Chastain in addition to Tahoe local and former pro golfer Annika Sorenstam is gaining notice from tournament stakeholders. U.S. women’s soccer team Olympic star Abby Wambach will be the latest soccer phenom to try her hand at driving a ball instead of kicking it.



The American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament will

attempt to establish a Women's Long Drive at Elevation record as part of a competition involving champion long ball artists Heather LeMaster and Blair O'Neal. The competition will take place July 19 at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course in advance of the 27th annual American Century Championship.

LeMaster's winning drive in the World Long Drive competition in 2013 at Mesquite was 306 yards. The tournament has consulted with the Guinness Book of World Records and there is no category for long drives at an elevation above 6,000 feet. Therefore, the longest drive of the competition will be submitted

for consideration to the Guinness Book of World Records in London, with evidence of authenticity.

“The great thing about the American Century Championship is that the field is diverse in many ways and creates interesting dynamics. With a record number of women playing this year, it’s surely one of the more diverse player lists we’ve seen and will prove to be a source of competitive fun for both players and spectators,” Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Executive Director Carol Chaplin told *Lake Tahoe News.*

That’s what Gary Quinn, NBC Sports’ vice president of Programming and Owned Properties, is counting on. Quinn has said the network has tried for years to “get as many female celebrities as it can,” but the quest has been “a bit challenging.”

Persistence pays off. The golf tournament has traditionally tuned in a viewership profile made up of about 65 percent men and 35 percent women. These percentages could change with this year’s dynamic.

“It could be one of the most entertaining golf events,” Quinn told *Lake Tahoe News.*

When asked how the men who don’t play, say up to par, will handle getting beaten by women who play professionally or competitively, Quinn projected the egos should be in check.

“If these guys come out and participate to play in front of 40,000 fans, they’ve got enough confidence in themselves,” he explained.

Ninety competitors in the tournament’s 27th year are celebrities in their own professional sport – football,

baseball, basketball, hockey or are stars in the world of entertainment.

This year’s gender profile just might make the event more exciting to watch – especially when there’s a record to beat.

“It’ll be interesting to see how far Heather (LeMaster) hits the ball,” Quinn said.

With the higher the elevation and thinner the air, the more the ball travels.

“Believe it or not, if my calculations are correct, I can expect to hit a golf ball over 380 yards, possibly over 400 yards. This will not only be my personal best, but so much fun. I’ve always wanted to show the world that girls can go far too. I like to call it #ladylong,” LeMaster told *Lake Tahoe News.*

Beyond being a nine-time world equestrian champion and African safari enthusiast, LeMaster’s golf game is in her blood. Her grandmother played golf with Mildred Ella “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias.



Brandi Chastain in 2015 played with the fans on the 17th hole. This year it will be fellow Olympian Abby Wambach's turn to trade a soccer ball for a golf ball. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Aside from the bloodlines, LeMaster will carry a distinct strategy to compete against the men at Edgewood.

"Although long off the tee, I make sure I still have a full shot into the green. This course won't be playing very long, so I feel that our wedge shots could be landing closer because we can use the full swing, as opposed to (having) to try and finesse the swing to produce the correct distance," LeMaster told *LTN.*

The pro golfer quickly lightened up though with a quip implying perhaps the women's advantage lies in "when we walk up onto the tee box our natural beauty and sweetness might distract (the men.)"

Cornwell added to the tongue-in-cheek responses on the subject of women's golf game advantages by declaring confidence is her competitive edge.

"I am confident that I can beat Charles Barkley and Larry the Cable Guy," she said of the basketball star and comedian. They are notoriously the cellar dwellers.

The sports stars have varying talents beyond golf, as in the case of Cornwell, who told *LTN* she also sings and plays guitar – but only around people she knows.

She'd like to add getting on a boat on the lake and ziplining in the forest as outdoor activities to take in while visiting Tahoe this month.

"I always say (the championship is) my favorite week of the year for so many reasons," Cornwell added.

Fun and friendly competition aside, the women golfers added to the list this year expressed the event is also about advancing the golf world for more female competitors.

"In many ways, golf is still a man's world, but thankfully, it's getting better. Augusta (Georgia) now has female members. The LPGA tour is in a very good place. Hopefully, the ladies out on tour will continue to get more and more exposure because they are so incredibly talented," Cornwell said, adding: "I always tell the men that if they want to get better by watching, watch the ladies. They get more out of their swings than the guys because their tempo is so good."

Ditto from O'Neal.

"Amateurs often tell me that they learn more from watching

professional female golfers than they do from the men. They like watching the smooth tempos," said O'Neal, who also can claim modeling to her list of talents.

The television host admits it's a tough balancing act between her public image and golf game, but insists she's been "fortunate to blend" them.

Anderson wins third ESPY award

For the third time Jamie Anderson has taken home the honor of Best Female Action Sports Athlete at ESPN's ESPY Awards.

"So thankful on so many levels! □□□ I wouldn't be where I am today without the love, support & encouragement of my family, friends & of course my sponsors! Thanks for making my Dreams a reality! Unbelievably grateful," she posted on Instagram.

The Meyers resident received the award in Los Angeles on July 13. She first earned the award in 2012, then again in 2014.

The Olympic gold medalist snowboarder's home resort is Sierra-at-Tahoe. She won the slopestyle competition in the Sochi Games in 2014, and she is regularly on the podium at the X Games.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Golf tourney benefits Gene Upshaw's legacy

The 8th annual Gene Upshaw Memorial Golf Classic is July 17-18 at Schaffer's Mill Golf Club in Truckee.

Twenty-five NFL hall of famers, former Major League Baseball players, other sports and entertainment celebrities will pay tribute to the former Oakland Raider and raise funds for cancer programs and traumatic brain injury research.

Money raised benefits the Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center and the Tahoe Institute for Rural Health Research. Since the inaugural event in 2009, more than $1 million has been raised for pancreatic cancer research, quality medical treatment and care for cancer patients and their families, sustainability and advancement of medical technology, and funding for research in areas such as mild traumatic brain injury.

Practice rounds begin July 17, followed by a VIP pairings party. Tournament play begins July 18 with a 9:30am shotgun start, followed by an afternoon awards banquet.

World Series of Poker to have big payout

By Case Keefer, Las Vegas Sun

Poker players are always late – even to their game's world championship.

Their proclivity for procrastination resulted in the final of three starting flights in the 2016 World Series of Poker Main Event going down as the largest single-day field in the tournament’s history on Monday at the Rio. Day 1C of the Main Event attracted 4,240 players who paid the $10,000 entry fee for a shot at poker’s world championship gold bracelet.

That brought the three-day total to 6,737 players, the highest number of Main Event runners since 2011 and the fourth-most of all-time. The eventual winner will earn an $8 million prize.

Read the whole story

USFS nears completion of river restoration

Work began this week on the final phase of the Upper Truckee River Reach 5 restoration project.

The U.S. Forest Service in collaboration with the California Tahoe Conservancy are diverting the river around the construction area to protect water quality and allow construction of the new channel to be completed.

Boaters will be prohibited from entering the construction area upstream from the project. Signs will be posted at the Elks Club Drive boat launch location notifying boaters of the closure and a barrier will be strung across the river upstream from the temporary bridge to prevent boaters from going downstream.

Fishing will also be prohibited in the construction area during water diversions. Fish will be relocated from within

the project area into the Upper Truckee River both up and downstream from the construction. The closure will remain in place until Oct. 14.

This is the final year of the four-year construction project to replace the existing stream channel with a new channel that is more stable and is connected to the adjacent floodplain, which will ideally provide better aquatic habitat, support a healthier meadow ecosystem, and reduce the amount of fine sediment that reaches Lake Tahoe.

Whittell football field, track to be overhauled



Whittell football players likely will be playing on artificial turf in 2017. Photo/Boyd Dangtongdee

By Kathryn Reed

Track meets will again be able to be run at Whittell High School, possibly as soon as the 2017-18 school year.

A donation of $2.5 million from the Lisa and Robert Maloff Endowment Fund is paying for the football field to be completely renovated as well as the track. The Douglas County School District board is being asked today to accept the donation.

“That football field and stadium have been high on our list, but we could never get to them because they are not a classroom,” Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The turf if fine, but it’s not as state-of-the-art as other districts. It will be upgraded to an artificial turf football field and an all weather track.”

Drainage issues exist with the current field that will also be remedied with the funds.

Lisa Maloff has been donating millions of dollars to various South Shore entities since her husband, Bob, died in 2011. The South Shore woman gave $10 million for the Robert Maloff Center of Excellence, a health and sports performance center just behind Barton Memorial Hospital near the emergency room. The other significant donation was nearly $8 million to Lake Tahoe Community College for the university center that will bear the Maloff name.

Bob Maloff co-owned and operated Lake Tahoe Inn and Timber Cove Lodge in South Lake Tahoe. Plus, he had other significant real estate dealings. Lisa Maloff was a founding member of the Barton Hospital Auxiliary. Promoting wellness, activity, and fitness in the community have long been goals of the Maloffs, which ties in well with WHS’ plans.



Cheerleaders will be on a track that will have some give instead of compacted dirt. Photo/Boyd Dangtongdee

The current track is dirt. It’s suitable for practices, but not competition. The all weather track will allow the Warriors to actually have home events at home. The number of lanes will be dependent on final costs.

White said the artificial turf is the route most schools are going.

The current stadium is not compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act, so some of the money will go toward those improvements.

Bleachers for visitors will also be built.

If there is any money left over, a concession stand is on the wish list, too.

When it comes to maintaining the new facilities, White said it should be a wash based on watering and mowing the grass today

to needing to vacuum the new field. Snow will need to be removed from the track for its longevity. With artificial turf fields having a life expectancy of 10-12 years, a replacement fund will be needed.

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Notes:

· The July 12 board meeting starts at 3:30pm at the Lake Tahoe Visitors Center conference room in Stateline.

Failed Everest ascent doesn't stop Squaw climber

By Jen Murphy, Wall Street Journal

Professional climber Adrian Ballinger was in phenomenal shape when he left for an expedition to Mount Everest on April 6. When he got down from the mountain May 28, he was as frail as a 90-year-old man.

A week later, at a rock-climbing gym back home in Squaw Valley, he watched his girlfriend, professional climber Emily Harrington, crank out one-arm push ups. "I was shocked when I realized I couldn't even do one," he recalled. "Psychologically, as a professional athlete, it's hard to be OK with being incredibly weak."

The 40-year-old founder and head guide of adventure-travel company Alpenglow Expeditions, Ballinger has summited Everest six times, each time as a guide and each time using supplemental oxygen. On his most recent trip, he and his climbing partner, 35-year-old Cory Richards, attempted the

summit without the use of supplemental oxygen.

Ballinger got home June 4 and had less than two weeks to prepare for his next expedition. He and Harrington flew to Tanzania June 15 to lead clients on a weeklong trek to the 19,341-foot summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. “I know it sounds like a terrible idea,” Ballinger said, “but this is the only time the family could travel.”

Read the whole story

The weird origins of going to the beach

By Ana Swanson, Washington Post

Like the steam engine, the tin-can telephone and the first vaccine, the modern American beach holiday was actually invented in Britain.

A beach vacation might seem like the most natural thing in the world — to head to the shore, play in the waves and splay your limbs out on the sand. But people didn’t always consider the beach a place primarily for relaxation and entertainment. After all, the beach can be cold, hot, sandy, wet, dismal and/or uncomfortable. And then there’s the whole prospect of drowning in the sea.

Like so many things, the beach vacation actually rose to popularity in Britain around the turn of the 19th century and spread through the world from there. (This isn’t to say people avoided the beach entirely before then, but vacationing at the beach wasn’t a cultural phenomenon.) Its origins were tied up

with how industrialization was remaking Britain at the time, as well as in popular contemporary medical theories that now sound bizarre.

Read the whole story

USFS using herbicide to kill invasive plants

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is using chemicals on 70 sites to get rid of invasive plants.

The work will continue through September.

Project areas include the 64 Acres parking lot in Tahoe City, Angora Fire area, Baldwin Beach Meadow, Burke Creek Trail, Camp Richardson Corral, Luther Pass Campground, Heavenly Creek Meadow, Heavenly Mountain Resort, the Lower Truckee River below Tahoe City, and the Spooner Summit fire station.

Crews will also treat infestations on numerous urban lots owned by the USFS.

Herbicides used include Rodeo, Milestone, and Telar.

Caution signs will be posted in treatment areas for at least 48 hours after application. Orange and black caution tape will mark the boundary around each treatment area.

Target invasive plants include tall whitetop, Dalmatian toadflax, yellow toadflax, hoary cress and Canada thistle.