

Anderson on top of podium at worlds in China

Jamie Anderson of Meyers won the big air competition at the 2016 Corona World Championships of Snowboarding in Yabuli, China, today.

Finland's Peetu Piiroinen was the winner for the men. Kyle Mack of the U.S. came to the second place, followed by Sebastien Toutant of Canada in third.

Enni Rukajarvi of Finland second for the women, with Jessika Jenson of the U.S. in third.

Avalanche warning issued for LT Basin

The Sierra Avalanche Center has issued a backcountry avalanche warning through Monday at 7am. The warning is for the Lake Tahoe Basin, north to Yuba Pass and south to Ebbetts Pass.

Wind slabs and snow slabs are a problem at and above tree line, according to the center.

"Natural and human triggered avalanches are expected today and should not be a surprise to backcountry travelers. Travel in or below avalanche terrain is not recommended. Large destructive avalanches may occur," the center said.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter storm

warning through 11am March 13 for the basin.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Squaw's Sullivan retires from skiing

By Associated Press

KVITFJELL, Norway – American skier Marco Sullivan ended his 15-year-long World Cup career on Sunday, a day after competing in his record 105th downhill race.



Marco
Sullivan

Sullivan competed in 167 World Cup races, including more downhills than any other American skier.

The Squaw Valley resident said: “I depart with a lifetime of memories and the fulfillment of my childhood dream to be one of the fastest ski racers in the world.”

Sullivan, 35, says he’s “beyond grateful to everybody who has helped and inspired me along the way. I am going to miss this life like crazy but can’t wait to see what the next chapter holds.”

He won slalom bronze at the 2000 junior world championships but soon specialized in speed events, winning his sole World Cup race in France in 2008.

Ganong in top 10 in downhill

By USSA

KVITFJELL, Norway – After a short delay, the fog cleared in Norway to leave a bluebird sky and perfect track for Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) to take his third Audi FIS Ski World Cup downhill podium in three races, finishing third.

“I skied really well and I’m happy with how I’m feeling on my skis and my movement and the continued podiums,” said Nyman after the race. “Three in a row, that’s kind of cool!”

Even with a bobble at the top, Nyman quickly made up time, nailing an aggressive line to take first from the early leader Canadian Manuel Osborne-Paradis. But it wasn’t quite enough to keep the lead, with Dominik Paris of Italy squeaking out his second downhill win in two races and 24-year-old Frenchman Valentin Giraud Moine surprising the fans to take second.

“It’s funny. Every race day I’ve been really nervous. I have to settle myself down and focus on the necessities,” said Nyman. “I know everything is working right—I know my body is right; I just have to perform.”

Behind Nyman, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) cracked the top 10 in his first race back after taking a few weeks off to nurse a nagging knee injury from earlier this season, taking eighth. Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) started his 105 World Cup downhill to take 18th. Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.)

was 20th and Tommy Biesemeyer (Keene, N.Y.) 36th.

Drought taking toll on Calif. wildlife

Amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal populations that depend on freshwater marsh, streamside habitat and wet meadows are struggling because of the drought, according to an assessment released Thursday by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Biologists ranked the vulnerability of the state's terrestrial species and gave top priority for additional monitoring and assistance to 48 species. The greatest concentrations of these high-risk populations are found in Southern California coastal, mountain and valley regions, the Sierra Nevada, Mojave Desert, Central Valley and the southern Cascade mountain range.

Researchers analyzed and assessed the vulnerability of more than 358 land species. Scientists then classified them into Priority I (most vulnerable) and Priority II (less vulnerable) categories. All of the species evaluated were threatened, endangered or were otherwise considered species of special concern before the drought impacted them.

In the Sierra Nevada and Northern California mountain ranges, amphibians such as yellow-legged frogs, Yosemite toads and Cascades frogs are struggling. Some species' tadpoles require multiple years to develop into juveniles and lack of suitable habitat has eliminated several years of breeding effort at once. Removal of non-native predatory fish from select areas as well as assistance with disease intervention,

translocations and reintroductions are underway to improve their chances of long-term survival.

Bowman on top of podium at World Cup halfpipe

By USSA

TIGNES, France – The U.S. scored three podium finishes at the final FIS World Cup halfpipe event of the season in Tignes, France. Maddie Bowman (Meyers) won the event for the women, while Annalisa Drew (Andover, Mass.) was second. Lyman Currier (Boulder, Colo.) took second for the men. Devin Logan (West Dover, Vt.) became the first freeskiier (halfpipe/slopestyle/big air) to win the FIS Freestyle Skiing overall crystal globe.

Bowman's win in Tignes marks her second World Cup victory on the four-stop tour for the 2015-16 season, and she finished third in the overall halfpipe standings. It was a dominant win for the Sochi Olympic champion, who landed all three of her runs.

"It feels great to be here in France and ski in front of such an amazing crowd," Bowman said. "I'm stoked that we're able to put up such a cool show for all the fans that gathered in Tignes tonight. I'm also very happy to finally finish the season healthy."

It was Drew's first career World Cup podium in her 20th start;

her run included back-to-back 900s and a 1080 to finish it off. Brita Sigourney (Carmel) was fifth and Devin Logan (West Dover, Vt.) was sixth. Logan, who competes in both slopestyle and halfpipe, made history by becoming the first freeskier (halfpipe/slopestyle/big air) to win the FIS Freestyle Skiing overall crystal globe.

“Being the first freeskier to win the overall World Cup globe feels pretty awesome,” Logan said. “I’ve been working really hard doing both slopestyle and halfpipe events and I’m feeling like I’m going in the right direction and overall I’m in a good spot, so I’m really happy.”

Currier finished just one point behind winner Kevin Rolland of France to score his first career World Cup halfpipe podium.

David Wise (Reno) finished just off the podium in fourth, Aaron Blunck (Crested Butte, Colo.) was fifth, Broby Leeds (Vail) was sixth, Alex Ferreira (Aspen, Colo.) was seventh and Kyle Smaime (South Lake Tahoe) was eighth.

Backyard feeders may be harmful to birds

By Ryan Sabalow, Sacramento Bee

Joy is the word that comes to mind as Margot Bach describes how it feels to look out her sliding-glass door and watch the songbirds fluttering into her yard to eat the seed she puts out for them.

“I love to see them around,” said Bach, 69. She had just finished filling the cylindrical feeder on the small concrete patio that pretty much fills the backyard of her Pocket-area home. A variety of songbirds twittered in the nearby trees.

“I love the sound they bring. I love the nests that they build.”

Yet Bach’s seeming act of kindness – a ritual shared by the estimated 50 million Americans who feed birds around their homes – has become something of a controversial practice in California in recent weeks. Last month, state wildlife officials said that feeding birds is “highly discouraged” following a disease outbreak that killed an estimated 1,000 songbirds statewide.

Read the whole story

Execs: Regulation could kill fantasy-sports innovation

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The Governor’s Gaming Policy Committee is on course to recommend some form of regulation for daily fantasy sports wagering, but don’t count on the leading companies in the industry to line up for licensing.

Executives of Draft Kings and FanDuel, the two largest daily fantasy sports industry players, told the 12-member committee on Monday that regulation could kill the innovation the technology of daily fantasy sports brings to its millions of players.

The committee, comprised of gaming industry leaders, state legislators and former and present industry regulators, made it clear that the state wants fantasy sports to be a part of Nevada's wagering offerings, but members also said they view it as gambling that must be regulated to protect consumers.

Gov. Brian Sandoval, who chaired the meeting, convened the committee to address daily fantasy sports, innovative gaming devices, skill-based games and other innovations in the rapidly evolving industry.

Read the whole story

Young skiers draw closer after death of friends in avalanche

By Pat Graham, AP

Erik Arvidsson and four of his ski team buddies crammed onto the tiny podium in Sochi, Russia. He was the newly crowned world junior downhill champion, yet they all celebrated as if they earned a piece of the gold medal.

They laughed. They held up their index fingers to announce, "We're No. 1." They posed for picture after picture.

Only something was painfully missing from the scene: Bryce Astle and Ronnie Berlack, two skiing prospects who were killed in an avalanche in Soelden, Austria, in January 2015.

Arvidsson also was caught in the slide that day and escaped. So did Drew Duffy and Addison Dvoracek.

Why them? It's a question they're making peace with through the support of Astle's and Berlack's parents. Their coaches and teammates, too.

A tragedy has bonded this young squad – the next generation of American racers – even tighter together.

“Every day, when I look at a course or the hill, I find something that I know one of those two guys would be psyched about,” said Arvidsson, 19, who won the world junior downhill title last week on the same venue as the 2014 Sochi Games. “We’ve been through something traumatic together. We lean on each other. We hold each other up.”

It remains difficult for Arvidsson to talk about the avalanche. For a harrowing moment, he was stuck in the path of the rushing snow. Somehow, he was able to make it off to the side.

All the support has helped.

“It’s definitely still a struggle,” said Arvidsson, who’s from the San Francisco area and grew up skiing in Squaw Valley and Bear Valley. “But their parents were like, ‘Guys, I know this is hard and this feels hard, but I definitely promise you that to live out their legacy is to keep going every day.’”

“I think about them in every moment. I think about them when I’m skiing. I think about them when I’m hanging out with my friends. I think about them when I’m (racing). That makes me happy and hopefully that makes Bryce and Ronnie happy.”

This is how much Astle and Berlack mean to this team: They were named to the squad this season. During a ceremony in November, family and friends gathered in Copper Mountain, Colorado, to remember the talented duo. Berlack’s ashes were spread along the course at Copper’s speed center.

They told stories – lots of stories. Some were skiing related

("Ronnie was sure of what he wanted and he wasn't afraid of talking about it," Arvidsson said), but most were a stroll down memory lane (Olympic and slalom world champion Mikaela Shiffrin recalled Berlack giving her a rainbow-colored hair tie as a Secret Santa gift).

To honor his friend, Dvoracek wears a necklace with a pendant containing some of Astle's ashes. Arvidsson has stickers with the initials "BA" and "RB" plastered on his ski helmet ("Every single time I put on my helmet, I look at that," he said).

And Duffy had a teammate paint the initials on the front of his helmet, along with the slogan "Fly On." The back of the helmet features the tongue and lips logo of the Rolling Stones, Berlack's favorite band. Next to it is Astle's favorite mantra: "Good vibes only."

Duffy was given a jacket by Berlack's father that Berlack used to wear featuring the Rolling Stones logo. Duffy wore it on the podium when he won the super-G at the U.S. Alpine championships last spring.

"Two summers ago, we were all really close – just a good group to hang out with," said Duffy, 20, of Warren, Vermont. "We were friends in training, friends just hanging out. After January of last year, it was tough for all of us. But it brought us together."

The tight-knit crew also includes Sam Morse and Patrick Kenney, along with Kipling Weisel and newcomer Florian Szwebel. They do quite a bit together, from dinners to mountain biking to pickup basketball games to playing hockey.

Recently, the group was in Lake Placid, New York, for a NorAm race and checked out the rink where Team USA memorably upset the Soviet Union on its way to a gold medal at the 1980 Winter Olympics.

The closeness of Mike Eruzione & Co. inspired them. The racers

carried that sort of camaraderie with them to Sochi for the junior world ski championships. For inspiration going into the downhill race, they played an audio clip of coach Herb Brooks' speech before the "Miracle on Ice" game.

Arvidsson went out and captured downhill gold. It was part of a banner day for the Americans, who placed four in the top 10 – the first time that's happened for the U.S. at world juniors.

"Since the passing of Ronnie and Bryce, I've spent a lot of time with this group," U.S. men's coach Sasha Rearick said. "They push each other. They joke around. They challenge each other. It's one of the coolest groups I've ever had a chance to be around.

"I'm very encouraged with their ability to bounce back from such a tragedy."

Whether it's in the starting gate or just enjoying a day on the slopes, Arvidsson constantly thinks about Astle and Berlack. Same with Duffy.

"I know that those guys would want us all to keep doing what we're doing – go fast every day," Duffy said. "That's what they would've done. That's what they would've wanted us to do."

Survivor of deadly Alpine Meadows avalanche recounts

five-day ordeal

By Bran Branan, Sacramento Bee

MAMMOTH LAKES – Anna Allen survived the most deadly avalanche in U.S. ski history, fighting through frostbite and severe dehydration during the five days she was buried beneath heavy snow and debris at Alpine Meadows.

The March 31, 1982, avalanche took the lives of seven people, including Allen's boyfriend and three of her colleagues at the Truckee-area ski resort. Allen attributes her survival to her faith in the search and rescue system, but understands that luck played a role. She was in a building when the great wave of snow slammed into it; the building was crushed but the debris helped create an air pocket that saved her.

In the more typical avalanche scenario – a victim encased in snow – Allen would not have survived. According to one widely cited Canadian study, people buried in an avalanche are unlikely to survive if not rescued within 20 minutes, because of the dangers posed by trauma and suffocation.

The return of significant snowfall to the Sierra this season, after four years of below-average precipitation, has brought skiers back to the mountains – and raised the risks for avalanches. Leaders of Sierra search and rescue teams say stories such as Allen's have given them greater motivation to continue intensive recovery efforts for avalanche victims even when circumstances suggest they are dead.

Such determination was on display in late January, when crews from across the state braved storms and high avalanche risk for five days as they looked for 23-year-old Carson May, a Sugar Bowl ski instructor who went missing.

Read the whole story