Primal Quest athletes endure snakes, rappelling with bikes



Team Journey, at the time in third place, rappel with their bikes down the cliff. Photo/Provided

By Molly Hucklebridge

It’s been a long day for the Primal Quest Tahoe adventure racers. Wednesday night, after a trek down Heavenly Mountain Resort and a six-mile paddle on Lake Tahoe, racers biked into the night from Cave Rock to the Tahoe Rim Trail. They checked in at Star Lake and continued on to Lover’s Leap.

Wednesday at 3pm, endurance racers took off from the Heavenly gondola on the 550-mile adventure race. Coed teams of four must navigate to 31 checkpoints on a multi-sport adventure throughout the Sierra.

Team GODZone from New Zealand, one of the two teams in the lead, pushed their bikes to the top of Lover's Leap at 7:30am only to realize that the checkpoint was below them. They strategically descended the summit and accidentally skipped the designated marker. Making a quick decision, they abandoned their bikes and scurried back up to the checkpoint.

Team Bones, not far behind GODZone, found themselves in the same predicament with their bikes more than 1,000 feet below where they needed to be. So they hiked back up. After stamping their passports, both teams rappelled back down to retrieve their mountain bikes and head cross country toward Kirkwood.



Steve Bannar, co-medical director for Primal Quest and orthopedic surgeon at Tahoe Center for Orthopedics, keeps an eye on racers as they kayak on Tahoe. Photo/Provided

Five hours later at about 1:30pm, three teams – Team Journey, Team Tahoe, and Team NorCal – arrived at the Lover's Leap

checkpoint within 10 minutes of each other and their bikes in hand. They all faced a different challenge: rappel down the cliff with the bikes on their backs so they could bike to the next checkpoint. One participant exclaimed he "hated this bike" another shared he had "never carried $4,000 [his bike] and 30 extra pounds down a mountain."

Team GODZones and Team Bones continue to hold the lead.

On Primal Quest, teams must supply their own food and gear. The only race support available is medical support. More than 40 volunteers are providing medical support, including 21 orthopedic physicians, nurses, athletic trainers, and physical therapists from Barton's Tahoe Center for Orthopedics.

Rattlesnakes have been spotted, but so far no participants have experienced any injuries.

Here is a **tracking map** to know where the racers are and who they are.

Molly Hucklebridge works for Barton Health.

App allows beach-goers to be citizen scientists

The UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center has launched a smartphone app called Citizen Science Tahoe to encourage beach-goers to let scientists know what they see.

The goal is to better understand conditions around the lake.

The app may be download at CitizenScienceTahoe.org. It was created by Shahzeb Khan, a UC Davis freshman studying computer

science.

Citizen scientists may enter what they see at the beach, from algae to wildlife – the good and the bad. Each observation automatically records the user's location and the date and time. Users may also add photos and comments.

First flowers may have 'bloomed' in water, not on land

By Amina Khan, Los Angeles Times

By analyzing more than 1,000 fossil remains, scientists have discovered that an unassuming, 130-million-year-old water-dwelling plant could be one of Earth's first flowering plants.

Montsechia vidalii, described in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, could change many theories about how angiosperms, or plants with the ability to produce flowers, first came to be.

"Because it is so ancient and is totally aquatic," the study authors wrote, this extinct freshwater plant "raises questions centered on the very early evolutionary history of flowering plants."

Flowers are a relatively recent addition to the plant family tree; until they emerged, plants managed to reproduce without growing many-petaled lures for nectar-seeking insects.

Read the whole story

SUP races, music at Tahoe Paradise Park

Tahoe Paradise Park will be the site for Music in the Park and Tahoe Games Standup Paddle Races on Aug. 23 and Sept. 13.

Standup paddleboard races will run from 2-4pm with a custom course built across Lake Baron. Free live music will follow the paddleboard races with Kanekoa and Taking Root performing from 4-8pm.

In addition to live music and recreation, the events will highlight local vendors, artists, free
bike valet and a beer/wine garden. Proceeds from the beer/wine garden will benefit Sierra-at-Tahoe
Education Foundation.

Benefits of bats subject of presentation

There will be a live bat presentation at Taylor Creek Visitors Center on Aug. 21 at 8pm.

Learn about the importance of bats in the ecosystem, such as keeping those pesky mosquitoes populations down.

The bats will be projected onto a large screen so people can see there delicate structures. All bats are certified as non-releasable by California Department of Fish & Wildlife and the

U.S. Department of Agriculture. Injury precludes them from surviving in the wild.

NorCal Bats strive to teach the environmental benefits of bats and put to flight the fears and myths that lead to destruction of roosts and colonies.

Taylor Creek Visitor Center is located approximately three miles north of South Lake Tahoe on the lakeside of Highway 89.

The $5 donation benefits the Tahoe Heritage Foundation.

Drought sets up ’emergency situation’ for Calif. trees

By Lisa M. Krieger, San Jose Mercury News

The rush to save water is claiming legions of unintended casualties – California’s trees.

Specimens that have stood tall and strong for decades are stressed and dying because of the drought, as Californians turn off spigots to comply with Gov. Jerry Brown’s mandatory conservation measures.

All over the state – in yards, on median strips and along freeways – ghostly sheaves of brown leaves will be an enduring symbol of the drought, long after winter rains resume. Their loss will reduce habitat, shade and property values, experts say.

So many trees are dying in the fourth year of this historic drought that some cities have begun delivering truckloads of water in an effort to save them.

Read the whole story

Primal Quest athletes descending on Tahoe

Primal Quest starts Wednesday or Thursday on the South Shore. The endurance racers do not know the start date or time, or where they are going for more than 450 miles.

This nonstop, unsupported race attracts adventurers from as far away as New Zealand.

Before the race begins, participants receive a sparse schedule and comprehensive packing list. Course details, including the start time, are selectively released as the event progresses. Coed teams of four will have to use advanced navigation skills to determine their route while trekking, mountain biking, flat water paddling, river paddling, ascending and rappelling, and caving.

Barton Health has donated all the supplies and will offer medical expertise throughout the course. Approximately 35 doctors, nurses, and medical personnel from across the United States are volunteering to provide care 24 hours a day.

Participants must carry their own food and gear. At each transition area, teams may seek medical attention and collect personal supply caches and equipment. The racers do not know the number of transitions or where they are located.

Eleven teams will be participating in the event. The first teams are expected to finish in four days and the course closes on the ninth day.

Sports shop to host trail running demo day

With races such as the Western States 100 Endurance Run, Tahoe Rim Trail Endurance Runs, and Tahoe 200, Lake Tahoe is a hotbed for trail running.

However, it is also safe to say that trail running can be hard on the body and lead to injuries. The right footwear can make a huge difference in keeping the stress down on a runner’s body.

Hoka One One and Altra Running will be at Alpenglow Sports in Tahoe City for a two-part trail running demo weekend on Aug. 22-23.

While the event is free, a credit card is required to demo shoes. The event is designed for participants to pick-up shoes, take them to their favorite trailhead, and put them to the test. Shoes will be available to demo from 9am-3pm.

For more info, call 530.583.6917.

10,000 acres in Sierra Nevada protected



Lyons Ridge was purchased by the Northern Sierra Partnership, American River Conservancy and Nature Conservancy. Photo/American River Conservancy

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

More than 10,000 acres of scenic meadows, forests and trout streams in the Sierra Nevada 10 miles west of Lake Tahoe have been preserved in a deal in which environmentalists hope to prove that thinning out overgrown forests can increase California's water supply.

The Northern Sierra Partnership, an environmental group based in Palo Alto and founded by longtime Silicon Valley leaders Jim and Becky Morgan, joined with the Nature Conservancy and the American River Conservancy to buy the land for $10.1 million from Simorg West Forests, a timber company based in Atlanta.

The deal, which closed Aug. 5, preserves a landscape south of Interstate 80 in Placer County adjacent to Granite Chief

Wilderness in the Tahoe National Forest. The land contains more than 20 miles of blue ribbon trout streams.

Read the whole story

Options for disabled adventurers on rise in Calif.



Adaptive Action Sports snowboard coach Chris Koeppe gives Gary Nolte a few pointers as they head down the run. Photo/LTN file

By Ben Egel and Brenna Lyles, Sacramento Bee

Like most state recreation areas, Nevada County's South Yuba River Park has plenty of trails to hike on. Unlike most others, though, it also has a path to roll on.

About half of the gently sloped, 2.5-mile Independence Trail on the west side of Highway 49 has been renovated for wheelchairs, part of a statewide move to open up rivers, parks and other outdoor spaces to easier use by people with

disabilities.

The accessibility push is also being taken on by private travel outfits who have designed packages for the disabled.

In its 37 years of operation, Sacramento whitewater rafting outfitter W.E.T. River Trips has accommodated people with visual and auditory impairments, as well as those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Other local organizations let disabled adventure-seekers try their hand at rock climbing, rope courses, boating, water-skiing and four-wheel off-roading in the warmer months, as well as skiing and snowboarding in the winter.

In the settlement to the 2005 lawsuit Tucker v. State of California Department of Parks & Recreation, the state promised to improve parks access, including creating wheelchair-accessible trails, signs for the blind and captioned educational videos for those with hearing impairments.

Read the whole story