Enthusiasm surrounds pro cycling in Tahoe

By Susan Wood

With cowbells clanking and a Kentucky-Derbyish announcer yelling in the background, history was made Saturday in South Lake Tahoe with the Women's Amgen Tour of California wrapping up its second day.

Leah Kirchmann of Canada, riding for Optum Pro Cycling, won the stage of the largest and first tour in the United States – inspiring hundreds of little girls and cycling enthusiasts in her path. Coming in second was U.S. rider Lauren Komanski, who also holds the distinction of being the yellow jersey winner for overall best time after two days. Trixi Worrack of Germany placed third.

They race in Sacramento on Sunday.

Front and center of the commotion at the finish line on May 9 was Joanna Lilly, a recreational rider who brought her two daughters, Alice, 7, and Zella, 5, to watch the spectacle.

"I encourage them to do every sport we have to offer. They ride. They ski. They play soccer," Lilly told *Lake Tahoe News.* The enthusiasm was marked by spectators banging on the barricades.

It was a day of encouragement all around. It was also a day to propel women's cycling a step closer to being on an even playing field with the men and a day to place Lake Tahoe on the proverbial publicity map.



South Lake Tahoe resident Tina Hughes, from left, Amanda Siegel of Sacramento and Stephen Katana – fiancé of Stage 1 winner Katie Hall – on Apache Drive in Meyers on May 9. Photo/Trish McGraw

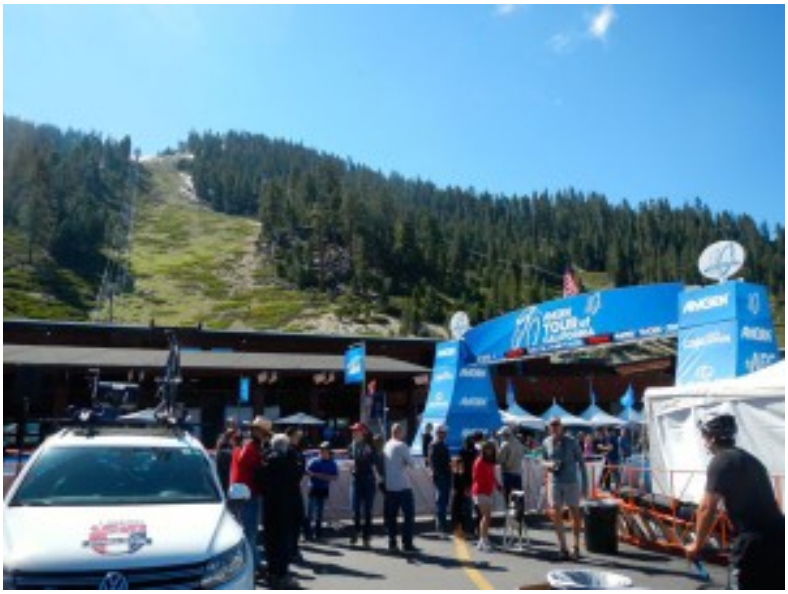
The South Shore loop was marked by a blink-and-you-miss-it blur of 70 riders who whizzed by for two laps between Heavenly Mountain Resort's California Base Lodge, down Pioneer Trail to Meyers and back.

About a dozen people had gathered on Highway 50 in the heart of Meyers with many others up Apache Road to see the riders snake through town.

Kyle Anton of Meyers brought his two young daughters on a walk to perch themselves on a rock near Steve's Transmission.

"It's important for them to see women athletes to give them encouragement and to show them they can do whatever they want to do," he said.

When asked if Dylan, 6, had ever seen a professional, competitive race like this, she blurted out: “On TV.”



A day earlier snow covered the slopes at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Dickson Brown of Stateline, who makes a point of catching the Tour de France on television, was not going to miss the up-close-and-personal view of a large-scale cycling event in his backyard.

“To have something like this, people should come out to support it. A lot of people thought: ‘Oh, this is only the girls,’ but women’s sports need to be supported as much as men’s sports because they don’t get the money or the limelight the men do. They’re dedicated and give up a lot of their time,” he preached.

Brown was so eager to see the race he parked along the route early, an hour before the ride started at 10:30am and waited for friends. They were headed up Apache to get a view of the women climbing.

“You can get a good idea of who’s riding well and who’s not riding well,” he said based on the riders’ ascent.

Graeme Holdsworth wanted to get a clear view of how his friend, rider Jo Hogan, was doing by preparing to also ride his bike up Apache.

“It’s a good route. It’s picturesque, but since it’s snow country, the road surface is in not that good of shape,” said the Australian. He rode the route earlier this week.

When asked if he could keep up with his professional rider friend, he declared a resounding: “No.”

Across the highway, John Hoefer felt right at home with his lone lawn chair – living the nostalgia of days gone by trying to keep up with his boys.

“My sons were all bike racers,” he said.



Teams line up for the second stage that had riders race a loop on the South Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Over at Ski Run Boulevard leading up to the end of the first lap, Wendy Mains of Roseville expected a larger crowd. She showed up at Pioneer Trail and Ski Run with her Sacramento-area friends.

“I had no idea this was going on (before we got to Tahoe).

This is great. We walked everywhere expecting to see more people," she said.

Her friend, Dana Eagen of Loomis, agreed, wondering if it's just a late-bloomer thing for Americans to appreciate a sport that is so big overseas.

"This is typical of Americans trying to learn a European sport. It's like trying to teach football to a Spaniard," he said. "This sport is all about Europe."

That trend is something the Women's Cycling Association would like to do something about.

"History is being made, and we're making a powerful statement – that women belong in big time stage racing. When you look at this, it's a huge step in the right direction. There's still work to be done, but we're encouraged Amgen stepped up to the plate and expanded the women's race," Jill Gass, a coach from Revolution Coaching, told *Lake Tahoe News.*

She was especially enthusiastic about a slim margin between the leaders.

"I thought the finish would be more spread out. The women's race should be super exciting (by the end of Sunday)," she said.



The peloton at Portal Drive and Highway 89. Photo/Kim Wyatt

Gass was joined by Inga Thompson, a three-time Olympic women's cyclist, Tour de France winner and 10-time U.S. national

champion. Thompson expected more advancement from the sport in the last few decades, but she's happy with any progress. She retired from racing in 1993.

"Women's racing has gone downhill through the years, so it's big to see Amgen bring back the three-day race. We're rebuilding from 30 years ago. I applaud it," Thompson told

Riders a bit younger were at least encouraged to see people.

"This is one of the best supported races I've ever been in," Alison Tetrick of Petaluma said, while resting after the race with her winning teammates. Optum had just won the stage for Day 2.

"The crowd was large and boisterous," she said.

Perhaps support is relative.

"I feel like not many people knew about it," Sacramento rider Amanda Seigle said after the race. Her friend and fellow rider, Tina Hughes, shared how a few of her South Lake Tahoe friends and neighbors didn't know the race was going on.

The duo would like to see the women's race staged in conjunction with the men to ensure a larger turnout.

"But this was a nice boost to women's racing," said Seigle, who rides for Jakroo Racing.

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Volunteers sought for

Snapshot Day

More than a hundred trained volunteers will continue a 15-year tradition with a one-day hands-on effort to capture a snapshot of the health of Lake Tahoe’s watershed on May 16 at Lake Tahoe Community College.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe will host Snapshot Day on the South Shore with presentations by Richard Booth from Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and Krissy Harman from Tahoe Resource Conservation District.

South Shore monitoring will complement efforts happening simultaneously throughout the Truckee River Watershed from its tributaries upstream of Lake Tahoe to its end at Pyramid Lake in Nevada. Incline Village General Improvement District will host Snapshot Day on the North Shore, Truckee River Watershed Council will coordinate activities in Truckee, and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection will host monitoring efforts in Reno.

Volunteers will gather at 9am on May 16 at LTCC. To volunteer, contact Savannah Rudroff with the League at 530.541.5388 or savannah@keeptahoeblue.org.

Tree planters to attempt to set world record

The Sugar Pine Foundation is partnering with Tahoe Donner Forestry to conduct a tree planting as a part of the

Sustainable Forestry Initiative attempt to set a world record.

Together with 40 groups across North America an estimated 200,000 trees will be planted in one hour. The local goal is to plant more than 200 Western white pines at Tahoe Donner in the old Donner Ridge Fire scar.

Meet at 15024 Glacier Way off Skislope in Truckee at 9:30am May 20. There is a parking lot on the left that ends with a gate. People will carpool with those who bring four-wheel drive vehicles up a dirt road for about 10 minutes. People will be at different locations in groups of 25 to 100.

The planting will be from 10-11am.

RSVP to Martin at martin@sugarpinefoundation.org. For more info, call Maria at 650.814.9565.

Women fight to win Lake Tahoe cycling race



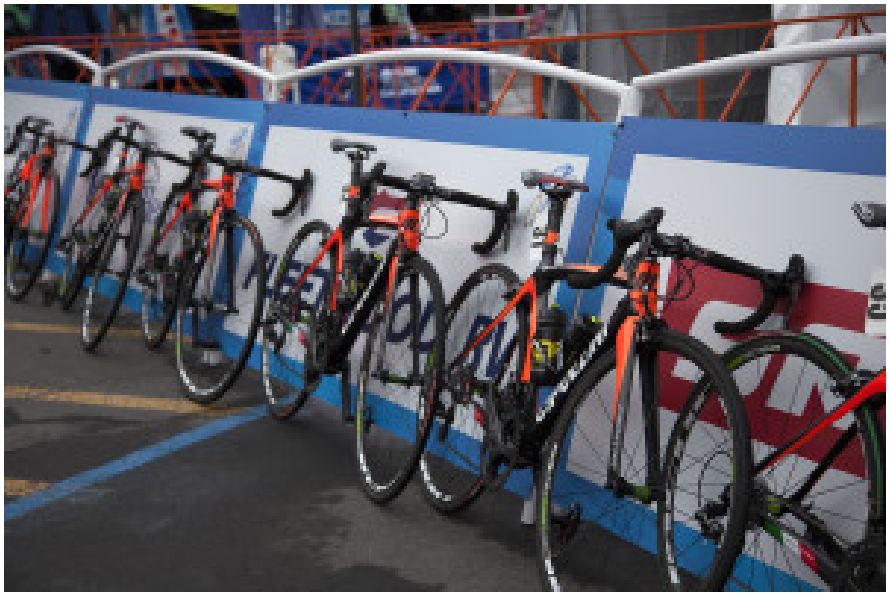
The peloton makes its way through Cave Rock on May 8. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Mother Nature teased Amgen Tour of California race officials Friday morning as temps hovered just above freezing and snow danced in the air. As the 11am start time got closer, the clouds parted to show blue sky and the requisite 45-degree mark had been reached.

Eighty-two elite women racers left Heavenly Mountain Resort's

California Lodge on May 8 on a 74.5-mile trek around Lake Tahoe, with an elevation gain of 5,300 feet. They rode through South Lake Tahoe, turned right onto Highway 89 to ride around the lake (72 miles) and then up Keller Road with its 15 percent grade, to finish at the California Lodge. (Cycling events go clockwise because it's safer to make right turns.)



Elite racing bikes easily cost five figures. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

This is the first time a women's cycling event of this caliber has been staged in the United States.

As the teams each signed in and were introduced before the start, Ali Tetrick of the Optum team said, "I think at the finish you will see a small group. You will see who wants to sprint after climbing that hill."

She was correct in her prediction.



Riders enjoy views of Lake Tahoe for much of the competition. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

“That last hill will turn riders inside out,” the announcer boomed as the pack thinned out in the last few miles. “They are all hoping they have enough gas in the tank to make it to the finish. You thought the Donner Party was bad; this is ridiculous.”

Katie Hall of team United Health Care crossed the line first with a time of 3:10.49. Rounding out the podium were Alena Amialiusik of Velocio-SRAM and Lauren Komanski with Twenty 16, both with a time of 3:10.51.



Top riders from each team on the start line. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Sarah Storey (Pearl Izumi) started a breakaway and was followed by Allison Beveridge (Canadian national team). They pulled 1:25 minutes ahead of the peloton until they were caught at the top of Spooner Summit.

With 7 kilometers to go, all the major teams had a rider in the breakaway. One by one they started to fall back.

Earning the best young rider jersey was Hannah Barnes (UHC); Queen of the Mountain went to Storey; and the sprint leader was Beveridge.



The gear, the bike and the rider are lightweight. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Dealing with the elements

The elevation and temperature are not issues most of these cyclists have to deal with on a regular basis.

Lauren Stephens with team Tibco said, “I’m used to riding in 100-degree heat, and 100 percent humidity.” The topped ranked rider in the United States in 2014 calls Texas home.

Storey said, “We had a lot of preparation with the altitude.”

The British athlete is already well decorated with Olympic cycling and swimming medals from the 1996 Paralympic Games in Atlanta. (When she was born her left arm was entangled with the umbilical cord in the womb, which left her left hand unable to function.)



Rhae Shaw and her BMW team scouted the course in March. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

The BMW team came to Tahoe in March to check out the courses. It was beautiful weather for their weeklong training – nothing like this week's weather.

While May is always iffy weather in Lake Tahoe, it felt more like winter than spring on Friday. More snow covered Gunbarrel than has been on that ski slope in the last month. All morning clouds shrouded Mount Tallac.



Cycling is a team and individual sport. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

The cold had most of the riders covered head to toe, with only a few braving shorts.

“We know mountain weather. Anything can happen,” Rhae Shaw of the BMW team told *Lake Tahoe News* before the start.

“It’s very difficult to ride at this elevation,” Shaw added. She said Colorado is the other area that gives cyclists a bit of a challenge when it comes to altitude.

Saturday’s forecast is a high of 61 degrees in South Lake Tahoe.



Cyclists pause for the national anthem. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Local impact

The South Shore in 2011 tried to host the men's first stage. Mother Nature wasn't as forgiving then and the race was canceled because of snow.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, was hesitant to put a dollar figure on the economic impact a race of this magnitude has on the region.

"More for us it's about the awareness of the destination," Chaplin told *Lake Tahoe News.* "We have great cycling. Elite athletes like to train here."



A team Optum rider prepares for the start of the first phase. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

While the North Shore does not have a start or finish like when the men's race was here and Northstar and Squaw Valley were part of the itinerary, it is still involved.

Sandy Evans Hall, executive director of the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, was on hand for the start of Friday's race.

"They will get to see the entire lake. It showcases what we have," Hall told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We are really focused on human powered sports."



Katie Hall, center, celebrates her win May 8 with Alena Amialiusik, left, and Lauren Komanski. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Even though there isn't live television coverage of the women's races in Lake Tahoe, it is possible to stream the events. And footage from these events will be used during the men's race this coming week.

Plus, it gives locals a chance to see a professional sporting event for free. More than 100 people gathered near the Y on Friday as the cyclists made the turn onto Highway 89. Cheering crowds were in groups throughout the race as well as many more who gathered at the finish line.

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Notes:

· Stage 2 for the women begins May 9 at 10:30am at Heavenly Mountain Resort's California Lodge.

· The 49.7-mile course goes into Meyers, will be two circles, with an elevation gain of 3,300 feet.

· Pioneer Trail will be closed from Ski Run Boulevard to Highway 50 in Meyers from 9:30am-1pm.

· The finish at the Cal Lodge is expected to be at 12:30pm.

· For more info, go online.

· There are two sites where people may stream the event live. Here is the first and the second.

Homeowners urged to get rid of junipers

Junk the Junipers is a Nevada Wildfire Awareness Month event designed to get people to rid their yards of this highly flammable plant.

The Nevada Division of Forestry is hosting Junk the Junipers on May 16 from 8am-1pm at the division's office, 885 Eastlake Blvd. in Washoe Valley. A second event will be hosted by the Bureau of Land Management and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District on May 23 at the Silver Lake Fire Station, 11525 Red Rock Road, Reno. Residents are encouraged to bring their junipers, pines, rabbitbrush, sagebrush and other woody vegetation to be chipped for free.

Vegetation chipped at the event will be used as mulch in

various locations. Materials that will not be accepted for chipping are: construction lumber, hazardous materials, lawn clippings, sod, dirt-infested vegetation and tree stumps or limbs greater than 8 inches in diameter.

For more information, contact Sonya Sistare at sistares@unce.unr.edu or 775.336.0271.

Equestrians to join Tahoe Rim Trail Challenge

Sunshine Tahoe is sponsoring the first equine team for the 2015 Tahoe Rim Trail Challenge.

The third annual Tahoe Rim Trail Challenge is open for enrollment. The challenge will take participants on an exploration around the rim on six featured outings highlighting something unique to Lake Tahoe. Depending upon the trail and season, people may hike, bike, ride horseback, ski or snowshoe to complete each challenge site all in one year.

For information about the TRT Challenge, call 775.298.4485 or email info@tahoerimtrail.org. To join the equestrian group or for questions, email sunshinetahoeriders@gmail.com.

Cavendish, Armstrong highlight Tour of California

By Associated Press

Mark Cavendish and Kristin Armstrong will highlight the Tour of California.

Eighty-four women representing 14 teams will begin two days of racing Friday in the Sierra Nevada with a 74-mile counterclockwise loop around Lake Tahoe in the new women's three-day stage race.

Poor weather, including possible snow, is forecast Friday and Saturday.

Lisa Brennauer of Germany, the current world time trial titlist, and American Lauren Stephens, who claimed the national racing series last year, are the top contenders.

Armstrong, now in her second retirement comeback, will join 24 women competing in Big Bear Lake next Thursday in individual time trial to coincide with stage 6 of the men's race.

"I am really excited about the Tahoe course," Stephens said. "All the climbing. They definitely look like difficult stages. The Sacramento stage will be a day for the fans. It will be such a short circuit, the fans can watch the whole race."

Cavendish of Britain, who has five stages in the Tour of California among his more than 150 career wins, will be favored in the opening stage of the eight-day men's race Sunday in Sacramento. The race ends May 17 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

The 126.2-mile men's opening stage will start at the same location as the end day of the women's stage race, a 34-mile circuit race. The 18-team field will ride through numerous

Central Valley cities before returning to Sacramento for an afternoon finish.

Robert Gesink of the Netherlands, a climbing specialist who won the overall race in 2012, is the only returning titlist. American Lawson Craddock will compete after finishing third last year, 1 minute and 48 seconds behind titlist Bradley Wiggins of Britain.

Wiggins, the 2012 Tour de France winner, is not entered.

Marcel Kittel of Germany withdrew from the event Thursday with a lingering shoulder ailment. His team will have seven riders and the starting field will be reduced to 143.

Stand up paddleboard race on Donner Lake

The 2015 Tahoe Cup Paddle Racing Series officially kicks off on Memorial Day weekend with the Donner Lake Race on May 23.

The first of a three-event series, the Donner Lake Race is open to all paddling craft of all ability levels, from the recreational paddler to the SUP elite racer.

Register online or the day of race at 8am.

The race starts at 9am from the West End Beach (pavilion area) in a 5-mile race around the shoreline of Donner Lake.

The start/finish area is open to spectators and will include a free demos provided by Surftech and Willard’s Sport Shop of Tahoe City.

The Tahoe Cup Paddle Racing Series is presented by the Lake Tahoe Paddleboard Association. It features the Donner Lake Race on May 23, Jam From The Dam on July 11, and Tahoe Fall Classic on Sept. 13.

USFS going after invasive weeds

Don’t be worried if someone with a backpack is spraying weeds on U.S. Forest Service property.

The agency is trying to eradicate, control and contain known infestations of invasive plants in the Lake Tahoe Basin by using chemical treatment. The work will occur at about 70 sites between May 15 and Sept. 30.

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

Crews will treat infestations on Forest Service urban lots on Ralph Drive, Terry Lane, Ski Run Boulevard and Mt. Rainier Drive in South Lake Tahoe; and on Sugar Pine Drive in Incline Village; Marge Court in Zephyr Cove; and Pine Street in Stateline.

Herbicides used in treatments include Rodeo, Milestone and Telar. Crews will apply the product with backpack sprayers and other hand held tools. Caution signs will be posted in treatment areas and remain for at least 48 hours after application. Orange and black caution tape will mark the

boundary around each treatment area. A marker dye will be used to identify locations that have been sprayed.

Access to treatment sites will be restricted during and after the application.

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

Cyclists train for race despite threat of snow



Cyclists on May 5 get acclimated to Lake Tahoe in preparation for the May 8-9 races. Photo/LTN

Some of the 84 racers who will compete in the Amgen Tour of California Women's Race this week in South Lake Tahoe have been training on local roads.

The 14 teams of top professional women cyclists are set to

race Friday and Saturday, with the start and finish at the California Lodge of Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The problem is Mother Nature may have something to say about it.

Like 2011 when the men were set to race from the South Shore, snow is in the forecast. The white stuff ended up canceling the South Shore leg.

Carol Chaplin, executive director of the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, told *Lake Tahoe News* there are contingency plans in place for Friday if the forecast for snow and rain come true. It’s possible the start could be moved to the afternoon.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report