South Shore snowboarders struggle in halfpipe

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

ASPEN – The future of snowboarding is Chloe Kim.

Mere minutes after a brutal practice crash, the 14-year-old on Saturday toppled Kelly Clark's dynastic halfpipe dominance. Spinning technical combos with a pair of 900s, a switch method and a switch 720 with floating amplitude, Kim's final run in the best-of-three contest earned 92 points to beat Clark's first-run 90.

Last year Kim was the youngest athlete to win an X Games medal with her halfpipe silver. Saturday night she became the youngest Winter X Games gold medalist. She was too young to go to Sochi and she is too young to compete in the World Cup circuit.

Rivals like Hannah Teter of Meyers and Elena Hight of South Lake Tahoe struggled to land clean runs that could thwart the queen of snowboarding's performance.

Read the whole story

Wise unable to keep X Game gold medal streak alive

By USSA

ASPEN, Colo. – X Games officially wrapped up on Sunday

afternoon with ski superpipe. Fittingly, after four days of nonstop action, the final competition of the 2015 X Games lived up to the billing. With it all said and done, Canada's Simon d'Artois won the superpipe gold in dramatic fashion, Kevin Rolland of France took silver, and hometown hero Alex Ferreira (Aspen) grabbed bronze.

David Wise (Reno) did not win a fourth consecutive X Games gold medal in superpipe, taking fourth in Sunday's final.

"This is going to be a good year for me. It's really nice to do a couple of high-level events, enjoy skiing, and spend the rest of the time with my family. The difference between an Olympics year and an X Games year is that X Games is the biggest event of the season. This is the biggest contest of the year for us, which is why we throw it all on the line," Wise said.

On Friday evening, 16 skiers had three chances to make it to Jan. 25 final. The stacked field was cut in half with Gus Kenworthy (Telluride, Colo.) sitting in the top spot after the elimination round.

The caliber of skiing displayed Sunday night was incredible. The Canadian halfpipe specialist stomped all three of his runs through the superpipe during Sunday's final, but he needed his final attempt to solidify the gold medal.

A score of 93 for d'Artois edged Rolland's 92.33 and Ferreira's 91.66. While the Canadian gold medalist and French silver medalist were deserving of their podium spots, Ferreira put on a show in front of his hometown fans. The 20-year-old Aspenite won his second consecutive X Games superpipe bronze medal with a clutch performance.

"I don't even know what to think right now; it was a crazy day," said an elated Ferreira. "I didn't land my first two runs and had to put it all out on the line for my third one and it ended up working out. I couldn't be happier. All my

friends and family are out here and I’m in front of my hometown.”

Americans finally embracing Nordic skiing

By Stephanie Pearson, Outdoor

Nordic skiing began about 8,000 years ago in Russia but it’s taken until now for the sport to start really catching on in the U.S. The proof is everywhere: Citizen races are booking out months in advance, alpine resorts are grooming new classical and skate-skiing trails (an offshoot of Nordic Skiing that developed in the ’70s), and Americans are finally competing with the powerhouse Europeans.

Earlier this month, Liz Stephen placed fifth in Italy’s multi-stage Tour de Ski, the highest result ever for an American. And shortly after that, she came in second in the Cross Country World Cup.

Why is this cardio-intense sport, formerly practiced only by diehard Nordic fanatics, being embraced by the masses? One reason could be that it kills winter depression and improves both mind and body health. According to the soon to be published “Birkie Health Survey,” a study of 24,000 past participants in the American Birkebeiner, the largest cross-country ski marathon in North America, it’s the best sport there is for both physical and mental well-being.

Read the whole story

River otters make a splash at Lake Tahoe



A river otter finds plenty to dine on at Lake Tahoe. Photos/Bob Sweatt

Two river otters were spotted Jan. 24 playing on the ice at Tahoe Keys in South Lake Tahoe.

“Two otters put on a show for about an hour and a half, diving, resurfacing and climbing up on the ice to peacefully eat their prize,” Bob Sweatt told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Each otter ate at least three large fish.”

It’s rare to see an otter at Lake Tahoe, though they have existed in various locations through the years. They’ve even been seen at Fallen Leaf Lake.



Wildlife at Lake Tahoe.

Normally they are found at lower elevations in the Sierra, but always close to shore.

They will eat fish and crawdads in Tahoe. While they don’t pose a threat to people or other land animals, humans and dogs can scare them off.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Scheduling conflict infuriates freeskiers



Reno freeskier David Wise trains at Northstar. Photo/Provided

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

ASPEN – David Wise of Reno battles gravity as an Olympic and X Games gold medal halfpipe skier. Now he's battling an equally stubborn force: the International Ski Federation, or FIS.

Widely embraced as the world's best pipe skier, Wise lost his world champion title last week when he, like most of the world's top freeskiers and snowboarders, opted to attend Aspen's Winter X Games instead of the FIS world championships in Austria.

The 24-year-old Wise, who skis for Northstar, blasted the international federation for refusing to reschedule the world championship halfpipe contest – which was put on the calendar five years ago – to accommodate the athletes whose careers have flourished thanks to the X Games.

The scheduling conflict is a symptom of a larger issue, freeskiers say. There's a perceived lack of respect for freeskiing and snowboarding from the sports' governing body. The fear is that new school freeskiing could see its freewheeling style stifled by the decidedly old guard FIS.

Wise, who spent three years pleading with the FIS to adjust the schedule, wrote in a scathing post on his blog last week that it is an "unforgivable blunder; one based in arrogance and in a true lack of respect." Dozens of the top-ranked skiers and snowboarders on the World Cup halfpipe and slopestyle circuit did not show up at Kreischburg, Austria, last week.

Read the whole story

Vonn back on podium, Mancuso 16th

By USSA

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland – Lindsey Vonn (Vail) will wing her way home to Beaver Creek with a 64th career victory, taking a strong win Sunday over Austria's Anna Fenninger in an Audi FIS Ski World Cup super G in St. Moritz. Vonn posted a 0.24 second margin for the win, coming just eight days before she will step into the super G starting gate at World Championships.

The St. Moritz super G course presented tough challenges for the athletes. "I was definitely a difficult course today," said Vonn. "There was a lot of terrain and tricky parts."

Her win came a day after a big mistake in the downhill dropped her from podium-challenger to 23.

"After a bad day comes a good day," said Vonn. "Yesterday I risked a lot and it didn't pay off. Today I risked a lot and it did pay off. I always like to ski at the limit – it's what's won me a lot of races and what's made me crash and go into the nets. That's the way I ski."

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was 16, with Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) 19 and Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) 27.

Kings Canyon reveals Carson's rural side



Dry, short grasses dot the landscape in the Kings Canyon area of Carson City. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

CARSON CITY – Despite a more than 20-foot waterfall tumbling down less than a half mile from the trailhead, the Kings Canyon area is so dry it looks more like summer than winter.

Dry sage and anemic manzanita dot the landscape early on. Ironically, it's this dryness that has driven us east, out of the basin in search of alternative winter recreation because there are so few snowshoeing opportunities right now in Tahoe. Even on this trail there ought to be more than the one patch of snow we saw.

This swath of land known as Kings Canyon is owned by the U.S. Forest and has been public property since 1997.

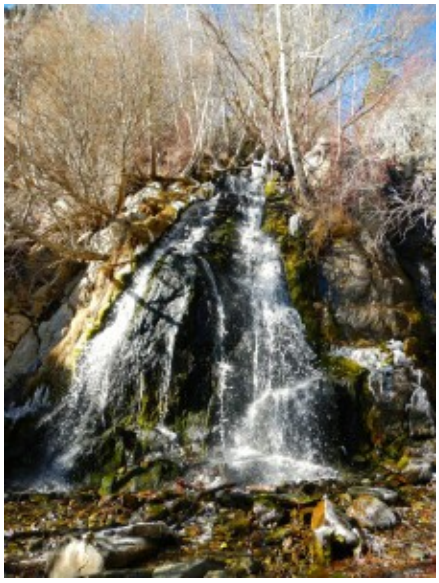


The five dogs lead their people uphill.

Way back when this land was home to the Washoe Indians. The canyon became a gateway to Lake Tahoe during the Gold Rush. Lumber was brought through the canyon during the Comstock era to build the silver mines of Nevada.

The area gets its name from Benjamin King, a doctor who built a ranch in the 1800s. Today there is a huge, modern house at the start of the trailhead. Other residences line the road leading up to what is the base of the Sierra.

Pete and Raymond Borda started a sheep farm on the land in 1947. They would drive sheep between Carson and Dayton until the 1970s. By then Carson City had experienced a population boom that prevented the drives from crossing the highway. Family members opted to donate their land for the public to use.



Plenty of water still cascades from the waterfall.

Today an extensive trail network exists. After checking out the waterfall (it's 0.3 miles from the trailhead and dead-ends there), we headed out on the North Kings Canyon Upper Loop Trail. The marker said it is 1 mile. It is single-track dirt with small rocks that make it necessary to look down a bit. This trail doesn't allow bikes or horses, but they are OK on the fire roads. We estimate having hiked 6 miles roundtrip.

It's a pretty steady climb, but it doesn't take long for good views of Carson City to reveal themselves.

We come to a fork where we head left onto what looks like a fire road. This was the first time for me, Rosemary and Brooke to explore this area. And none of us had a map, so we winged it when it came to deciding where to go. We were pretty sure we wouldn't follow the early pioneers and walk all the way to Tahoe. Plus, we had five dogs among us to be the trail leaders.

This road, though, had few turns. It kept going up. Luckily, the temperature was ideal considering the sun was beating down on us and we had no shade. This would not be the hike to do in mid-summer.

But soon we were among the trees and the mercury dropped substantially. Ice at various spots where there was water was a clear reminder on this Saturday in January that it really is winter.

The foliage is healthier here where water is more abundant. But there are also stark reminders of the 2004 Waterfall Fire that burned 8,700 acres. It started from an abandoned campfire.



Ice and a bamboo-like plant at one of the creeks.

While there is a warning at the trailhead this is bear and mountain lion territory, wildlife was scarce on our outing. One magpie was spotted and we heard a chipmunk or squirrel.

We finally hit a plateau where we ran into a couple from Carson City who told us the route we were on would take us to Ash Canyon. We took their advice to go a bit farther to get a great view of Carson City and then turn around.

They told us about a different route back. Had it not been for their multiple cairns and arrow drawn in the dirt, we would never have seen the abrupt right turn onto the single-track. This dirt trail was a more gradual descent without rocks compared to the path that got us to this point.

At various times the drop-offs are rather daunting. We tried not to look down. It would be a long, painful tumble.

Views are beautiful and vast.

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Getting there: From South Lake Tahoe take Highway 50 east to Carson City. Turn left at the base of Spooner Summit in Carson, left on West 5th Street, right on Division Street, left on West King Street. The road dead-ends at the trailhead.

U.S. men miss podium in downhill, super G

By USSA

KITZBUEHEL, Austria – After two hours of weather delays, the famed Hahnenkamm was shortened – with the fastest times coming in at under a minute. Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) was the top American downhiller on Saturday, taking fifth place –his best ever result in Kitzbuehel.

After winning both training runs, Kjetil Jansrud of Norway stepped on top of the podium again. Paris Dominik of Italy was second, just missing first by 0.02 seconds, and Guillermo Fayed of France took third.

“This is a good step forward and confidence builder going into Beaver Creek,” Nyman said after his downhill run. “I want to give it everything and see what I got. Hopefully I can win or get a medal. I’m stoked.”

The racers could hear the 60,000-70,000-person crowd in the start gate and even with massive delays and falling snow, the audience was electric. The spectators lined the finish of ski racing’s Super Bowl – a right-of-passage race for so many

skiers. As Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) said after the super G, “Every ski racer has two goals: an Olympic medal and a podium or a win in Kitzbuehel.”

The racers still got up to almost 80 mph, but on such a short track, there was very little room for error. Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) and Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) noted that, making a couple quick mistakes, which put them down in 41 and 44, respectively.

Only his second time on the Hahnenkamm, Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) had a solid run, taking 25. Wiley Maple (Aspen,) just skied out of the points, into 31 place, while Weibrecht opted to rest and did not start.

Kitzbuehel officially started Friday. The Americans came in strong to the super G, with two-time Olympic medalist Weibrecht pulling off a career-best World Cup result in fifth place, and Nyman taking 13.

It was a gnarly course, as always, set more like a downhill than a super G, with both smooth and bumpy sections. But Weibrecht skied it cleanly and aggressively, nailing his line.

“It’s always a great place to have a good result,” said Weibrecht, after his run. “I wanted to start out 2015 skiing really strong and carry everything I had into the new year.”

Weibrecht, who is known for winning Olympic bronze and silver in 2010 and 2014, had never cracked the World Cup top five before this race. Three out of his previous four top-10 results were in Beaver Creek. So how is the Warhorse feeling about the Vail/Beaver Creek-based FIS Alpine World Championships in two weeks?

“World Champs is a hill that I like a lot. It’s game on in Vail,” confirmed Weibrecht.

Nyman also had a great run, his best super G result since

2007. But, as always, the speed skier is looking for better.

“I skied well. I skied my plan. It worked out that today was pretty quick,” said Nyman. “I risked it on the Hausberg [jump], but got bounced pretty low. I could have ended up in the top 10 if that didn’t happen.”

Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) took 36 and Tim Jitloff (Reno) 46. Ted Ligety (Park City, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley), Tommy Biesemeyer (Keene, N.Y.), Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) and Wiley Maple (Aspen) all did not finish.

The super G, while being a stand-alone World Cup race, also takes place as part of a alpine combined – one super G and one slalom run. Under the lights for the slalom portion of the race, Weibrecht finished 18, Goldberg 19 and Jitloff 25 overall in the alpine combined.

Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.) acted as the POV forerunner of the race – skiing well, but not taking too many risks. He will pull out of the downhill, deciding to focus on World Championships instead. “It’s tough because I love to win here, but to avoid the race is the right decision,” said Miller. “Another week and I should be good.”

Upgrades coming on key South Shore bike trails

By Kathryn Reed

Thousands of dollars in bicycle trail and ball field improvements on the South Shore were approved Friday by the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Facilities Joint Powers Authority.

Money for the projects comes from Measure S/R dollars. This voter approved initiative affects the California side of the South Shore.

The 6-year-old Sawmill bridge that crosses the Upper Truckee River on Highway 50 is in need of a new top coat because the concrete is disintegrating. There are so many loose particles on the span that it is getting close to the point where riding across it on a road bike could mean an instant flat tire.

While there was a lawsuit between the builder and El Dorado County regarding the bridge, it had more to do with days worked and not the short lifespan of the work.

County officials are hoping to find a product that will last 20 years.



Sawmill bike bridge is in need of a new overcoat. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Deterioration of the current bridge is being blamed on the sand and salt Caltrans spreads on the highway, the expansion and contraction of material from temperatures, and not having laid down materials in optimal conditions.

The board on Jan. 23 agreed to use $87,000 to help resurface this bridge.

Doing so would create a smooth bicycle path from Meyers to South Lake Tahoe because the final phase of the path on Sawmill Road is slated for construction this summer, too.

The recommendation for this and other projects came to the JPA board from the Bicycle Advisory Committee.

The committee also suggested, and the board approved, $70,000 to rehab the class 1 trail between Trout Creek and Edgewood Circle between Lakeview Commons and the property where the Alta Mira building used to be.

This route will be close to the highway and is not what has been long been called phase 2 of Lakeview Commons. The continuation of the bike trail on those plans calls for a cantilever bridge that would jut out onto the lake and get people away from the road. But lack of funding is stalling that project.

The other bike related allocation was for $10,000 to be spent on wayfinding signs along class 1 trails.

When it comes to ball fields in the area, the T-ball fields will get the most attention this coming season – in the form of new turf.

While bleachers are desired at the Little League field, there may not be the money to make that happen.

The fields committee is going to seek donations from service clubs to pay for the bleachers. If that doesn’t work, there are old bleachers that could be brought in.

Prescribed fires to continue next week

California State Parks and the U.S. Forest Service may continue prescribed fire operations on Jan. 26.

Operations may take place near Tahoe City on Highway 28 between Rocky Ridge and Lake Forest, near Emerald Bay at Eagle Point Campground, the boat camp and behind Vikingsholm, Gardner Mountain near South Tahoe High School, Luther Pass near Grass Lake, Ski Run Boulevard near Heavenly, and on the East Shore near Logan Creek Drive and the north side of Spooner Summit. Operations will last through the next several weeks as conditions allow.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size. Agencies coordinate with state and local county air pollution control districts and monitors weather conditions closely prior to prescribed fire ignition.

Before conducting prescribed fire operations, agencies may post road signs around affected areas and make email or phone notifications. The Forest Service updates the local fire information line at 530.543.2600, ext. 6.