

Warning for snowmobilers about where to ride

With snowpack in the Lake Tahoe Basin at low levels and in anticipation of a busy holiday weekend, the U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is warning snowmobilers they will be fined if they operate their sleds in areas with inadequate snow.

“Snowmobile operators should avoid bare dirt and patchy snow and should not ride across streams or over small trees or brush. Operating snowmobiles on too little snow creates ruts in the soil and crushes vegetation,” the USFS said.

Causing resource damage can result in a citation punishable by a fine of \$5,000 or more and/or six months in jail.

Information on areas where snowmobiles are allowed is available in the **online Snowmobile Guide**.

Outfitting athletes for the Winter Olympics

By Susan L. Sokolowski, The Conversation

At the first Winter Olympics, in Chamonix, France, in 1924, athletes competed in uniforms made from natural material resources like wool, cotton and leather; some had sport-specific modifications to aid in performance (like impact protection or warmth) or appearance (like a coat or skirt that would flare when spinning).

They did include colors and badges to signify the countries their wearers represented, but overall their dress could have largely passed for everyday clothes.

Since then, athletes' uniforms have changed substantially.

Read the whole story

Susan L. Sokolowski is the director and an associate professor for sports product design at the University of Oregon.

Sierra to host retro ski clothing day

Sierra-at-Tahoe is partnering with Shonesty, a clothing company specializing in retro ski gear and party suits, to host a Throwback Day on Feb 24.

This is a free event to guests of all ages, taking place from 9am-4pm in the base area of Sierra.

Guests are encouraged to wear their best retro outfits and vintage attire. Those who dress up will have a chance to win prizes. Other activities will include a Hot Doggin' Eating Challenge, Spread Eagle Tournament, plus games and live music provided by DJ Conqu3st.

Bone-chilling cold weather coming to Tahoe

Caltrans is alerting motorists to be prepared for winter driving conditions Sunday through Tuesday with the arrival of cold winter temperatures for the Northern California area.

The National Weather Service has forecast significant drops in both day and nighttime temperatures, with mountain temps down to single digits. The cold weather system is expected to arrive Sunday morning and continue through Tuesday night. While snow accumulations over the passes Sunday evening and Monday morning are not expected to be significant (2-4 inches), the severe cold will create very slick and icy conditions for mountain roadways.

Strong winds are also forecast throughout the area. With below freezing temps predicted, gusty winds will result in wind chills below zero in the mountains.

Chain controls on Interstate 80 over Donner Summit and Highway 50 over Echo Summit should be anticipated Sunday night through Monday morning.

Coyote recovering after container removed from its head

By Benjy Egel, Sacramento Bee

Things are looking up for a Northern California coyote saved

by a human search party last week.

The female coyote was rescued Feb. 5 after wandering around Placer and El Dorado counties for at least 13 days with a hard plastic container securely fastened to its head. It was emaciated and dehydrated, and had wounds near its ears as well as tick and flea infestations.

Read the whole story

Wearable technologies help Olympians

By Jaci VanHeest, The Conversation

As Fitbits and other wearable activity monitors change how regular people exercise and track their activity, they're having similar effects on how Olympians train and recover between workouts.

It's long been common for coaches to use video cameras to show athletes what their form and movements look like, to track progress, and to fine-tune exactly the right technique for, say, taking off for a jump or landing after a particular trick. But those only show what's going on from the outside.

Now, wearables, biometrics and apps analyzing their data are becoming much more common for athletes at all levels, giving indications of what's going on inside an athlete's body. I have worked as a sport physiologist with elite athletes for two decades, including with USA Swimming and U.S. Figure Skating; there's not yet much research about the results in figure skating, but wearables have helped coaches, athletes

and sport scientists in other sports like swimming, cycling, soccer and volleyball.

Beating how fast?

The most basic measurement of how hard an athlete's body is working is how fast her heart is beating; many wearable devices track their user's heart rate in real time. Trainers can measure how fast an athlete's heart beats during maximum exertion in a test on a treadmill or skating increasingly fast across the rink.

Then, during workouts, a coach can determine how hard the athlete is working by comparing his real-time heart rate to his maximum. When a person's heart is beating almost as fast as it can, that's pushing nearly as hard as a person's body can. When an athlete's heart rate is closer to half its maximum, the body is working at an intensity that allows the skater to recover from more demanding efforts. By tuning the workout to keep the athlete's heart rate in certain ranges for certain periods, a coach or sport scientist can optimize both exertion and recovery time. That way, the body's muscles and cardiovascular system are well trained and in top form for competition.

How many landings?

Figure skaters and many snowboarders and skiers are among those whose competitive performances include jumps – which means they have to practice intensively for each one. Those leaps, and their landings, exert enormous amounts of stress on athletes' bodies – ranging from eight to 14 times the person's body weight for a brief moment. A 100-pound skater who jumps 50 times in a typical daily workout for five training days is loading 160 tons of cumulative weight on her bones during that training week. The forces are absorbed by muscles and bones in the feet and legs, as well as the torso.

That's a lot of stress, and a lot of potential for injury. In

figure skating, for example, 70 percent of injuries are from overuse – primarily from the accumulated effects of those impacts. Wearable monitors can track how many jumps a person takes and measure the rotational, gravitational and other forces involved in the jumps and landings. These readings can help coaches ensure athletes develop strength and endurance while warning of potential for injury.

More sophisticated biosensors embedded in clothing keep track of an athlete's body temperature, movement and breathing rate and other data, also helping coaches fine-tune workouts to optimize performance.

Getting enough rest?

Crucial elements of Olympians' top performance come while away from practice sessions – including when they're eating and sleeping. Athletes can use smartphone apps to record what they eat and when, tracking how many calories they take in, as well as amounts of nutrients like proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

Similarly, sleep-tracking devices use accelerometers to track a person's movements – and sometimes heart and breathing rates – while they're asleep. The data can reveal indicators of how well the person rested, such as how much a person moved around in bed at night. That can help coaches choose appropriate workouts depending on how tired an athlete is.

Wearables make available all these data – about nutrition, exertion, stress forces, rest and recovery – that coaches and athletes alike can use to improve training, boost performance and, ideally, make it to the top of a medal podium.

Jaci VanHeest is an associate professor of education at the University of Connecticut.

Squaw's Bennett leads Team U.S. in downhill

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

Racing under bright sunshine and on a perfect track, Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) led Team USA in the downhill, finishing 16th at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games Thursday.

"I treated this run like any other run," Bennett said. "I just didn't perform the way I wanted. I will use this run to move forward, over the next four years, and I will be ready for the next Olympic Winter Games."

Aksel Lund Svindal won Norway's first-ever downhill gold. His countryman Kjetil Jansrud won the silver medal. Switzerland's Beat Feuz won the bronze.

"I am super happy how I approached today and how I skied," said Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah), who was 20th. "I was skiing at a really high level and I am proud of that. Some things happened with the wind and made it very difficult for anyone in the middle of the pack to break the top 10. I have no control over that so I am just happy how I executed my run."

Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, Vt.), who replaced Tommy Biesemeyer (Keene, N.Y.) after he suffered a season-ending ankle injury in Wednesday's downhill training, was 23rd.

"I feel for him (Biesemeyer) right now," Cochran-Siegle said. "When I was coming back from my injury we were working closely together, so I understand what he is going through and I only want the best for him. I am going to try best as possible to

send him positive vibes and race with him again soon. I am proud of my run today and excited to race tomorrow.”

“Coming into today I felt excited,” said Wiley Maple (Aspen, Colo.), who made his Olympic debut and finished 30th. “I was looking forward to racing. The Olympics are notorious for allowing anyone to do anything. I didn’t come in with the highest expectation but there is always a little bit of a dream that if I do ski well, maybe I could sneak into the top. I wasn’t too nervous, I just felt excited to be here.”

Thursday’s downhill was originally scheduled for Sunday, but high winds at the Jeongseon Alpine Centre forced Olympic organizers to reschedule the event.

“There is a great energy in this group of skiers,” said men’s coach Johnno McBride. “Although it is very difficult to have three athletes get hurt, there is a lot of positive momentum moving forward. I am very proud of the way everyone skied today. These athletes put a plan together and executed that plan. That is what I am most proud of. Their result isn’t indicative of their performance – that is just a part of the sport.”

Prepping skis for Olympics is art and science

By Julie Brown, Powder

For the world’s most elite ski racers, when a win on the World Cup is a matter of hundredths of seconds, the right tune can make or break a competition.

Which is why every ski racer has a person whose job it is to make sure the skis are tuned to be as fast as possible. Lindsey Vonn's ski technician is World Cup wax room veteran Heinz Haemmerle. Ted Ligety works with Austrian Alex Martin. Last winter, Travis Ganong brought rookie Lukas Rottinger onboard.

The tune is in the details. It is as much about matching notes on time to temperatures and measurements as it is a feeling of what works, what does not, and most importantly, what the racer wants.

Read the whole story

Shaun White snares gold in epic halfpipe finish

By Angel Rodriguez, Los Angeles Times

Shaun White, who once trained at Northstar, did it again.

White scored a 97.75 in the third run to top Ayumu Horano of Japan who had set the ride to beat in the second run with a score of 95.25.

It was a back and forth duel between White and Horano throughout the afternoon.

Read the whole story

Prescribed fires planned for Tahoe basin

The Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team, which includes local, state and federal agencies, may continue prescribed fire operations this week in some locations around Lake Tahoe, weather and conditions permitting.

Each prescribed fire operation follows a specialized prescribed fire burn plan that considers temperature, humidity, wind, moisture of the vegetation, and conditions for the dispersal of smoke. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.