

Expansion and growing pains of Winter Olympics

By Heather Dichter, The Conversation

When the International Olympic Committee announced that PyeongChang would host the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, most people outside of South Korea had probably never heard of it, let alone knew that the eastern part of the country had snow and mountains.

The shift in the type of place capable of hosting such a mega sporting event demonstrated how much the Winter Olympics has grown – but this change also brought with it a set of problems unforeseen when the event began in 1924.

Figure skating first appeared on the Olympic program in 1908, and ice hockey in 1920, but these events were part of the summer games. The first Winter Olympics took place in the French alpine village of Chamonix in 1924. The organizers of the Paris Olympics that year wanted to offer an International Sports Week at the beginning of the year with solely winter sports as an experiment. Only after its success did the IOC decide to call the Chamonix event the Winter Olympics.

The first few Winter Olympics took place in ski resort towns known to winter sport enthusiasts: St. Moritz, Switzerland, in 1928, Lake Placid, N.Y., in 1932 and Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, in 1936. In the 1930s the U.S. and Germany hosted both the Summer and Winter Olympics because the IOC allowed the country which won the right to host the summer games to decide whether they wanted to organize the winter ones too. If they did not – or could not in the case of the Netherlands in 1928 – then the IOC opened up the bidding to other countries.

The Winter Olympics has always been significantly smaller than its summer counterpart in terms of the number of sports

contested and number of countries competing. Just over 250 athletes competed in Chamonix, and it took until the 1964 games in Innsbruck, Austria, for more than 1,000 athletes to compete. Fewer than 3,000 athletes competed in Sochi in 2014, whereas more than 11,000 athletes competed in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

No more village ski resorts

Although still significantly smaller than the summer event, the growth of the Winter Olympics to include 102 events across 15 sports at PyeongChang, alongside its global media coverage, means that the games no longer take place in small ski resort villages. Instead, larger cities have bid for and hosted the Winter Games in the past few decades.

Urban centers provide many of the required amenities for a successful Olympics: huge venues for the opening and closing ceremonies, sizeable indoor arenas for ice hockey and figure skating, facilities to accommodate the world's media, and thousands of hotel rooms for all of the spectators. However, those same larger cities tend to be further away from tall mountains and the higher altitudes needed to ensure sufficient snowfall and cold temperatures for the outdoor events of skiing, snowboarding, and the sliding sports of bobsled, skeleton, and luge.

At the 2010 Vancouver games, even with the widening of the highway that leads from the city to the mountains at Whistler, it still took nearly two hours to reach the mountain venues. The organizers put on buses for those spectators who purchased tickets to events in the mountain to minimize traffic on the highway. After the initial ticket allocation, only Canadians with a postal code within a small radius of Whistler were permitted to purchase the remaining tickets to some of the mountain events.

Further and further from the mountains

One of the reasons the IOC selected the Korean city for the 2018 event was to spread winter sport to a new part of the world which had not held the Winter Olympics. But aside from concerns about the post-Olympic use of these venues in a country where participation in skiing has declined, logistics for spectators will be challenging.

The PyeongChang organizers recommend that visitors use the high-speed train from Seoul which opened in December 2017. However, a major Korean holiday falls during the Winter Olympics and the majority of seats on the train have already been reserved. International spectators who purchased special train passes for the games are now unable to book seats on trains to take them to the Olympic events. There have also been concerns about accommodation shortages.

The next Winter Olympics in Beijing in 2022 will be ever more spread out between venues. As larger cities further away from the mountains host the Winter Olympics, the games feel more disjointed for both athletes and spectators. Fans must decide where to stay and may decide not even to bother attending any mountain events. The organizers for recent Winter Games have built two Olympic villages, one in the city and another in the mountains, separating athletes instead of them all living together.

Future hosts for the Winter Olympics have to find a way to balance the interests of athletes, spectators, and post-event use of facilities. This challenge will not be easily solved, although recent past host cities – such as Salt Lake City – putting their hat in the ring to host the Winter Olympics again may be one solution.

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USOC: No plans for American bid for 2026 Olympics

By Eddie Pells, AP

PYEONGCHANG, South Korea – If the U.S. Olympic Committee is going to bid for the Winter Games soon, it will be a bid for 2030, not 2026.

USOC Chairman Larry Probst ruled out the possibility of bringing the Olympics to Salt Lake City, Denver or Reno two years before the Summer Games return to the United States, in Los Angeles.

“It would make things extremely complicated from a financial standpoint with Los Angeles,” Probst said Friday.

[Read the whole story](#)

Sagan Fondo off-road cycling event coming to Truckee

Truckee has been selected as the “gravel” host location for one of two Sagan Gran Fondo cycling events this year and in 2019.

Event producers at Bike Monkey in partnership with three-time world champion cyclist Peter Sagan will bring the event to Truckee May 3-5. Bike Monkey is the producer of the famous

Levi's GranFondo out of Santa Rosa.

Featuring a long-course distance of 67.5 miles, the combo of trail/pavement is ideally suited for wide clearance cyclocross or gravel bikes and will take place on gravel and dirt roads. A shorter, 23-mile course route will also be offered. Participants should expect traffic-controlled intersections, on-bike marshals, moto officials, food stations and SAG providing rider support.

Spaces will be limited to the first 1,500 registrants, with competitive categories and awards for the top three riders in 12 total age and gender groups. **Rider registration** will begin Feb. 15.

Olympian takes up cause of vanishing ski trails

By Kendra Pierre-Louis, New York Times

Jessie Diggins fell in love with snow as a child.

Diggins is a member of the U.S. women's cross-country skiing team, which is favored to win a medal at the PyeongChang Olympics. It would be only the second medal in the sport for the United States and the first for the women's team.

Before Diggins was an Olympic skier, before she had even taken her first steps, her parents strapped her into a baby carrier and took her cross-country skiing near her hometown, Afton,

Minn.. But she worries that future generations of American children might miss that opportunity.

The risk is real. In the United States, the average time between the last frost of the spring and the first of the winter has expanded by 10 days since the first half of the 20th century.

Read the whole story

USFS approves draft for Heavenly to make upgrades

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit issued a draft decision for proposed improvements to existing skiing and snowboarding terrain at Heavenly Mountain Resort.

People have until March 21 to file objects with **the decision**.

Proposed improvements would include selective widening of ski trails, removing trail obstacles and relocation and/or realignment of some portions of existing snowmaking air and water pipelines to improve user experience, maintain user safety, increase energy and water efficiency, and maintain native species.

Ski trail widening to reduce bottlenecks and improve skier flow, would include tree removal and selective boulder relocation on approximately 12 trails, with grading required in two locations to match the widened area to the grade of the existing trail. Due to the widening, any existing snowmaking lines would be relocated to the new edge of the trail. Removal of obstacles, such as boulders, stumps and logs, would take

place on 11 trails to improve natural snow surface coverage.

Project work is expected to begin this year.

Bowman, Wise praise coach as Olympics begin

By Kathryn Reed

Like all athletes, even skiers need coaches. Maddie Bowman and David Wise, who in the next two weeks will try to defend their Olympic gold medals, credit Andy Woods for some of their success.

Woods was first named as a coach to the U.S. Freeskiing Halfpipe Team in 2011. This was in advance of the 2014 Olympic debut of the sport.

Under his tutelage leading up to the last Olympics, Bowman, who grew up in Meyers and still has family there, was on top of the podium at the Sochi Olympics in halfpipe skiing. Wise, a native of Reno, collected gold in the same contest for the men.



David Wise and Maddie Bowman will represent the Reno-Tahoe area in the Olympics – again. Photo/LTN

Bowman said of Woods that they are very much alike in balancing a “laid back style with an attention to detail.” She told *Lake Tahoe News* she is impressed with how far he’s come, going from “just a skier” to accomplished coach.

Before the 36-year-old was hired, several members of the U.S. team were consulted. This was in part because some knew him so the higher ups wanted to make sure there would be a symbiotic relationship.

Plus, Woods didn’t have any coaching experience prior to then.

“He and I have an amazing relationship. We are both introverted,” Wise told *Lake Tahoe News*. “He and I will obsessively watch video over and over again. We will pick apart different pieces.”

Woods grew up in Vermont, with his home resort being Smugglers’ Notch. He went from moguls, to doing tricks. At age 19 he and some buddies planned to go to the U.S. Open at Vail. They flaked out, he went. His parents went along, too. What a show they got to see.

He finished in the top 20 in slopestyle, and then competed in the big air event.

“I had the idea in my head of doing a 1260, thinking, ‘Maybe if I do this, I can get past the first couple rounds’,” Woods told *Powder* magazine. He fell. He tried again. This time he landed it. He also landed on top of the podium.

In that same event it was Jon Olsson who placed second and Squaw Valley’s Jonny Moseley in third. (Moseley had won gold at the 1998 Olympics in moguls, he was fourth in 2002.)

Woods continued to compete for several years, winning multiple events. But injuries forced him to stop competing in 2007. He went on to be a judge at various events. Then the call came from the U.S. Ski Team – he’s never looked back.

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Notes:

Opening ceremonies for the PyeongChang, South Korea, Olympics are tonight. Here is a **link** to the entire NBC television schedule.

Mammoth is to snowboarding what Silicon Valley is to tech

By Elliott Almond, Bay Area News Group

MAMMOTH LAKES – Three-time Olympic medalist Kelly Clark left Vermont 17 years ago to cultivate her snowboarding talent on the powdery slopes of Mammoth Mountain.

Now 34, Clark is taking her high-flying circus act to the

Winter Olympics for the fifth time as a long-time Mammoth local. Four other snowboarders competing in the Pyeongchang Games call Mammoth home, including halfpipe rock stars Shaun White and Chloe Kim.

The Eastern Sierra peak has become the triple-flip launching pad of American snowboarding as the sport celebrates its 20th anniversary as an Olympic discipline. The popular snow resort that on weekends feels like an L.A. suburb has been grooming airborne talent for decades because of supreme facilities, a long season with plenty of sun and snow and an innovative spirit.

Read the whole story

Salt Lake City first in U.S. to seek 2030 Winter Olympic bid

By Associated Press

Salt Lake City on Wednesday became the first U.S. city to announce its intentions to bid for the 2030 Winter Olympics as this year's games get ready to kick off in South Korea.

The city's Olympic exploratory committee concluded after a monthslong analysis that Utah could host the Winter Games again without losing money thanks to existing venues and the budget expertise of a team that put on the 2002 event.

Salt Lake City could face competition from Denver and Tahoe-Reno, which are considering bids. Internationally, cities weighing the move include Sion, Switzerland; Calgary, Canada;

Stockholm, Sweden; and Sapporo, Japan.

Read the whole story

Study: Humans degrading rivers across the west

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Rivers are the ecological lifeblood of the western U.S. but they're taking a beating from human activity.

That's according to researchers who mapped the condition of more than 300,000 miles of river in 11 western states.

The massive undertaking researchers named Disappearing Rivers looked end-to-end at thousands of rivers and streams.

The data provides a snapshot of conditions of everything from the mighty Colorado which provides water to roughly 40 million people in seven states and two countries to Lamoille Creek, a scenic stream in Nevada's Ruby Mountains known for wild brook trout.

Read the whole story

Silver Belt ski races coming

back to Sugar Bowl

The second annual Silver Belt Series returns to Sugar Bowl this month.

This three-event series is designed for skiers and snowboarders of all ages, ability levels and interests. Participants may register for just one, or all three events.

Proceeds benefit local nonprofit organizations. In partnership with the Excellence in Education Foundation, High Fives Foundation and the Sierra Avalanche Center, events will include a downhill event, a banked slalom, and an uphill touring event.

The Silver Belt Series will kick off Feb. 10 with D Money's Dozen, and will be followed up by the Banked Slalom on Feb. 24. The series will conclude on April 7 with the Quad Crusher. Registration for each event is available **online**, and will take place on-site at the resort the day of the event.