White pulls out of slopestyle at Olympics

By USSA and Wire Reports

ROSA KHUTOR, Russia – Olympic champion Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, announced late Wednesday Sochi time that he was withdrawing from slopestyle to keep his focus on winning an unprecedented third straight gold in halfpipe.

White fell and jammed his left wrist in a training run on the slopestyle course. Afterward he called the course "a little intimidating."

Torstein Horgmo of Norway, who was one of the favorites coming into the Olympics, broke his collarbone on a training ride. After White got hurt, Marika Enne of Finland had to be taken off the course in a stretcher because she fell hard and sustained a concussion.

Slopestyle snowboarding will make its Olympic debut with qualification runs Thursday and the men's finals opening the Games on Saturday.

"After much deliberation with my team, I have made the decision to focus solely on trying to bring home the third straight gold medal in halfpipe for Team USA. The difficult decision to forgo slopestyle is not one I take lightly as I know how much effort everyone has put into holding the slopestyle event for the first time in Olympic history, a history I had planned on being part of," White said.

Halfpipe snowboarding competition is set for Tuesday at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park.

White is the two-time defending champion in halfpipe. Training begins Saturday for Tuesday's men's halfpipe finals.

Polar plunge to benefit Special Olympics

Hundreds of Californians and Nevadans will plunge into the winter-chilled waters of Lake Tahoe on March 29 all in the name of Special Olympics.

Donned in costumes but without the protection of wet suits, Special Olympics athletes and their supporters will jump into Tahoe’s icy waters at Zephyr Cove for the South Lake Tahoe Polar Plunge.

This is a fundraiser for Special Olympics Northern California and Nevada

Plungers, which include individuals, companies, law enforcement, families and schools, are asked to raise a minimum of $125 – which provides one season of sports instruction and competition at no cost to the Special Olympics athlete.

In 2013, the polar plunges had more than 1,400 plungers, who raised more than $450,000.

Registration and donations for the South Lake Tahoe Polar Plunge are being accepted online and will be accepted on site. Registration is at 1oam and the plunge at noon.

Prescribed fires planned for Tahoe basin

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will continue prescribed fire operations in several locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin on Feb. 4.

On the South Shore, operations will take place on the east side of Tahoe Mountain in South Lake Tahoe, the south side of Highway 89 near Camp Richardson, and off North Upper Truckee Road in the Angora Fire area south of Mule Deer Circle.

On the West Shore, operations will take place across from Emerald Bay State Park and on the west side of Highway 89 near Tahoma.

Prescribed fire crews may continue operations through the weekend, weather, staffing, and conditions permitting

All prescribed fire projects are conducted in accordance with an approved prescribed fire burn plan. Burn plans describe specific conditions under which operations are conducted including the weather, number of personnel, opportunities to minimize smoke impacts, and available burn days. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.

Smoke may be visible on Highway 89 near Camp Richardson, Emerald Bay State Park, and Tahoma. Smoke from prescribed fire may continue for several days after the initial ignition.

Casino sportsbooks cash in on Super Bowl

By Case Keefer, Las Vegas Sun

The Not-So Super Bowl got the best of the vast majority of sports bettors.

Approximately 2 out of every 3 gamblers wagered on Denver minus-2.5 against Seattle all the way through Sunday's kickoff, losing their money after a 43-8 Seahawks blowout victory.

Casinos will post a profit on the biggest annual betting event for the 21st time in 23 years, since the state began officially tracking the Super Bowl as its own entity. Although the Nevada Gaming Control Board won't release the official tally until later in the week, the sheer volume of bets on the Broncos all but guarantees a substantial figure for the house.

Read the whole story

Pro snowboarder transitions to coaching Olympians — including sister Hannah Teter



Elijah Teter, right, will be in Sochi for the Winter Olympics that start this week to coach Kaitlyn Farrington and Hannah Teter. Photo/Provided

By Jessie Marchesseau

The name Teter is synonymous with snowboarding. Though Elijah Teter's name may not be on the competitors' roster for the most recent halfpipe competition and you haven't seen him stand on a podium lately, he is likely standing not too far away.

Teter, who used to live in Meyers, spent a decade as a pro snowboarder. After just missing a spot on the 2010 Olympic team, he turned his focus from competing to coaching. Now he is watching some of the athletes he trained take their skills to the Olympic playground in Sochi.

Kaitlyn Farrington and Hannah Teter, who have been under Elijah Teter's instruction, will be representing Team USA in snowboard halfpipe. Ayumu Hirano, the 15-year-old Japanese phenom Teter has been working with since 2012, will be in

Sochi riding for Japan.

It was after the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver that Teter began coaching fulltime. Even when he was riding professionally, he remembers always offering tips to other riders. He helped his sister train and coached a little during the summers. Teter said he enjoyed it, but never really considered it as a career option. Then in 2010, his sister Hannah, who had just won a silver medal in Vancouver and already had a gold from the 2006 Olympics, asked him to be her full-time coach. He accepted, and the transition from rider to coach was made. (Hannah Teter lives in Meyers and rides for Sierra-at-Tahoe.)

He now spends his winters in Colorado, and in addition to working with Hannah, is in his third season as a snowboard halfpipe coach with Ski & Snowboard Club Vail, a nonprofit focused on winter sports training. SSCV athletes come from all over the world and have graced many Olympic, X Games and World Cup podiums. (Much of the rest of the year Teter is in Grass Valley.)

Two years ago, when Teter was serving as a judge at the X Games, he was approached about coaching Japanese Olympic snowboarder Kazu Kokubo. Kokubo is possibly the most famous pro snowboarder Japan has seen, both because of his riding ability and his outspoken personality. Teter accepted the offer, and, along with SSCV, later picked up one of Kokubo's teammates: Ayumu Hirano.

Hirano is being hailed as the one who could possibly dethrone Shaun White in the halfpipe and bring home Japan's first medal in the event. At last year's X Games, he brought home the silver, a close second to White. Though Japan will be sending its own coaches to Sochi with Hirano, Teter will surely be cheering him on.

Working as a coach and mentor to athletes at this level is no easy task, but having been in their shoes gives Teter a leg

up.

“Coaching at the elite level is about a lot more than just teaching them tricks,” Ben Boyd, program director of SSCV, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s about getting them in the right mindset.”

Boyd often coaches alongside Teter, and said this is something his fellow instructor is particularly good at. There is always a calmness about him, and he has a way of getting athletes to believe in themselves, said Boyd. Teter learned the importance of the mental aspects years ago as a pro rider. He says he spent time each day meditating and “centering” himself.

“When it comes down to it, we’ve all got good tricks, it’s who can land their run,” Teter told *Lake Tahoe News*.

These personal experiences as a rider make Teter’s influence as a coach invaluable. Boyd said he is one of the rare few who can break down the technicalities of a complicated halfpipe run and really understand what’s happening.

Teter still spends a lot of time on his board and has no reservations about his decision to get into coaching. “It’s nice to pursue something you’ve been pursuing for 20 years,” he said.

Teter may spend his days training athletes on how to do spins and grabs, flips and jumps, but in the end, he says the most important thing he can pass on is something he acquired a long time ago: a pure and simple love for snowboarding.

Land deal protects sage grouse in Douglas County

By AP

RENO – Thousands of acres of ranchland along a scenic river in southern Douglas County will be protected under a conservation easement.

A deal announced last week preserves about 3,800 acres of the Fairfield Ranch, a move conservationists and land managers say will protect critical sage grouse habitat and the area's natural values.

Ranch owners Alan and Cindy Horn donated the conservation easement along with a stewardship endowment to the Nature Conservancy.

"Patience, perseverance and the generosity of the ranch owners made this shared dream a reality," said Duane Petite of the conservancy's Eastern Sierra Nevada program.

The deal was four years in the making and involved talks with the Horns, the conservancy and state and federal agencies, the *Reno Gazette-Journal* reported.

Parts of the ranch straddle nearly three miles of the West Walker River and is considered vital habitat for a distinct subspecies of sage grouse that lives only along the Nevada-California line.

Ted Koch, Nevada supervisor for U.S. Fish and Wildlife, said the deal demonstrates the value of conservation easements in protecting habitat for the bistate sage grouse, which experts say number only about 5,000 birds.

The Fairfield Ranch area provides particularly valuable habitat, said Tony Wasley, director of the Nevada Department

of Wildlife.

“Fairfield Ranch has important wet meadows that are one of the most critical habitats to sage grouse in this arid environment,” Wasley said. “This easement has significant conservation value and is important to the long-term viability of sage grouse in the bistate area.”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed in October to list the bistate sage grouse as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The proposal would designate about 1.8 million acres as critical habitat.

Public comments on a draft measure are being accepted through Feb. 10.

Those birds are separate from the greater sage grouse population, which is also under consideration for listing. Found in 11 Western states, the Fish and Wildlife Service will determine whether the greater sage grouse deserves protection as a threatened or endangered species by 2015.

Mud racing governing body adds protection

By Elliott D. Woods, Outside

Sam Mansfield and Mark Ballas met in the autumn of 2012 when the two were visiting an investment property near Fort Benning, Georgia. Ballas, a former Army Special Forces soldier-turned-entrepreneur, had recently founded an adventure race called Green Beret Challenge, and Mansfield, a market researcher and consultant, had just started dabbling in mud

races after years as an amateur triathlete.

“We started to talk a little bit about ventures we wanted to get involved in in the future, and one that continued to come up was the obstacle course space—what is it in that industry that needs help?” The two quickly hit on the idea of a governing body for the sport, and on Jan. 7, United States Obstacle Course Racing (USOCR) was born.

At present, the company’s public face consists of a website, USOCR.com, that provides the mission statement and invites visitors to join the mailing list. But Mansfield told me USOCR – heavily modeled on USA Triathlon – will begin signing up members as early as Valentine’s Day. As for event sanctioning, he said USOCR will be “certifying and working with endorsement programs this season.” He was not yet able to confirm any events that have agreed to participate in the sanctioning program, which will involve a standardized safety management planning process and on-site inspections by USOCR staff.

Mansfield said the issue of event insurance was one of the early drivers for the development of USOCR. He speculated that current insurers of OCR events will begin pulling out of the industry as they develop a better understanding of the risks. When that happens, one of USOCR’s biggest assets will be a unique set of actuarial data compiled from sanctioned events that will help keep rates attuned to the actual risk and not the perceived risk. As Mansfield said, USOCR’s data will allow the industry to “define our risk instead of having our risk define us.”

Read the whole story

N. Shore celebrating 2014 Olympians

North Lake Tahoe has caught the Olympic spirit.

Tahoe City Public Utility District and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association have organized an event for people to show their support of Tahoe City Olympians and their families.

There will be a “GO USA/NORTH TAHOE” group photo at 3pm Jan. 31, followed by a reception at the NLTRA Visitor Center across from the Tahoe City Y.

Squaw offering tours of former Olympic sites

Squaw Valley is offering skiers and riders a glimpse into the past with 1960 Winter Games heritage tours.

These are three-hour private excursions of Squaw Valley’s on-mountain Olympic venues and highlight historic moments of the 1960 Winter Games.

The tours are led by professional guides who will lead participants down the same trails that were used as Olympic venues during the 1960 Winter Games. The private tours are available for individuals or groups of up to five people and

cost $200 ($40 per person for a group of five).

As part of the tours, guides will also share insider-details on Squaw’s heritage and the story of the 1960 Winter Olympics.

Tours may be booked by calling 800.403.0206 or emailing lesson@squaw.com. It is suggested that participants have intermediate to advanced skiing or snowboarding skills for the tours.

USFS to pile burn throughout Tahoe basin

If predicted rain and snow arrive this week, U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will resume prescribed fire operations in several locations around the Lake Tahoe Basin beginning Jan. 28.

Operations will take place on the South Shore in the Luther Pass Campground off of Highway 89, on the West Shore off of Bunker Drive near Tahoe City and off of Chalet Road near Alpine Meadows ski area, and on the East Shore off Easy Street on Lower Kingsbury Grade. Operations may continue through the weekend, weather, staffing, and conditions permitting

All prescribed fire projects are conducted in accordance with an approved prescribed fire burn plan. Burn plans describe specific conditions under which operations are conducted including the weather, number of personnel, opportunities to minimize smoke impacts, and available burn days. This information is used to decide when and where to burn.