15 Tahoe-area athletes headed for Sochi

By USSA

PARK CITY – The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association has nominated a record 94 athletes to the 2014 U.S. Olympic Team that will compete in Sochi. Fifteen are from the greater Lake Tahoe area, including Mammoth.

The team includes eight athletes who have previously won Olympic gold.

The team is significantly larger than the 76 athletes named in 2010 because of the addition of halfpipe and slopestyle skiing, slopestyle snowboarding, parallel slalom snowboarding and women's ski jumping.

Athletes range in age from 15 to 37.

Olympian Todd Lodwick was named to his sixth Olympic Team, matching the most ever by a Winter Olympian.

The Games begin with women's moguls and men's slopestyle snowboarding qualifications Feb. 6, a day before the Opening Ceremony.

The Olympic gold medalists competing for more hardware are:

Billy Demong, nordic combined large hill

Kelly Clark, halfpipe snowboarding

Hannah Kearney, moguls

Ted Ligety, alpine combined

Julia Mancuso, giant slalom

Bode Miller, alpine super combined

Hannah Teter, halfpipe snowboarding

Shaun White, halfpipe snowboarding,

Those who have won the most medals are:

Miller, alpine skiing – 5

Mancuso, alpine skiing – 3

White, halfpipe snowboarding – 2

Demong, nordic combined – 2.

The athletes are:

Alpine

Men

David Chodounsky, Crested Butte, Colo.

Erik Fisher, Middleton, Idaho

Travis Ganong, Squaw Valley

Jared Goldberg, Holladay, Utah

Tim Jitloff, Reno

Nolan Kasper, Warren, Vt.

Ted Ligety, Park City

Bode Miller, Franconia, N.H.

Steven Nyman, Sundance, Utah

Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley

Andrew Weibrecht, Lake Placid, N.Y.

Women

Stacey Cook, Mammoth

Julia Ford, Holderness, N.H.

Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley

Megan McJames, Park City

Laurenne Ross, Bend, Ore.

Mikaela Shiffrin, Eagle-Vail, Colo.

Leanne Smith, North Conway, N.H.

Resi Stiegler, Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Jacqueline Wiles, Aurora, Ore.

Cross Country

Men

Erik Bjornsen, Winthrop, Wash.

Kris Freeman, Concord, N.H.

Brian Gregg, Winthrop, Wash.

Simi Hamilton, Aspen

Noah Hoffman, Aspen

Torin Koos, Leavenworth, Wash.

Andy Newell, Shaftsbury, Vt.

Women

Sadie Bjornsen, Winthrop, Wash.

Holly Brooks. Anchorage, Alaska

Sophie Caldwell, Peru, Vt.

Jessie Diggins, Afton, Minn.

Kikkan Randall, Anchorage, Alaska

Ida Sargent, Orleans, Vt.

Liz Stephen, East Montpelier, Vt.

Freestyle

Men’s Aerials

Mac Bohonnon, Madison, Conn.

Women’s Aerials

Ashley Caldwell, Ashburn, Va.

Emily Cook, Belmont, Mass.

Men’s Halfpipe

Aaron Blunck, Crested Butte, Colo.

Lyman Currier, Boulder, Colo.

David Wise, Reno

Torin Yater-Wallace, Aspen

Women’s Halfpipe

Maddie Bowman, Meyers

Annalisa Drew, Andover, Mass.

Brita Sigourney, Carmel

Angeli VanLaanen, Bellingham, Wash.

Men’s Moguls

Patrick Deneen, Cle Elum, Wash.

Bradley Wilson, Butte, Mont.

Women’s Moguls

Hannah Kearney, Norwich, Vt.

Heidi Kloser, Vail

Heather McPhie, Bozeman, Mont.

Eliza Outtrim, Hamden, Conn.

Men’s Slopestyle

Bobby Brown, Breckenridge, Colo.

Joss Christensen, Park City

Nick Goepper, Lawrenceburg, Ind.

Gus Kenworthy, Telluride, Colo.

Women’s Slopestyle

Keri Herman, Bloomington, Minn.

Julia Krass, Hanover, N.H.

Devin Logan, W. Dover, Vt.

Maggie Voisin, Whitefish, Mont.

Men’s Skicross

John Teller, Mammoth Lakes

Nordic Combined

Billy Demong, Vermontville, N.Y.

Bryan Fletcher, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Taylor Fletcher, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Todd Lodwick, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Ski Jumping

Men

Nick Alexander, Lebanon, N.H.

Nick Fairall, Andover, N.H.

Peter Frenette, Saranac Lake, N.Y.

Anders Johnson, Park City,

Women

Sarah Hendrickson, Park City

Jessica Jerome, Park City

Lindsey Van, Park City

Snowboarding

Men’s Halfpipe

Greg Bretz, Mammoth Lakes

Danny Davis, Truckee

Taylor Gold, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Shaun White, Carlsbad (rides for Northstar)

Women’s Halfpipe

Kelly Clark, W. Dover, Vt.

Kaitlyn Farrington, Sun Valley, Idaho

Arielle Gold, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Hannah Teter, Meyers

PGS/PSL

Justin Reiter, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

Men’s Snowboardcross

Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, Mich.

Alex Deibold, Manchester Center, Vt.

Nate Holland, Squaw Valle

Trevor Jacob, Mammoth Lakes

Women’s Snowboardcross

Faye Gulini, Salt Lake City

Jackie Hernandez, Londonderry, Vt.

Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton Mountain, Vt.

Men’s Slopestyle

Chas Guldemond, Reno

Sage Kotsenburg, Park City

Ryan Stassel, Anchorage

Shaun White, Carlsbad (rides for Northstar)

Women’s Slopestyle

Jamie Anderson, Meyers

Jessika Jensen, Rigby, Idaho

Karly Shorr, Truckee

Ty Walker, Stowe, Vt.

Study: Climate change threatens Winter Olympics

By Dominique Mosbergen, Huffington Post

Russia's Sochi, Canada's Vancouver, France's Chamonix, Japan's Nagano and California's Squaw Valley all have one thing in common: These former and future Winter Olympics venues are each known as prime sites for cold-weather sports, and as breathtaking havens for sporting enthusiasts. But according to a new study, these winter wonderlands are now under threat from climate change and soon may no longer be cold enough to play host to elite winter sports competitions like the Winter Games.



Northstar on Dec. 20, 2011.
Photo/LTN file

Researchers at Canada's University of Waterloo and Austria's Management Center Innsbruck say that if global warming continues at its current rate, only 10 of the previous 19 Winter Olympics host cities will be cold enough to reliably

host the Games in the 2050s. By the end of the century, that number could drop to a dismal six. “The cultural legacy of the world’s celebration of winter sport is increasingly at risk,” said Professor Daniel Scott, a Canada Research Chair in Global Tourism and lead author of the study, per a media release. “Fewer and fewer traditional winter sports regions will be able to host a Olympic Winter Games in a warmer world.”

Troublingly, even if the world takes steps to reduce carbon emissions and therefore lessen the impact of global warming in the coming years, the researchers said that the number of cities that could host the games in the middle and end of the century will still fall dramatically (see the infographic below). By the 2050s, at least four Winter Games venues – including Sochi, this year’s host city – will be too warm to host the competition, even if active steps to curb global warming are taken.

Read the whole story

Animals use various strategies to survive winter

By Kathryn Reed

Animals have a way of knowing when to prepare for winter, but if winter doesn’t come, it can be a problem.

Those that use camouflage as a tactic from hiding from their predators are having a hard time of it in the Sierra this year because their white coat is standing out against the brown landscape instead of blending in with the snow.

Will Richardson, co-founder and co-executive director of the Tahoe Institute for Natural Science, spoke at the Tahoe Area Sierra Club meeting Jan. 22 about winter wildlife survival strategies.



Will Richardson talks Jan. 22 about how wildlife survive winter. Photo/LTN

In Lake Tahoe he said five species turn white in winter – two types of rabbits, long and short tail weasel, and the white-tailed ptarmigan.

“Winter presents a lot of challenges for any organism,” Richardson told the crowd of more than 60 people.

Key problems are shelter and food. Animals can choose to leave for the winter, tough it out or lower their metabolism so they can sleep through most of the winter.

Migration is common for birds. But insects and some mammals choose this option, too. Many birds head for the tropics. Millions land in Central and South America.

“What happens when you lose an acre of rain forest? What happens here?” Richardson asked rhetorically.

Facultative migration is a shorter migration; maybe just to the Carson Valley or Central Valley.

A sure sign that animals are confused by the weather this year

is a barn swallow was spotted in Tahoe City this month. Richardson said he doesn’t know of any time when any species of swallow has been seen in the basin in January.

Mountain quail walk out of the basin every year. The same goes for deer.

Waterfowl tend to stay in Tahoe through the winter. And they attract eagles. Richardson said this is a big year for eagles; with 15 spotted during the Christmas bird count.

Snakes do what’s called hibernaculum. This means they all are huddled together in the quest to have a consistent temperature.

Frogs have one of the more unusual winter rituals. The Sierra chorus frogs are what Tahoe has the most of. When they touch an ice crystal their body starts to shutdown and their organs freeze.

“They are able to freeze solid. They have no heart, no brain function,” Richardson said.

He showed a video of a similar species of frog to what is in the basin that depicted the freezing process as well as the thaw-warming in the spring. Scientists still aren’t sure how this is possible.

Putting on a winter coat as well as extra weight are other ways animals survive winter. Feathers are a great insulator.

Richardson said no matter what strategy animals employ, preparation is critical – especially to have enough food stored.

Truckee’s Davis wins X Games halfpipe

By USSA

ASPEN -– U.S. Olympic team member Danny Davis (Truckee) earned a gold medal in his first halfpipe snowboarding final at X Games Aspen Sunday, just two weeks before the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

Davis led a U.S. sweep with Louie Vito (Sandy, Utah) taking silver and fellow Olympic team member Greg Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) bronze.

The strong American showing came without defending Olympic gold medalist Shaun White, who took a break from X Games to focus on Sochi.

Cook leads U.S. women in super G

By USSA

CORTINA D’AMPEZZO, Italy – Two-time Olympian Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) led the U.S. Ski Team with 13th in super G Sunday, the last of four races held over four days in Cortina to close the Olympic qualification period.

The U.S. Alpine Ski Team nominations to the 2014 U.S. Olympic Team will be announced later today.

Swiss Lara Gut won for her fifth victory of the season.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was 16th as swirling wind, tough visibility and a tricky course set forced 19 athletes, including Julia Ford (Holderness, N.H.) off course.

World Cup rookie Jackie Wiles (Aurora, Ore.) was 29th for her third consecutive day of scoring World Cup points.

Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein and Maria Hoefl-Riesch of Germany placed second and third, respectively.

El Dorado Trail captures route of old railroad



El Dorado Trail goes from Camino to Folsom. Photos/Kathryn

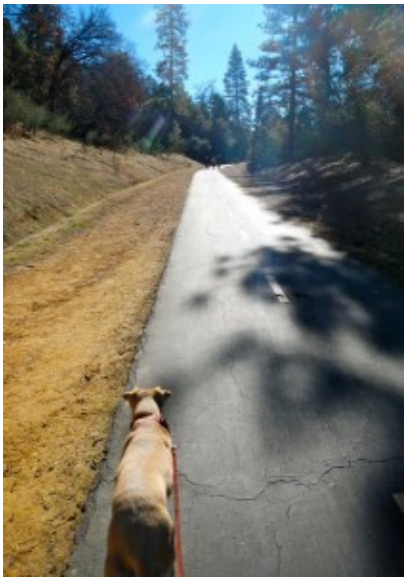
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By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – Spring in January. It's not something I want to get used to. But it is something I'm going to enjoy for hopefully what is just a brief interruption of winter.

Not wanting to endure ice on the trails, we opted to head off the hill last weekend in search of exploring new terrain at a lower elevation. We had seen a sign for the El Dorado Trail on one of our wine excursions and knew we would be back to explore.

What we didn't know is where it went, how long it was or anything about it.



AJ leads the way.

It's a trail in progress. But the completed section we were on is great. It's a paved multi-use trail – and is well used based on the walkers, cyclists and horse doo-doo.

Going out it is all uphill as we make our way toward Camino. An overpass crosses Highway 50 so then we are on the south side of the road. AJ didn't know what to make of the cars below her and got a little skittish. Dogs are allowed on the

trail on leash.

What’s interesting is how many times we have driven this stretch of highway and never knew there was a trail below us. We looked for it on our way home but could not see it.

The distinctive Apple Café sign on the hill is one of the few identifying markers for us to know where we are.

Benches along the way provide an opportunity to rest or just take in the scenery. The foothills, with the mix of pine and oak, stretch for miles. Several residences are above and below the wide path. More things not noticeable from the highway.

It’s disconcerting, though, how dry everything is. What should be green is brown. And it’s so warm – 68 degrees on Jan. 18. I could easily have been in shorts, as some people were.

At times the trail is shady, other times it is in full sun. I can imagine it would not be a great place to be in mid-summer because of the heat.

A man out with his dog told us when we hit the dirt trail we could keep going, but we opted to turn around at that point. Above us, though it’s not visible, is where the Valero gas station in Camino is. We think round-trip it was a little less than 5 miles.

But there is much more to the El Dorado Trail than what we did. The paved portion continues on the other side of the road from where we started. According to websites I read, it is paved from Camino to just south of Folsom – 35 miles in total.



Views between Placerville and Camino.

The trail follows old railroad lines – Southern Pacific and Michigan-California railroads.

Work on the route started after the July 1991 purchase of the line from the Southern Pacific Railway Corporation by the Sacramento-Placerville Transportation Corridor Joint Powers Authority. The former rail line is a part of the Designated Cross State Bicycle Route that goes from San Francisco to South Lake Tahoe.

Friends of El Dorado Trails is working to extend the trail east. Their website says discussions are under way for the route to go to Pacific House east of Pollock Pines, then follow the former Pony Express trail into South Lake Tahoe.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 50 west. Take the Smith Flat Road exit near Placerville. Turn right on Smith Flat School Road. Take the first left on Smith Flat Road. Turn right on Jacquier Road. Parking lot is on right. There is a big sign that says El Dorado Trail.

Anderson takes silver in slopestyle at X Games

By USSA

ASPEN -– Olympian Jamie Anderson (South Lake Tahoe) earned silver Saturday at the X Games slopestyle snowboarding final after Norway's Silje Norendal stomped a smooth run and pushed her out of the top spot.

Anderson and Norendal will meet again when slopestyle snowboarding makes its historic Olympic debut at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, on Feb. 6. Anderson was the only U.S. woman to advance to Saturday's final.

Olympian Chas Guldemond (Reno) finished fourth.

Canadian Max Parrot won gold for the men while his teammate Mark McMorris followed with silver and Norway's Ståle Sandbech earned bronze.

Vail taps young Midwest market to fill its bigger resorts

By Andrea Petersen, Wall Street Journal

Vail Resorts has come up with a novel way to combat the leveling off of skiing's popularity: buying up little

Midwestern hills.

The goal is to hook families on the sport at spots close to home and groom them for vacations at the company's pricier Western mountains like Canyons Resort in Utah and Breckenridge Ski Resort in Colorado. Vail Resorts has already bought resorts in Minnesota and Michigan and spent $20 million to renovate and upgrade them.

It is a long-term strategy, says Rob Katz, Vail Resorts Inc.'s chief executive. "There are kids in those [Midwestern] markets whose parents may not ski – maybe they are 12. If we can make a connection with that kid, we have a great opportunity to keep him in our family as he gets older and begins making his own decisions about where he is going to travel," he says.

Skiing and snowboarding are looking to attract younger participants to replace aging baby boomers. The percentage of skiers and snowboarders ages 24 and younger fell to 22.8 percent in the 2012-13 ski season, down from 30.6 percent in 1997-98, according to a survey of visitors to 88 U.S. resorts by the National Ski Areas Association, a trade group. During the same stretch, the percentage of people ages 45 to 54 increased to 19.8 percent, up from 14 percent.

Read the whole story

Cook, Mancuso stay in top 10 in downhill

By USSA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy – The U.S. Ski Team speed women

continued to storm toward the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup podium Saturday as Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) finished fifth and Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) seventh in the second of two Cortina downhills.

With less than two weeks to the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, the pair has now finished inside the World Cup top 10 in three straight races with Cook also finishing fifth in Friday's downhill.

Tina Maze of Slovenia, last season's overall and downhill champion, took her first victory of the 2014 season.

Leanne Smith (N. Conway, N.H.) was 26th and World Cup rookie Jackie Wiles (Aurora, Ore.), who was 15th Friday, finished 29th.

The race was incredibly tight with the top 15 skiers separated by less than a second.

Women's Olympic racing opens in Sochi on Feb. 10 with super combined followed by the downhill on Feb. 12.

The race, orginally slated for Garmisch-Partenkirchen, was moved to Cortina due to lack of snow in Germany.

Clear blue skies allowed the downhill to be staged from the top start. Friday's race was run from the super G start.

Bowman, Wise win gold at X

Games halfpipe skiing

By USSA

ASPEN -– Olympians David Wise (Reno) and Maddie Bowman (South Lake Tahoe) grabbed X Games gold at the halfpipe skiing final in Aspen on Friday night, just a few weeks before the historic halfpipe skiing debut at the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia.

It was Wise’s third-straight gold medal at X Games Aspen, while it was Bowman’s second straight.

France’s halfpipe hero Kevin Rolland took silver, while Alex Ferreira (Aspen) stomped his third and final run to earn bronze, his first X Games medal. Lyman Currier (Boulder, Colo.) and Gus Kenworthy (Telluride, Colo.) also qualified for the final, but couldn’t land clean runs and finished sixth and seventh.

Olympian Torin Yater-Wallace (Basalt, Colo.) also qualified for the final, but opted out of the competition.

Canadian Roz Groenewoud and France’s Marie Martinod, took silver and bronze, respectively.

U.S. Olympians Brita Sigourney (Carmel) and Angeli VanLaanen (Bellingham, Wash.) also advanced to the final where they finished fifth and seventh, respectively.