Jitloff top U.S. finisher in giant slalom

By USSA

ADELBODEN, Switzerland – A stroke of bad luck zapped Ted Ligety (Park City) Saturday as the four-time Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom champ crashed midway through the final run. Ligety, who was third after the opening run, was poised for the podium when his left ski skipped off the snow at the instant he was turning sending it flying and Ligety spinning down the course. The rare crash opened the door for good friend Felix Neureuther of Germany to capture his second straight World Cup win and the first giant slalom victory for Germany since 1973.

Tim Jitloff (Reno) posted the best American finish with 24th.

Temperatures in the mid 40's caused the course to deteriorate rapidly in both runs allowing large bumpy ruts to form around the sharper turning gates.

Thomas Fanara of France was second ahead of World Cup giant slalom leader Marcel Hirscher of Austria, who now edges Ligety in the discipline points by 120 points.

Mancuso has best downhill finish of season

By USSA

ALTENMARKT-ZAUCHENSEE, Austria -– Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley)

punched her best Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill finish of the Olympic season on Jan. 11 with 13th to lead four U.S. Ski Team athletes into the Zauchensee top 25. Elisabeth Goergl ended a two-year downhill victory draught for Austiran women with a stunning win ahead of teammate Anna Fenninger.

Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain), Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) and Leanne Smith (N. Conway, N.H.) also finished in the top 25 with 22, 23 and 25, respectively.

The race was held with only one training run after Friday's session was canceled due to heavy snow.

Mancuso laid back and focused on Sochi Games

By Grayson Schaffer, Outside

My plan to treat Julia Mancuso like an Olympic superstar is falling apart. I rented a red Porsche Cayman at LAX and made brunch reservations at the Ivy. But it's already 10am, I have to get her to a photo shoot at noon, and she hasn't showered after her morning beach workout of sprints, tuck jumps, and stutter steps. Fortunately, Mancuso's throwing audibles and solving problems. She knows this great little organic non-GMO spot on Abbot Kinney. "I showered last night," she says, both simplifying things and confirming the basic nature of her appeal.

Mancuso is the Olympic champion you'd want to drink a beer with. The 29-year-old Lake Tahoe native trains for skiing by surfing and paddleboarding, appears untroubled by minutiae, and then, like Big Papi, comes through when it matters. This

pattern first emerged at the 2006 Turin Games when, as an obscure 21-year-old, Mancuso won gold in the giant slalom. She wasn't quite a favorite at Vancouver, either, but she won two silver medals, making her the most decorated Olympian in U.S. Women's Ski Team history.

Going into the Sochi Games, most of the chatter has focused on Mikaela Shiffrin, the 18-year-old American phenom, and Mancuso's training partner Lindsey Vonn, who reinjured her surgically repaired right knee in November. Maybe it's because of Mancuso's relaxed demeanor that observers continue to underestimate her. But to hear Mancuso tell it, the *laissez-faire* attitude isn't a strategy; it's all she knows.

Read the whole story

Ski helmet fit makes a difference

By Berne Broudy, Outside

Lots of things can go wrong when you're skiing. Face it, you're sliding fast down a slippery surface on narrow planks with sharp metal edges, surrounded by hazards such as trees and other skiers, who may or may not be in control of their actions. If you crash—whether you're hucking and jumping, speeding through moguls, or just trying to get through your run—you can reduce the risk of danger by wearing a helmet.

Ski helmets protect your head from impact. But in order to do that job, a helmet must be sized correctly, worn correctly, and certified to meet minimum safety standards.

“Helmets, like jeans or shoes, come in lots of shapes and sizes,” says Lindsey Johnson, helmet category product manager at Smith. “Some are wide, some narrow. Find a brand that fits your head by visiting your local shop, and trying several until you find one that fits and feels good.”

Read the whole story

Poison kills more than the intended animal

By Denise Upton

There’s a threat looming out there. A threat to our wildlife we are supposed to be living in harmony with. Many of us are unaware of this threat.

Here’s the scenario: We’re sitting in our living room and “something” catches our eye running across the floor. Did we really just see something? Then we open the pantry and find droppings. It’s confirmed. Mice have moved into your house and you have to get rid of them. Quickly!

We run to the hardware store and we have a choice of old-fashioned snap traps where we have to remove the dead mouse carcass or how about those nifty bait stations where the mice go in get some poisoned bait and we never see them again. Sounds like a no brainier, right?

Well, let me get you up to speed on what really happens when the mice “take the bait” so to speak.

First of all, let me give you a little lesson in rodenticide 101. The most popular brand of poison bait is D-Con. The key

ingredients are brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difethialone or difenacoum. These are all what they call “second generation” rodenticides and are anti-coagulants that result in death from internal bleeding.

In June 2012, the EPA announced they are starting the process to ban second-generation rodenticides from the consumer market. In March 2013 the EPA started regulatory action to remove 12 D-con products from shelves of some retailers as the company Beckitt Benckisen (the manufacturer of D-Con) has refused to voluntarily remove these products. Even if these actions are imposed, you will still be able to purchase these products at some farm and ranch supply stores.

Why all the fuss over a few mice and some poison bait stations? Mice are not where the story ends. It’s just the beginning. Thousands of dogs and cats are exposed to this bait and injured or killed every year even though the bait stations are “supposedly” sealed. From 1993-2005 12,000 to 15,000 children under the age of 6 were reported to have exposure to rodenticides as reported by Poison Control.

As wildlife rehabilitators, what we see is exposure to our wildlife.

Secondary exposure occurs when wildlife consumes dead or dying rodents that have eaten poison bait. Since it is a slow acting poison it is often eaten over several days by rats and mice causing the deadly substance to accumulate in the animals’ systems reaching many times the lethal dose in their tissue. Predatory or scavenging wildlife that feed on them fall victim to secondary poisoning. Some of the animals affected are grey fox, coyote, kit fox (federally endangered), raccoon, fisher marten, bobcat, mountain lion, black bear, golden eagle, great horned owls, barn owl, all the hawk species and virtually anything that consumes rodents.

In essence we are killing our natural pest control species.

Ninety-two percent of all raptors in San Diego County tested positive, 79 percent of endangered San Joaquin kit foxes showed signs of anti-coagulant in their blood, and of 104 mountain lions tested since 2005 82 had the deadly poison in their system.

Since many of these animals typically retreat to their dens, burrows or other hiding places in the final stages of anti-coagulant poisoning, the numbers of non-target wildlife being killed by these compounds may be much higher.

Here in Tahoe we have many vacation homes that are only used during the summer. It's common for these homeowners to purchase multiple boxes of D-Con and toss them under their homes to control the "mouse problem" while they are away during the winter. "Out of sight, out of mind" so to speak. While they are away the rodents consuming this bait, which can include our local squirrels and chipmunks which are also rodents, may leave the area under the house and become easy targets for our hungry wildlife.

I remember the call we received about a pine marten in someone's garage. When we live trapped the sick animal we could tell he was in very bad shape and died soon thereafter. Within the next few days we got calls of two more pine martens in the same garage. We were able to save and release one of them. This garage was full of all sorts of stuff, but somewhere amid all of it was D-Con, which poisoned the mice and in turn killed the pine martens that consumed them.

Not many people have even seen these beautiful animals here in Tahoe and to see them die a slow agonizing death was heartbreaking.

We've received a record number of raptors at LTWC last year – eagles, hawks and owls. Some had obvious injuries and some were just found sitting on the ground for no apparent reason. Without expensive blood tests we can never be sure, but we

suspect some sort of poison. Some of these animals -after they died from “something” are sent to fish and wildlife labs for further testing, as this has become a widespread issue throughout the state and the entire country.

We live in Tahoe among a multitude of wildlife. We battle voles in our lawn, squirrels in our attics and bears under our porches. There exists a delicate balance among our wildlife. By poisoning our mice we are in turn killing the very species such as hawks, coyotes and owls – to name a few – that control our rodents naturally.

Here’s a perfect example: Last summer my neighbor had a huge lawn and lots of voles to go with it. He also had a resident hawk that spent the day sitting atop a tree watching for his chance to help control these lawn pests. Day after day this same hawk swooped down and took off with a vole in his talons. Amazingly, last spring, as the snow melted, he didn’t seem to have the same vole problem. Nature had done what it does best – controlled the problem naturally compliments of our neighborhood hawk.

I know people see coyotes and immediately think of them as pet eating carnivores when they are actually omnivores. Did you know that up to 80 percent of their diet could consist of rodents dependent on where they live? Did you know that bears are actually attracted to the smell of D-con under your house?

I won’t even begin to talk about the illegal marijuana growers in our national forests killing multitudes of our wildlife by putting out deadly poisons in tin cans known as “wildlife bomb” surrounding their camps killing everything and their offspring that is unfortunate enough to come in contact with it. This is all to protect their crops and camps. This is why wildlife is being found miles away from any civilization dead and dying from these toxic poisons. If you want to read more on this, here’s a link.

We can do our small part to protect our wildlife. Please educate yourself before you reach for that box of rodent bait with any of the ingredients listed above. There are alternatives such as snap traps, catch and release traps (please no glue traps). Find the entrances the rodents are using and seal them or as a last resort bait stations with ingredients that do not cause secondary poisoning to our local wildlife. We have an obligation to keep the delicate balance of nature in line and to think twice about what or who is affected when we take the easy way to control that little mouse you just saw run across your floor. You could be killing more then the little mouse.

Denise Upton is president of the Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care board.

USFS, Heavenly offer chance to ski with a ranger

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit's Ski with a Ranger at Heavenly Mountain Resort begins Jan. 17.

Tours begin at the top of the gondola at 10am and 1pm every Monday and Friday. Spanish Ski with a Ranger returns March 7 with tours every Friday at 10:30am. Both programs are about one hour. They will continue through April 11, weather permitting.

Participants must be at least intermediate level skiers-boarders and provide their own lift ticket. No reservations are required; attendance is on a first-come, first-served

basis.

For more info, contact Megan Dee at (530) 543.2618 or mldee@fs.fed.us or Joy Barney at (530) 543.2685 or jbarney@fs.fed.us.

Prescribed fire scheduled for Tahoe City

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations off of Bunker Drive near Tahoe City on Jan. 9.

Crews will burn approximately 1 to 5 acres per day, weather permitting. In addition, crews continue to burn piles near South Lake Tahoe on Luther Pass. Both operations may continue through the weekend, as weather and conditions allow.

Smoke from these prescribed fire project areas can be expected, is normal, and may continue for several days after the initial ignition. All prescribed fires are monitored regularly for burning and smoke dispersal and action is taken to mitigate concerns as they arise. For more information on prescribed fire and smoke management tips, go online.

Snowshoe cocktail event tests balance, speed

Snowshoe Cocktail Races at Camp Richardson are scheduled to start Jan. 18.

Racers run up and down the beach with a cocktail tray full of drinks. The goal is to be the fastest snowshoer with the least amount of spilled beverages. It’s possible to win prizes in multiple race categories.

The event begins at 7pm at the Beacon restaurant. There is no cost to participate.

There will be races Feb. 15 and March 15, too.

Vonn to miss Sochi Olympics

By USSA

PARK CITY -– Olympic gold medalist and 17-time Audi FIS Alpine World Cup title winner Lindsey Vonn (Vail) announced today that she will miss the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

“I am devastated to announce that I will not be able to compete in Sochi. I did everything I possibly could to somehow get strong enough to overcome having no ACL, but the reality has sunk in that my knee is just too unstable to compete at this level,” Vonn said.

Vonn sustained a season-ending injury to her right knee on Feb. 5, 2013, during a crash in the opening race of the World

Championships in Schladming, Austria.

Vonn staged a comeback, returning to snow on Aug. 31 during a U.S. Ski Team training camp in Portillo, Chile.

She re-aggravated the same knee during a downhill training crash on Nov. 19 at the U.S. Ski Team Speed Center at Copper Mountain, Colo., causing her to miss the debut of Raptor, the 2015 World Championships women's venue at Beaver Creek.

She then returned to the World Cup tour Dec. 6-8 with a successful three-race series in Lake Louise, Alberta, including an impressive fifth the super G.

A subsequent racing injury suffered Dec. 21 during a World Cup downhill in Val d'Isere, France, made it impossible to stabilize her knee and be ready in time for the upcoming Olympic Winter Games.

Vonn will undergo surgery shortly and will turn her focus on the 2015 World Cup season that includes the 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships set for Feb. 2-15 in Beaver Creek.

Vonn is the most successful female alpine skier in American history with 17 World Cup titles including a record six consecutive downhill titles and four overall crowns.

Vonn has 59 World Cup victories, currently three short of tying the women's all-time record of 62 held by Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell.

Avalanche courses at Squaw,

Alpine

Skiers and snowboards may take advantage of avalanche education courses at Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows starting Jan. 8.

The one- and three-day courses teach the basics of snow science, how to access and read the avalanche advisory, how to operate standard avalanche equipment (beacon, probe, and shovel), and, most important, how to make good decisions.

The three-day AIAIRE Avalanche Leavel 1 Certification course is Jan. 8-10 for $389, and the one-day avalanche awareness course is Jan. 12 for $149.

Additional courses will be offered at both Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows in February and March.

Full information including additional dates and details is available online.