Lack of snow makes slopes more dangerous

By Colin Lygren, KOLO-TV

As families continue their holiday vacations, many will be heading up the hill to catch some fresh turns. But this year the mountain may be a little more dangerous than in years past.

Last year we got a lot of snow early in the season and by late December, ski resorts were actually looking pretty good. This year, there’s not much snow at all which means less mountain for skiers and boarders to enjoy.

The problem at Tahoe area resorts started two months ago when the snow never came.

Read the whole story

Mancuso 29th, Shiffrin on podium in GS

By USSA

LIENZ, Austria – World Champion Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) returned to the site of her first Audi FIS Alpine World Cup slalom podium to further her status as a giant slalom threat after finishing third Saturday in Lienz.

Fourth after the first run with a 0.35 second deficit, Shiffrin charged within 0.01 of second place finisher and

discipline leader Jessica Lindell-Vikarby of Sweden.

Austrian Anna Fenninger won for her second straight giant slalom victory in Lienz.

It was the final 2014 Olympic qualification race in women's giant slalom. The Olympic U.S. Alpine Ski Team will be named Jan. 26.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) finished 29th and will return to the U.S. for a planned break. Mancuso will return to action for the speed series Jan. 11-12 in Altenmarkt-Zauchensee, Austria.

Shiffrin and Resi Stiegler (Jackson Hole, Wyo.) return to action Sunday with a slalom in Lienz.

Professionals to ski with masses at Squaw, Alpine

JT Holmes, Jonny Moseley and Jeremy Jones – all of whom call Squaw Valley home – will be signing autographs and skiing and snowboarding with guests at Squaw and Alpine Meadows through Jan. 2.

At Alpine, skiers and riders should meet at the base of Alpine's Summit Express. At Squaw, skiers and riders should meet at the Gold Coast Demo center.

It is free to ski or ride with the pros, however, a lift ticket is required for lift access.

Go online for exact dates and times, go online.

Winter triathlon in Tahoe City

Tahoe City Golf Course is hosting a winter triathlon Dec. 28. It involves skiing, riding and running about 2 miles each.

The entry fee is $20 for per team and $15 for individuals.

The race starts at 9am, registration at 8am.

For more info, call (530) 583.1516.

Gay athletes part of U.S. Olympic delegation

By BBC

The U.S. is sending two openly gay sports stars to the Winter Olympics in Sochi as part of its official delegation.

The move is being seen as a challenge to new laws in Russia which ban “propaganda” about homosexuality.

Tennis legend Billie Jean King and ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow will represent the US at the opening and closing ceremonies and other events.

President Obama, who is not going, said the delegation

“represents the diversity” of the U.S.

Activists have urged world leaders to boycott the Sochi Games over human rights concerns, despite assurances by Russia President Vladimir Putin that gay athletes will not be discriminated against.

Read the whole story

Free snowshoe at Spooner Lake on New Year’s Day

Nevada Division of State Parks is starting the New Year with a free guided snowshoe at Spooner Lake State Park.

This will be a snowshoe hike if there is adequate snow. The outing will follow the Spooner Lake loop trail, which is a little more than two miles, will little change in elevation.

Park entrance fees are waived for hike participants.

The event is Jan. 1 from 10am-noon.

Children are welcome, but dogs are not permitted.

Sierra transforms base area

into event venue



The new structure on the left, which has a restaurant and retail, will open in mid-January. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

TWIN BRIDGES – Snowboarders aren't the only ones sitting on their bottoms enjoying all that the slopes of Sierra-at-Tahoe have to offer.

The South Shore-area ski resort located 12 miles west of Meyers has kicked off the 2013-14 season with a new twist and turn – a major $5 million overhaul to its base lodge area that includes a plaza, new eatery and associated amenities designed to accommodate hanging out.

The resort started construction as soon as the last season ended.

"The mountain is incredible. We don't want to change the

mountain. We just wanted to do something that would enhance the overall ski and riding experience," Sierra-at-Tahoe spokesman Steve Hemphill said, as he strolled through a massive expanse of paving stones now covering the area outside the main base lodge.



Richard Baker works on the Solstice restaurant at Sierra.

No longer should seating be an issue.

Two fire pits, a structure for an informational sign, lighting, fencing and a 9,000-square-foot building mark an area that used to be covered in dirt or snow. The improvements have greatly increased the number of seats available for those who don't want to leave the ski area after playing on the slopes and for those who just want to people-watch or wait for others.

Sierra-at-Tahoe, still run under the management of Booth Creek Holdings, wants to expand into new markets – weddings, concerts and events. Three concerts that could simulate the Live at Lakeview series at South Lake Tahoe's El Dorado Beach are planned in March in cooperation with Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and OnCourse Events.

Also look for the plaza to be turned into a massive venue for a corn-hole tournament.

And when the Cal Band from Berkeley arrives for its annual

pilgrimage to Sierra-at-Tahoe on Jan. 19 during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday it will have a suitable place to stand and perform. This is the same weekend the new food-retail outlet on the plaza is set to open.

Events and parties represent part of the missing elements Sierra-at-Tahoe has wanted to capitalize on for years, but didn't have the full monetary resources to pull it off. When it ran Northstar, Booth Creek tended to pile the money into improvements to the north before Vail Resorts took over the Truckee-area ski area.

Sierra wanted a little breathing room inside and out of its base area where 90 percent of its visitors pass through. Getting in on the act, the Aspen Café and Mama's Kitchen in the base lodge were also opened up to accommodate more seating. Charging areas have been added for people who need to stay connected or do some work while at the resort.

"It's a vast improvement. This will be the après ski experience we've never had," Hemphill told *Lake Tahoe News*. "When you pay $84 (for a lift ticket), you expect certain things. That's how the Vails of the world do a great job."

However, Sierra isn't anything like Vail – and doesn't want to be. Within minutes of discussing how the improvements are a result of guest surveys, Hemphill confirmed the ski resort would not be the type of resort to put in hotel. That's not its style. But Sierra wouldn't mind if guests stayed after 4pm.



Paving stones are in the plaza, above the 14-foot wall, as well as in front of the ski rental area.

With chairlift technology constantly evolving, new lifts are in the master plan it shares with the landlord, the U.S. Forest Service. But lifts won't be in new locations. A mountain bike park is not likely, but adventure races are.

So how does a small ski resort compete with the high-dollar, fancier ski areas of the world when they're constantly adding new venues or improvements?

"We compete with the big guns by sticking to our guns. We're not looking to compete. We're just giving (people) the product they expect and enhanced it," Hemphill said.

The new restaurant will be called Solstice. It's designed to appeal to guests wanting healthier options and more local representation. These include the Hope Valley Café near Pickett's Junction and Jack Russell Brewery near Placerville, along with other wine-tasting options in the El Dorado County region. There will be seating inside and out of Solstice, and a bar outside. The retail space of the structure, which took much negotiation with the county building department to nail down, will feature the ski area's partners to provide them with more marketing offerings.

The new place is a Sprung design that's similar to an airport

hangar. It’s similar to the one at the West Bowl, only larger. This is where the last, large-scale improvement was made at Sierra for the 2003-04 season.

The plaza took out the shack for ski waxing and storage and moved the features to a tent on the lower level.

Long-term goals have the ski area eyeing improvements to its children’s ski school. After all, skiers and riders who grew up skiing this mountain have known greatness. Who can forget the two Travis’s skiing the slopes – Cabral and Ramos. Now all one has to do is look at the cast of young Olympians aiming for a shot at a gold medal. Some have already achieved it. Take snowboarding gold-medalist Hannah Teter who calls Sierra her host mountain near her Meyers home. Now there’s Jamie Anderson and Maddie Bowman likely on their way to Olympic stardom.

The resort hopes to erect a jumbo screen on the plaza during the Olympics in February so people can watch Sierra’s stars in action.

Anderson 7th despite falling in slopestyle at Copper

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. -– Sixteen-year-old Ty Walker (Stowe, Vt.) landed the top spot for the United States with her fourth-place finish in the Paul Mitchell Slopestyle at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix.

The international field put down runs with confidence at

Sunday's FIS World Cup with Czech rider Sarka Pancochova taking the victory and Isabel Derungs and Elena Koenz of Switzerland taking second and third.

Walker's top-four result fulfilled her objective criteria for Olympic qualification, and her top finish over the Americans moved her up in the standings behind Jamie Anderson (South Lake Tahoe), who fell during both of her runs Sunday and finished seventh.

Anderson is the only other rider who has met the top-four criteria after her victory at the Dew Tour iON Mountain Championships last weekend at Breckenridge.

Jessika Jenson (Rigby, Idaho) was the only other American rider in the final, finishing eighth.

Overall the course was running a little bit slow due to the new snow and cold, dry Colorado weather. Increasing winds in the second round also threw off many riders during the jumps.

White finishes third in slopestyle at Copper

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. -– Two-time Olympic gold medalist Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, made a big leap toward Sochi on Sunday with his third-place finish at the Paul Mitchell Slopestyle at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix.

White's top-four result fulfilled the objective criteria for

Olympic qualification as well as gave him the highest U.S. result so far in the five-event qualification series, putting him in a solid position going into the three remaining events.

The stacked field of international talent made for a progressive competition, especially the Norwegians, who went one-two with winner Staale Sandbech stomping an incredible cab 1440 and scoring a 97.00. The fight for the first-ever Olympic slopestyle team will only get more competitive when the Sprint Grand Prix Tour moves to Breckenridge Jan. 8-11.

Chas Guldemond (Reno) was hoping to improve his first run score of 88.5, but went down in his second run and landed fifth for the second time in two events. He still sits on top of the standings, but only has three more chances to secure a top-four result.

Overall the course was running a bit slow due to the new snow and cold, dry Colorado weather. Increasing winds in the second round also threw off many riders during the jumps.

Bahrke 25th in Beijing aerials

By USSA

BEIJING -– Dylan Ferguson (Amesbury, Mass.) landed a fifth-place finish at the aerials World Cup inside the famed Bird’s Nest stadium, the site of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games opening ceremony.

Ferguson took the top U.S. finish in the stadium, which was complete with a roaring crowd, music and light show. Canadian

Travis Gerrits spoiled the Chinese podium sweep, winning the contest ahead of Chao Wu and Zongyang Jia.

Olympian Scotty Bahrke (Tahoe City) took 25th in Sunday’s event, with Nevin Brown (Streetsboro, Ohio) 27th.