Northstar no longer hosting Olympic qualifying event

By Nick Zaccardi, NBC

Due to lack of snow, the third of five Olympic selection events in ski and snowboard halfpipe and slopestyle was moved from Northstar to Breckenridge, Colo.

Breckenridge, which hosted last week's first selection event, will now host the Jan. 8-12 stop, too.

"While the snow conditions are great at Northstar and the region is now experiencing much colder temperatures, we all mutually felt that it was too great a risk for the resort given the massive amounts of snowmaking required to build the venue," U.S. Ski and Snowboard Vice President Calum Clark said.

The second Olympic selection event is taking place in Copper Mountain, Colo., this weekend.

North Shore to host U.S. cycling events

The 2015 and 2016 USA Cycling Amateur and Para-cycling Road National Championships will be in North Lake Tahoe.

USA Cycling on Dec. 19 announced the six locations for 2015-16 USA Cycling national championships. The exact dates will be revealed after the first of the year.

Gravity Mountain Bike National Championships will utilize the course used for the 1996 UCI Downhill Mountain Bike World Championships at Mammoth Mountain. Cross-Country Mountain Bike and Enduro National Championships will be on Mt. Bachelor in Bend, Ore. Marathon Mountain Bike National Championships are slated to be in Columbia County, Ga. Collegiate Mountain Bike National Championships are slated to be at Snowshoe Mountain in West Virginia. Professional Criterium National Championships will be in Greenville, S.C.

Pursuit of powder requires a strategy

By Cindy Hirschfeld, New York Times

It’s every skier’s dream: to arrive at a resort just after a good storm, take one of the first lifts up and ply delightfully fresh, powdery tracks. The reality, though, is that most of us can’t drop everything to chase storms. We have to plan a ski trip in advance. That means the odds of finding good snow, let alone a powder day (often defined as six or more inches of new snow), requires some strategizing.

The simplest trick (other than forking over a lot of money for a snowcat or heli-skiing trip, and even that’s no guarantee) is to pick a resort known for receiving prodigious amounts of snow.

But start talking to meteorologists and others who track snowfall, and it turns out it’s not so simple. The vagaries of mountain weather mean that snow conditions in a couple of months are nearly impossible to predict accurately.

“I really hate planning trips too far in the future, because you never know what’s going to happen,” said Joel Gratz, a Boulder, Colo.-based meteorologist and co-founder of the opensnow.com website, which specializes in ski-targeted forecasting. “Hope isn’t in my vocabulary.”

Short-term forecasting isn’t much easier. The craggy topography of mountainous terrain is partly to blame, as is the difficulty of measuring atmospheric moisture at mountain-top elevations and in the upper atmosphere. “A lot of the tricks of mountain forecasting come down to terrain and wind direction,” Gratz added. “To learn these local effects, you need to live there and have observed the weather for a few years.”

There is an elite club of American resorts that average 500 or more inches of snow annually. They include Mount Baker in Washington (655); Alyeska in Alaska (650); Kirkwood (600) and Sugar Bowl (500) in California; Alta (560), Snowbird, Brighton and Solitude (500 each) in Utah; and Grand Targhee in Wyoming (500).

Read the whole story

Mountain bikers eager to test Heavenly’s trails

By Kathryn Reed

Mountain biking. That could be what Heavenly Mountain Resort is known for in the future.

Maps with colorful squiggly lines filled the U.S. Forest

Service conference room Wednesday night as people came and went during an informal information meeting about the South Shore resort's plans to turn the mountain into more of a summer playground.

And while rope courses, hiking trails, ziplines and canopy tours are part of the overall design, it is the biking opportunities that are generating the most buzz.



U.S. Forest Service recreation specialist Jonathan Cook-Fisher, center, talks Dec. 18 to people about Heavenly's proposed mountain bike trails. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Jonathan Cook-Fisher, USFS recreation special uses program manager, said mountain biking is also bringing in the most comments on the scoping document.

(The deadline to comment on the scope of the environmental impact statement is Dec. 20. The Forest Service expects to release a draft environmental impact statement in August 2014 and a final EIS the following January. For more info, go online.)

"We have a TAMBA trail map and there is a black hole where Heavenly is," Ben Fish told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That would change with what is mapped out.

The plan is people could ride from lake level up the mountain or take the gondola to access trails. Then the trails will connect with other established routes like the Tahoe Rim Trail. Heavenly's trail system will be a connection that has long been missing.

Mountain bikers already use the public bus system to get to the Stagecoach area of Heavenly and then make their way down to Stateline or South Lake Tahoe. Some of those riders lament the fact BlueGo only allows two bikes per bus.

A group of cycling enthusiasts on Dec. 18 pointed out how Van Sickle Bi-state Park is likely to get more use, especially from people descending the mountain. They spoke of the need to put in signage so people understand the bike park boundaries and know when the trail becomes mixed use.

The Panorama Bike Trail could be what Ridge Run is to skiers – a route that offers sweeping views of Lake Tahoe, where photographs are a must. The difference between this bike trail and the Flume Trail is that it should be reasonable to stop to take a picture or two.

Right now a proposed trail goes under the mid-station of the gondola, but there is no connector to the deck area. With weddings and sightseeing being a draw to the mid-station, the thought is cyclists would negatively impact those users and could stir up a lot of dust. But some people want the Forest Service to rethink putting in a connector.

The actual bike park and concentration of trails are in Nevada and outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. This means they are outside Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board's jurisdictions.

"The mountain bike park will be smaller than Northstar's park. But Northstar doesn't connect to the national forest. It

doesn’t have a ride-through capability,” Cook-Fisher told *Lake Tahoe News*.

There will be a mountain bike skill park outside the Tamarack Lodge.

Cycling advocate Kevin Joell sees the improvements as an economic driver for the area as well as another place for locals to play.

“What’s been missing is an inclusive trail network for beginners to advanced,” Joell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

LTCC grooms campus Nordic trails

Lake Tahoe Community College’s Nordic Ski Center is open. Groomers have set 3.5 kilometers of track for cross country and skate skiing.

When more snow falls a total of 5 to 7 kilometers will eventually be groomed.

For the most up-to-date grooming reports and snow conditions, go online.

The $29 individual season pass provides unlimited use of our terrain. A family pass is $49 for the season.

Skiers may access the trails from several entry points around the college – from the Ledbetter Terrace; the trailhead between Ross and the post office; from Black Bart; from behind the LTCC sports field; and from the bike path at College Drive.

Passes can be purchased online or stop by the Connect Community Education office. For more information, call (530) 541.4660, ext. 717.

Anderson ensures students ride this winter

By Kathryn Reed

Growing up in a family of eight kids, Jamie Anderson knows outfitting youngsters to ride or ski is expensive. She also knows what it means to be on the slopes when you are young.

Although Anderson is only 23, the Meyers resident is a veteran snowboarder. She's been taking home gold since she was a teenager. On Friday she won the snowboard slopestyle at the Dew Tour in Breckenridge, Colo. She is aiming to be on the Olympic team for the Games in Russia.

But before going after more hardware, Anderson spent time Dec. 16 Skyping with students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District. She is still in Colorado. The students are competing to win a season pass to her home resort, Sierra-at-Tahoe, as well as a full set of gear – mostly from businesses who sponsor her. Without Anderson and Sierra's generosity, these students would not be snowboarding this winter.

To be in the running for this prize, students had to write an essay about why they believe they deserve to be recognized by Anderson.

South Tahoe High School Principal Ivone Larson said, "They wrote a letter describing how it would impact them."

Most were serious in nature, while sophomore Paul Mutz took a more creative comical approach that caught the attention of reviewers.

Sixth-grader Allison Kennedy told *Lake Tahoe News*, “I wrote about how my dad was in prison for four years and that he just got home last year and we haven’t had that much money.”

Administrators narrowed the field to the 10 finalists. Essays from the finalists have been emailed to Anderson.

All but the one person who was out of town read part of their essays to Anderson on Monday.

As fifth-grader Monserrat Franco spoke she got choked up and barely could get out how she wants to ride with her cousins, have them teach her to snowboard so then she can teach her younger brothers.

Junior Jorge Luquin spoke of how money from his part-time job goes to pay household bills. There is no money for playing on the mountain.

“You are amazing; all of you,” Anderson told them. “I’m excited to meet you guys in person. All of your letters were heartwarming.”



In the control room of South Tahoe High School’s screening room Jamie Anderson, left, can be seen

Skyping with students on Dec. 16. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Anderson didn't have the normal school life. Mostly, except for a spell at South Tahoe Middle School, she was homeschooled.

She told the kids she knows things can be hard, that people can be mean. She asked them to try to rise above all the negativity.

"It's more than about boarding. It's about the love. It's more about passing along love," Anderson told them.

On Dec. 28 the youngsters will go to Sierra and ride with Anderson. That is when they find out who receives what.

This is the third year Anderson has partnered with Sierra and LTUSD to give students an opportunity to ride. The first year it was two students, last year four and this year it will be eight.

"Jamie is a world champion in so many ways, but a real class individual," John Rice, general manager of Sierra-at-Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It is a great program. She wanted to expand it this year. It's really showing that she is maturing as a human being and using her celebrity status to share with the world."

Derby Dames recruiting players for 2014

The Tahoe Derby Dames are looking for skaters and volunteers

to join the flat track roller derby team in South Lake Tahoe.

TDD consists of women from a variety of professional and athletic backgrounds. No prior skating experience is necessary. Minimum age is 18.

The first practice of the season is Jan. 5 from 8-10pm at Kahle Community Center in Stateline. Practice will be at Kahle on Sundays and Tuesdays through March.

Go online if interested in joining the team.

Guldemond top U.S. boarder in slopestyle

By USSA

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. -– X Games gold medalist Chas Guldemond (Reno) finished fifth and secured the top U.S. spot in the first-ever slopestyle snowboarding Olympic qualifier at the Dew Tour on Sunday.

Top-qualifier and favored U.S. athlete Shaun White (Carlsbad) sat out the event because of a sprained ankle he reaggravated during the halfpipe final on Saturday.

Both ride for Northstar.

Guldemond takes 1,000 qualification points into the second of five qualification events, the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix at Copper Mountain Dec. 21-22.

Sage Kotsenburg (Park City) and Brandon Davis (Mammoth Lakes)

finished sixth and seventh in the final, but went to second and third in the U.S. Olympic qualifications standings.

The final produced some of the most progressive tricks ever performed in competition, with Canadian Mark McMorris stomping a triple cork 1440 and winning with a score of 97.80. McMorris posted a 95.00 in the first round—a full four points above the rest of the riders—so he had nothing to lose when he threw down the triple cork.

Guldemond's first and highest-scoring run: Front board 180 out, half cab onto the wall ride 180 out, switch backside 900, double back rodeo, half cab on to the box, back lip on the rainbow rail, cab double cork 1260, backside double cork 1080.

Mancuso looking better in GS competition

By USSA

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland – Olympic champion Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) made another leap toward her champion-level form Sunday with an encouraging 12th in the St. Moritz giant slalom to lead the U.S. Ski Team. This was her best World Cup finish this season.

Reigning NorAm overall champion Megan McJames (Park City) landed her first Audi FIS Alpine World Cup points of the season with 23rd. Slalom World Champion Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.), who scored the first World Cup giant slalom podium of her career two weeks ago in Beaver Creek,

started bib one in the opening run and slid off course over a roll and did not finish.

Tessa Worley of France and Beaver Creek winner Jessica Lindell-Vikarby of Sweden went 1-2 on the sun-soaked 2017 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships venue.

Spectacular views spill forth after easy climb



Views of Rubicon Point and Mount Tallac from Eagle Rock. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TAHOE CITY – Eagle Rock has to be the easiest hike in Lake Tahoe to get some of the most stunning views. It's like having an eagle's-eye view of the basin.

Eagle Rock has always been popular among those who knew about it. But now it is getting even more attention because a designated trail was created. It used to require scrambling up the rocky backside to get to the top.

When we scampered up there two weeks ago the dirt trail was narrow, with a gradual climb. It's only 1,800-feet long.



Blackwood Creek flows into Lake Tahoe.

Signs at the trailhead said it's a moderate hike. I would say for those who are used to hiking in Tahoe it's an easy hike. The only "difficult" part is a bit of rock scrambling at the top. This might be where poles would come in handy for anyone with balance or knee issues.

It's 250-feet of volcanic rock at the top. This in itself makes it such a change from the usual granite that dominates the basin.

Like so many places in the basin, this used to be a special spot for Native Americans. However, white people knew about Eagle Rock in the 1880s. At one time there was a gazebo at the top. With how exposed the area is, it's easy to see how it

could be a hot vista in the summer.

There is a California State Lands Commission marker at the top that is dated 1979.

The California Tahoe Conservancy in 1987 acquired the 54.5-acre property that includes Eagle Rock for $450,000.

The Conservancy in 2012 completed a more than $4 million restoration project in the Blackwood Creek Watershed. This area contributed more sediment to Lake Tahoe than any other watershed in the basin – more than 1,900 tons a year.

The Eagle Rock trail is in the watershed. Part of it was built in 2011, with the second and final phase finished this year.

It’s easy to see where Blackwood Creek spills into Lake Tahoe.



Rubicon Peak

The sweeping views make it a must-do hike. It takes about 15 minutes to get to the top. Rubicon Point and Mount Tallac dominate the southern view. Immediately to the south are Homewood’s ski runs. Heavenly’s upper trails are distinctly outlined in white. To the rear is Rubicon Peak. Private piers dot the landscape to the north.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, take Highway 89 north. The trail is

between Chamber’s Landing and Sunnyside, on the left. There is parking on the left side, but there is no visible trailhead sign that can be seen while driving. There is a large “Lower Blackwood Creek Restoration Project” sign. The trailhead sign is to the right of that.