Mancuso struggles, Shiffrin shines in GS

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK -– Slalom world champion Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) earned her first Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom podium Sunday, taking second during the final event of the Nature Valley Raptor women's World Cup week.

After laying down an inspired first run for the roaring hometown crowd, Shiffrin produced a fluid final run that nearly snatched the win away from Jessica Lindell-Vikarby of Sweden.

Shiffrin's previous best GS result was a sixth in Soelden, Austria, to open the 2014 Olympic season.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) made the top 30, advancing to the final run in 28th, but missed a gate and did not finish her second run.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction but still a little off on time. We have a lot of races and I feel like it's tougher once you reach a certain level in your career," Mancuso said. "When you have ups and downs you have to remember that it keeps going. When you're having breakthroughs when you're younger everything seems to work a little easier. When you've been around for a long time it's hard when you're struggling to find that extra bit of energy."

The race was on the future site of the 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships at Beaver Creek Resort.

Jingle Jog coming to South Lake Tahoe

South Lake Tahoe and the Tahoe Tri Club are partnering to put on Jingle Jog.

The Dec. 15 event starts at 10am at Lake Tahoe Community College, 1 College Way, South Lake Tahoe.

Awards will be given to participants in holiday themed attire.

Register online.

Ganong 24th in downhill

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta —- The Audi FIS Alpine World Cup had its men's downhill opener Saturday amid cloudy skies and challenging flat-light conditions on Saturday. Two-time World Cup overall champion Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.) posted the top U.S. Ski Team result in 16th, while Italian Dominik Paris carved up the icy and bumpy course to take the victory.

Sunday the men race a super G before returning to America for the Audi Birds of Prey race week in Beaver Creek.

Also earning World Cup points were U.S. Ski Team members Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) finishing in 19th, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) 24th and Erik Fisher (Middleton, Idaho) 26th.

Miller is returning to the racing circuit after a year absence

and showing promising results with two top-20 finishes in a row, including Saturday and the Soelden World Cup giant slalom in late October.

Long-term forecast: Dry in California

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Despite a hint of rain and snow in the forecast next week, the region and California as a whole can expect a third dry winter ahead.

That's according to an "experimental" long-range forecast released this week by the California Department of Water Resources. The forecast covers the 2014 water year, which runs from Oct. 1, 2013, through Sept. 30, 2014. It calls for "mostly dry conditions for most of California," with dry conditions being especially likely in the south state.



While moisture is in the forecast next week for Tahoe, it may be a dry

winter overall. Photo/Susan
Wood

The forecast was done for the state by Klaus Wolter, a Ph.D. meteorologist and research associate at the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Wolter made a similar dry prediction for the state last year, which at first appeared “destined for failure,” he said.

In a hint that suggests a similar outcome this year, the near-term forecast calls for a major change in the weather for Lake Tahoe and Northern California on Monday. A storm is expected to drop out of the Pacific Northwest, bringing a chance of rain to the Valley through Wednesday and snow in the Sierra Nevada through Thursday.

Read the whole story

U.S. women mediocre in super G in Colo.

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK -– Swiss Lara Gut set the speed pace for the 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships with victory in the both the Nature Valley Raptor downhill and super G.

Leanne Smith (N. Conway, N.H.) earned the best result for the U.S. Ski Team with 23rd, which came as perfect weather Saturday blanketed the thousands on hand in Beaver Creek for the second straight day of Audi FIS Alpine World Cup racing.

Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) and Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) also earned World Cup points with 28th and 29th, respectively.

“We should have done better here as a group. I think we are better than this, and I think when we get back on the courses that we are a little more familiar with and we can get into our normal pattern again, we’ll start bringing the results we brought last year,” Cook said.

Giant slalom will close the women’s weekend on Sunday with slalom World Champion Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) taking to the Raptor slope for the first time since training on the hill last spring.

USFS, resorts want to regulate uphill skiers

By Kathryn Reed

The U.S. Forest Service is looking at solidifying policy for the 122 ski resorts in the country that are on federal land when it comes to allowing people to access the mountain without paying to go uphill.

Walking, hiking, and skiing uphill (usually done with skins) are activities that are gaining in popularity. Many times people want to access backcountry terrain. Other times people just want to play for free.

“We’ve seen a significant increase in uphill skier traffic over the past few seasons, so with safety in mind we recently

launched a new uphill use policy," Jeff Monson, spokesman for Sugar Bowl ski resort, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "While we won't be charging a fee, we do expect all uphill skiers to adhere to these rules, respecting the fact that there's nearly constant work being conducted out on the mountain. By obtaining our new uphill season pass, signing the waiver and ultimately familiarizing themselves with the rules and regulations of uphill use, skiers are more educated on the hazards involved, and the level safety is improved as a result."



While Squaw doesn't allow access except via a lift, one reason people like the choice is to avoid lift lines. Photo/LTN file

Heavenly Mountain resort doesn't allow people to be on the mountain when chairlifts are spinning unless they have a lift ticket.

"We have no plans to charge for uphill access to Heavenly. As a company, we have instituted policies to ensure the safety of our guests who choose to access the mountain under their own will," Sally Gunter, with Heavenly, told *Lake Tahoe News*. Here is the resort's policy.

Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows do not permit any uphill travel during winter operations except via the lifts.

Lake Tahoe Basin Forest Service officials said the intention

of the national directive is to strike a balance between the resorts and those who want to use the resort without taking a chairlift.

Proposed changes “would preclude authorization of an entrance fee at ski areas, and would allow authorization of fees for facilities and services the holders provide, such as lifts, parking lots, and slopes and trails that have been cleared, graded, groomed or covered with manmade snow. Additionally, this paragraph would encourage authorized officers to ensure that some portions of the permit area remain open to the public without charge, so that the holder’s charges do not constitute de facto entrance fees.”

Comments on the policy are being taken until Dec. 2. It’s part of revising the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act. Clarifications are being made to the 2011 legislation. More information is available online.

In part wording is being changed “to clarify that ski area permit holders may be allowed to charge fees for use of improvements and services in which they have made capital investments, such as ski trails or other facilities they constructed, groom, or otherwise maintain, and to clarify that ski area permit holders may not be allowed to charge for use of non-motorized or motorized trails that are constructed and maintained by the Forest Service.”

While Sierra-at-Tahoe intends to follow whatever rules come from Washington, the South Shore resort does not promote uphill skiing.

“We do not encourage uphill skiing and recommend that guests who want to uphill ski, safely explore other areas of the Tahoe basin,” Steven Hemphill, Sierra’s spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Cook leads U.S. women at Beaver Creek

By USSA

BEAVER CREEK – The 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships women's downhill successfully hosted its first World Cup Friday to open the Nature Valley Raptor World Cup week. Veteran Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) earned the top spot for the U.S. Ski Team, finishing 19th on a course that has been heralded by the entire AudI FIS Alpine World Cup field.

Cook finished 2.23 seconds behind the Soelden winner Lara Gut of Switzerland, who put down a smooth and aggressive line early in the race to take the victory.

"Itt's pretty bumpy and just is a hard course to figure out, especially when it changes day to day. It's just hard to get a grip on it and I struggled a little bit on executing my plan. That happens on new courses," Cook said.

Saturday the U.S. women's speed team takes the Raptor race speed venue again for a World Cup super G.

Three-time Olympic medalist Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) finished 20th, with Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) 22nd.

Rookie Jacqueline Wiles (Aurora, Ore.) started her first World Cup race Friday, finishing 44th. Leanne Smith (N. Conway, N.H.) had a podium run going before hooking an edge above the finish jump, forcing her to pull off course.

Guided snowshoe event at Tahoe Donner

On Dec. 22 from 10:30am-noon Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center is hosting a snowshoe tour.

Guides will teach people about snowshoeing while exploring the trails at Tahoe Donner. Information about local fauna and flora will be given.

The cost is $30 for tour only or $59 for trail pass, rental and tour.

Tahoe Donner Cross Country Ski Center is 15275 Alder Creek Road, Truckee.

For more info, call (530) 587.9494.

Vikings begin basketball season Friday

South Tahoe High School’s basketball teams open against Incline High school on Friday at home.

The freshman boys start the action at 1pm, followed by the JV girls at 2:30pm, then the JV boys at 4pm, varsity girls at 5:30pm and varsity boys at 7pm.

Both varsity matches are expected to be entertaining,

according to one of the coaches. Despite Incline having a smaller enrollment, the school has a respected basketball tradition.

Invasive species adapt to change faster than natives

By Michelle Nijhuis, Smithsonian

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the growing season in many areas of the lower 48 states has expanded by about two weeks. Frosts end earlier in the spring and begin later in the fall. To gardeners in Maine, Wisconsin and Montana, that might seem a blessing. What’s not to like about more lettuce or riper tomatoes?

The longer seasons, however, are also helping invasive plants annex American soil; extended springs mean they can more quickly push aside native species and transform ecosystems.

Researchers found that many nonnative species are changing their flowering schedule in concert with the longer growing season. By contrast, indigenous species have been, on average, much slower to react to the new conditions.

Read the whole story