Age doesn’t have to be the reason not to ski

By AP

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. — If you’ve walked into a ski lodge the past few years, likely as not you’ve seen tables filled with gray-haired skiers wearing sweaters so old they’re back in style.

That’s because the number of skiers on the far side of 50 — some on the very far side — has been creeping up each year, according to the National Ski Areas Association.

Credit advances in artificial hips and knees that make it possible for skiers to continue enjoying the sport; shaped skis, along with better snowmaking and grooming that make skiing easier; and high-speed lifts and luxury touches like ski valets that make it more pleasant.

“There are no excuses,” said 93-year-old Klaus Obermeyer, the Aspen-based skiwear designer. Despite breaking his leg in a wipeout two years ago, Obermeyer still skis each day.

Sure, younger people still make up the majority on the slopes — the average skier is 38.5 years old — but, “The person who skis the most in a given year is 65 and older,” said Michael Berry, president of the NSAA, based in suburban Denver.

Bragging rights go to those age 68 and older, who averaged 9.5 days skiing last season. Boomers — those age 49 to 67 this year — also skied more than the national average of five times per year, according to an NSAA survey released in August.

“You don’t want to sit in your rocking chair and look at the view,” said 70-year-old Billy Kidd, who won a silver in the slalom at the 1964 Olympics. “You want to remember your days

of youth and you love that feeling of adrenaline and dealing with the variables of skiing."

Clearly, others old enough to remember Kidd in his heyday feel the same way. Those ages 45-54 made up 20 percent of skiers last winter, up from 14 percent in the 1997-98 season; the 55-64 age group made up 12 percent, up from nearly 5 percent, and those 65 and older rose to 5.5 percent from 2.5 percent, according to the NSAA study.

Kidd, who skis nearly daily in his role as an ambassador for the Steamboat Ski Resort, said one thing that has changed as he's gotten older is his gear.

Indeed, Kidd is a walking billboard for the latest innovations. His skis and poles are lightweight carbon fiber. His Osbe helmet does away with goggles and replaces them with a built-in visor that provides better peripheral vision. He traded in traditional ski boots for soft Apex boots, which provide support through an external frame. (For putting on traditional ski boots, many older skiers swear by the Ski and Snowboard Boot Horn.)

"At 20 years old I didn't care about comfort," Kidd said. "I still have to have control, but the top priority for me is comfort."

Certainly, there are challenges as skiers age, not the least of which is finding friends who are also still skiing.

Clubs like the 70+ Ski Club, based in North Kingstown, R.I., with more than 4,000 members, and the Over the Hill Gang International based in Colorado Springs with 3,000 members, offer camaraderie, discounted tickets and ski trips near and far.

Even those who retire to Florida still pursue their passion. The Florida Ski Council has 17 clubs in the state and at least one trip going every week of the ski season. The largest club,

the Tampa Bay Snow Skiers and Boarders, takes about 1,000 people a year skiing, said Clair Quenzler, the council president.

These dedicated watchers of the discounts for skiers agree that the perks seniors used to get from ski resorts have been reduced as their numbers increase.

Several resorts have raised the eligibility age for discounted lift tickets, or they've limited deals to weekdays.

"To be fair to the ski areas, it's a business for them as well," said Doug Lofland, 56, one of the owners of the Over The Hill Gang International.

So what suggestions do experts have to help the rest of us ski into our Golden Years?:

- Stay in shape.
- Try to choose slopes with less traffic so you can safely ski a little slower.
- Think about afternoon sun and shadows. A west-facing slope will have better definition.
- Be cognizant of higher altitude and hydration.
- Walking in ski boots can be more challenging than skiing, so companies have developed lightweight shoes, like Pakems, that you can carry with during the day for a quick change.
- Consider taking a gondola or chairlift down the mountain if weather sets in or you're tired.
- Consciously chose your danger level. "The repercussions of making a mistake are too great," Kidd said.

And finally, enjoy, like the 89-year-old who sent the 70+ Ski Club a photo of herself skiing with her great grandchildren.

"There are not many sports four generations can do together like that," said club president 42-year-old Richard Lambert.

Kirkwood to host megaslope competition in March

Red Bull Megaslope will return to Kirkwood Mountain Resort in 2014, but this time as a full-blown competition.

In spring 2013, professional skier Bobby Brown saw his dream slopestyle course come to life as Snow Park Technologies built a massive line featuring six oversized, custom features that he was able to ski in a single run. The exclusive filming project, known as Red Bull Megaslope, included four other skiers.

The Red Bull Megaslope course, which weaves across three black diamond runs, features a vertical change in elevation that is approximately two and a half times that of a traditional slopestyle course, at 1,200 feet. The length of the course will remain the same as it was in 2013, at 2,750 feet and will incorporate six massive features, some three to four times the size of a traditional contest feature, each of which would normally be built for a big air competition, not a slopestyle competition.

The event is open to athletes by invitation-only and will be finalized when two wildcards are added to the roster during a voting period for Athlete’s Choice and People’s Choice. Initial invites have gone out, and invited athletes include Bobby Brown, Gus Kenworthy, Russ Henshaw, and PK Hunder, all of whom skied the 2013 course, plus newcomers Sammy Carlson, James Woods, Nick Goepper, Torin Yater-Wallace, and Jossi Wells.

The Red Bull Megaslope course will be built on the backside of Kirkwood Mountain Resort, and the one-day competition will

take place during a weather window from March 15-18.

Heavenly and Northstar opening Saturday

Updated: 8:45am Nov. 23

Heavenly and Northstar are opening today.

Kirkwood is looking at opening Monday.

Curtis Fong, the guy from Tahoe, has provided *Lake Tahoe News* with this ski report update Nov. 23 for Tahoe resorts.

Heavenly delays opening day until Saturday



Wind on Nov. 22 prevents Heavenly's gondola from running. Photo/LTN

Opening day didn’t happen for Heavenly Mountain Resort today. Wind prevented anyone from getting on the Gondola, despite a couple dozen people braving the 20-something degree weather in hopes to getting on the mountain at 9am.

William Rust of Marina and Steve Luiz of Hollister came up Thursday night in anticipation of starting the ski season Nov. 22.

“We chose Heavenly because it always has the best grooming, especially in early season,” Luiz told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The two friends hadn’t decided if they would spend the night in Tahoe in hopes the winds die down and Heavenly can open Saturday.

George Awad of South Lake Tahoe was on the phone in his car in Harrah’s parking lot Friday morning trying to find out what else was open.

Boreal is it for Tahoe resorts – as least on this Friday.

Mother Nature will dictate when other resorts open. Heavenly and Northstar are shooting for Nov. 23.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Children less fit than their parents were as kids

By Michelle Roberts, BBC

Many children cannot run as fast as their parents could when they were young, a study of global fitness says.

Experts say the work – being presented at the American Heart Association's annual meeting – suggests children's fitness levels may be declining.

Researchers analyzed data spanning 46 years and involving more than 25 million children in 28 countries.

On average, children today run a mile 90 seconds slower than did their counterparts 30 years ago, they said.

Across nations, cardiovascular endurance – gauged by how far children can run in a set time – has dwindled consistently by about 5% every decade, according to the findings.

The decline is seen in boys and girls and across all ages from nine to 17 years, and is linked to obesity, with some countries faring worse than others.

Lead researcher Dr Grant Tomkinson of the University of South Australia's School of Health Sciences said: "In fact, about 30 percent to 60 percent of the declines in endurance running performance can be explained by increases in fat mass."

Read the whole story

Rare weather pattern could inundate region

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Scientists at NASA say they have identified a rare weather pattern that assures intense and potentially prolonged wet weather will strike California.

The research findings are a crucial addition to weather forecasting tools and may go a long way to alerting officials to the possibility of floods, mudslides and levee failures.

“We have found a strong connection between certain phases of two systems and the frequency of their atmospheric landfalls in California,” said Bin Guan, an earth sciences researcher at UCLA and lead researcher of the study.

Conducted in collaboration with scientists at UCLA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the study found a conclusive link between the alignment of two specific weather patterns in the Northern Hemisphere and the formation of an “atmospheric river” headed for California.

The research results were gleaned in part from data provided by NASA’s 11-year-old Aqua weather satellite – one of more than 40 weather-related satellites that circle the globe.

Atmospheric rivers are narrow bands of wind, often a mile high, that can pack the punch of a hurricane. As they move over the ocean they become laden with water vapor – and can carry with them as much water as the Mississippi River dumps into the Gulf of Mexico in an average week.

An example of the power of such an atmospheric river event was seen in 1999, when a winter storm hit California and caused 15 deaths and $570 million in damage.

Read the whole story

Scientists decoding language

of plants

By Elizabeth Preston, Nautilus

Entomologist Richard Karban knows how to get sagebrush talking. To start the conversation, he poses as a grasshopper or a chewing beetle – he uses scissors to cut leaves on one of the shrubs. Lopping off the leaves entirely won't fool the plants. So he makes many snips around the edges and tips of the leaves – "a lot of little bites."

A few months later, Karban, a professor at UC Davis who studies plant defense communication, returns to the sagebrush and examines its leaves, many of which now have damage from real grasshoppers or beetles. However, within about two feet of the branches he clipped, leaves have been spared the worst ravages of the hungry insects. That's because Karban's cuttings convinced those damaged leaves they were under insect attack, so they sent chemical alarms into the air. Neighboring leaves intercepted and deciphered the code messages, and began prepping their own defenses against the bugs.

If plants seem silent to us, it's only because we're oblivious to their chatter – we are just beginning to tap into their cryptograms. Plants emit codes into the air all the time, helping them defend against insects and other threats, and in some instances serving as warnings to their neighbors. Moreover, plants can send "SOS" calls for rescue missions and summon predators to feed on insect invaders.

Plants speak in chemical codes – carbon-containing molecules called volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Characterized by the ease with which they enter the air, VOCs are a diverse group: plants alone make more than 30,000 varieties. Some VOCs produce familiar herbal or flower smells. Others are released only in response to a specific cue. Within seconds of being damaged, plants send out green leaf volatiles (GLVs), which we

can detect too – for example, as the smell of a newly mown lawn.

Read the whole story

Heavenly mountain bike park moves forward

By Kathryn Reed

While opening day at Heavenly is just two days from now, there may come a day when the South Shore resort is open year-round for recreation.

Skiing starts this week, as does the comment period for the scoping for the environmental documents involving the expanded summer recreation. While much of the first phase of the non-skiing on-mountain recreation is completed (the zipline opens in December and rope courses in the summer), Heavenly wants to develop a mountain bike park, hiking trails, and more ziplines and rope courses.

It's possible construction of the mountain bike park would start in 2015. The 8 to 10 miles are proposed to include beginner to expert terrain, according to Sally Gunter at Heavenly. But it won't necessarily cost avid cyclists anything to ride at Heavenly Mountain Resort. This is because the plan is to tie the park into the Tahoe Rim Trail and connect to Van Sickle Bi-state Park.



The ropes course above Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly opens to the public in summer 2014. Photo/Provided

“We are aiming for an intermediate trail system catering to families and folks who want to play together,” Jonathan Cook-Fisher, USFS recreation special uses program manager, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We want access to and through Heavenly that connects to a wider system. Connectivity to recreation in the Tahoe basin is key.”

Cyclists, for a fee, would be able to ride the gondola and then access trails via Dipper, Comet and Tamarack chairlifts. It would be possible to ride off the mountain – back to town, or ride loops on what are commonly known as ski slopes.

The first phase of non-skier activities centers around where the gondola ends on top of the mountain. What is being proposed next would spread the activities out more – east toward East Peak Lake Basin and west to Sky Meadows Basin. The three areas would be connected via ski lifts, hiking trails, ziplines and roads.

In addition to the bike park, Heavenly wants to add zipline and skycycle canopy tours, a ropes course, water activities, hiking trails, mountain excursion tours and nature interpretation.

A snowcat emergency evacuation route for the gondola line is also part of the latest plans.

About three miles of hiking trails will be added to what's already available.

The water activities don't actually involve getting in the water. Cook-Fisher said it's more like learning about mining, perhaps having a sluice box, as well hiking around East Lake.

"For us, it's all about educating the next generation," Gunter told *Lake Tahoe News*. "It will create an appreciation for the national forest and outdoors."

She anticipates the apparatuses and bike park will be a draw for locals and tourists.

These new activities are allowed now because of the Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act of 2011.

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Notes:

• The deadline to comment on the scope of the EIS 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.

• TRPA's Advisory Planning Commission will discuss the proposal Dec. 4 at 9:30am at the agency's Stateline office. The Forest Service will host a workshop Dec. 18 from 5:30-7:30pm at the South Lake Tahoe office, 35 College Drive.

Pile burning to occur on

South and West shores

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations off Marshall Trail near South Lake Tahoe and on the West Shore near Tahoma on Nov. 19.

Weather and conditions permitting, crew will burn approximately 10 acres per day on the west side of Tahoma. Operations are expected to continue through the weekend. In the Marshall Trail area, crews will burn approximately 2 acres per day over several days.

Smoke from these prescribed fire project areas can be expected and is normal. Smoke from prescribed fire may continue for several days after the initial ignition. Smoke that settles in low lying areas in the morning usually lifts out of the area during normal daytime heating. All prescribed fires are monitored regularly for burning and smoke dispersal and action is taken to mitigate concerns as they arise.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around the areas affected by the prescribed fire, send email notifications, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, ext. 6. To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

STHS girls win state soccer title



South Tahoe High's girls' soccer team celebrates being state champs. Photo/Amy Jackson

The South Tahoe High School girls' soccer team won state for the third time in four years.

The Vikings defeated Pahrump Valley 3-2 on Nov. 16 to take home the trophy at Dayton High School. Brittany Hibberts, Ally King and Maia Bickert each scored in the championship game.

South Tahoe finished the season 17-3-3, ending with a nine-game win streak.

Pahrump had beaten Truckee 2-0 the day before to reach the finals. STHS prevailed over Faith Lutheran to make it to the championship game. Jenny Burks scored twice in the 2-1 semifinal.

Faith was the last team to beat Pahrump, dating back to last season. This meant STHS snapped Pahrump's 22-game unbeaten streak.

South Tahoe also won state in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, STHS lost 8-3 to Pahrump in the semifinals.

– Reporting by Jeremy Evans