

Northstar – off the charts good



Near empty slopes at Northstar seem to flow onto the inversion covering Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

TRUCKEE – *Pssst* – here’s the best-kept secret for those who have been living under a rock – midweek skiing is nothing like the weekend.

Midweek riding offers a world all its own for those either lucky enough to be retired or crazy enough to call in sick to work. Then, there are those who work odd hours or swing shifts and others who want to celebrate the slopes to themselves. The experience is surprisingly a mixed bag of motivations.

Wednesday at Northstar was no exception.

“It’s eclectic – all types. You can see everything from retirees to ski teams to locals to visitors wanting a different experience,” Northstar spokeswoman Marcie Bradley

told *Lake Tahoe News*. “(Midweek is) serene and quiet.”



A crew prepares the terrain park that is now open.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

She's right. Only three boards and four sets of skis were resting in the racks by midday at the routinely-busy Zephyr Lodge.

Compulsive skiers and boarders wanting the assurance of technology to tell them what lift lines are uncrowded may check a feature on their Epic Mix pass that allows them to check the length of time to get on the slopes. Vail introduced the feature last year.

Eric Behrens of Healdsburg, who's been skiing at Northstar since he was 10, doesn't need to check. He knew what to expect midweek, that's why he was there.

The 41-year-old skier was celebrating his 10-year anniversary with his wife at Northstar. He came up midweek, and had a room at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe, which is tucked in about a

third of the way up the slopes.

“Nobody’s here. There’s no line,” Behrens said, while riding up the Comstock Express chairlift. He’s semi-retired, so his schedule is somewhat flexible.

One snowboarder from Redwood City didn’t care he was supposed to be at work. The 59-year-old, who plans to retire at 61, called in sick to his job in San Francisco to go skiing with no lines. He boasted of the bold decision.

Northstar has much to brag about. Besides its reputation for being family friendly, customer-service oriented, amenity-filled and professionally astute about what it’s doing, the Truckee ski resort has the operation down like a fine-tuned instrument.



Slow times at Zephyr Lodge. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Despite the bare ground at lake level, the big guns of snowmaking operate top to bottom skiing, with wide runs that can make you claustrophobic anywhere else.

The ski resort boasts 58 inches of snowfall even before Christmas. Since it's been quite cold, the snowmaking has been working around the clock on some days. And there's something to be said for that. Northstar has some of the **best snowmaking capacity** in the nation. With apologies to natural-snow snobs, it appears the man-made variety holds up better on warm days. Northstar is able to cover half its mountain with its chemical mix.

The runs off East Ridge on one side of the summit and West Ridge on the other are fully covered. Sketchy runs with obstacles like the black diamond trails of Rendezvous and Dutchman are well marked with warnings. The view off the ridges is outstanding, and the terrain is worry-free, and at midweek, it's like the wide-open road.

Skiers and boarders seeking a greater red-carpet experience may add on the Platinum Piste service, a trail combining the resort's signature grooming on a trail designed exclusively for them. Early birds may sign up for First Tracks, which opens its runs to them before the lifts turn for the masses.

The resort on Friday opened its Pinball terrain park under the Vista Express chairlift. This is one of nine lifts the resort is turning to serve 30 trails.

Northstar should start to see an uptick in people hitting the slopes for the holidays. If you're one of those who couldn't get away any sooner or later, there is an advantage to the exhilaration of coming out when the resort is bustling with activity.



No waiting in line during midweek skiing at Northstar.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Events include:

- Noel Nights, Dec. 22, features a winter wonderland with horse-drawn sleigh rides.
- Breakfast with Santa, is just that on Dec. 24.
- New Year's Eve Fire & Ice, Dec. 31, rings in 2018 with a fireworks show.
- Her Mountain Retreat, Jan. 6-7; Feb. 3-4, provides an all-women getaway on the slopes.
- Mountain Table Dinner, Jan. 12, Feb. 2, Feb. 16 and March 9, allows for a night dining excursion at the Zephyr Lodge.
- Spring It On, April 7-8, celebrates the warm-weather season at the resort with a favorite – the pond-skim event.
- Snowshoe tours for families are scheduled for Dec. 24, Jan. 1, Jan. 14, Feb. 18. Stargazers can take part on Dec. 21, 23, 27; Jan. 13; Feb. 17; March 10; April 14. Twilight enthusiasts may seize the event Dec. 16, 23, 30; Jan. 6, 20, 27; Feb. 3, 17, 24; March 3, 4.

Anderson secures spot on Olympic team

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. – Jamie Anderson of Meyers and Chris Corning (Silverthorne, Colo.) both landed second-place finishes in slopestyle snowboarding finals at Dew Tour, achieving maximum Olympic selection points and confirming their nominations to the U.S. Olympic snowboard team.

Anderson's signature smooth style was on display right out of the gate when she scored a 93.33 on her first run of the day to hold down the second podium spot. Canada's Spencer O'Brien landed the win, and Finland's Enni Rukajarvi was third. U.S. riders Hailey Langland (San Clemente) and Julia Marino (Westport, Conn.) finished fourth and sixth, respectively.

"I feel really good – I can't believe the Olympics are around the corner," said Anderson. "It was really fun out here in Breckenridge. All of the girls are killing it. Super happy for Spencer putting down a new, creative run. I was definitely bummed I couldn't land my cab double-nine, so I still have some work to do. But yeah, I'm feeling good."

After finishing second at last weekend's Toyota U.S. Grand Prix at Copper Mountain, local rider Corning added another podium to his Olympic qualification results, putting down a massive second run to score a 95. Canada's Max Parrot answered back with a 97, landing him the first place spot. Norway's Mons Roisland was third.

"Oh dude, it's amazing [to have made the Olympic team]," said Corning. "I don't really know what to say or what to think, but I'm pretty stoked. I just wanted to get some runs down and at least get a top five, that was pretty much the goal. But I'll take a second place out of it."

The U.S. had three additional riders finish in the top 10, including Red Gerard (Silverthorne, Colo.) in fourth, Judd Henkes (La Jolla) in sixth and Brock Crouch (Mammoth) in seventh.

Olympic qualification competition continues after the New Year

with Toyota U.S. Grand Prix stops at Snowmass Jan. 7-14 and Mammoth Mountain Jan. 15-21.

Squaw's Bennett 11th in downhill in Italy

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

VAL GARDENA, Italy – Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) scored a career-best FIS Ski World Cup result, finishing ninth in downhill Saturday in Val Gardena, Italy. Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) just missed the top 10, finishing 11th.

“I was pushing the line and telling myself ‘don’t do that ... just get back to the regular line’,” said Goldberg, who won the opening training run on Wednesday. “Now that I’m running in the top 30, I have a clearer course and I can get away with pulling off a more difficult line.

“I got out of the track a little bit on one turn, right before the flat and I could feel myself decelerate a little bit,” he added, “but I knew that if I just got back in the track and stayed low, that I could make it up on the bottom.”

Norway took the top two spots with Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud going 1-2. Austria’s Max Franz was third. With the victory, Svindal maintained his overall World Cup lead over Jansrud, and teammate Henrik Kristoffersen, who did not compete Saturday.

Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) returned to the World Cup circuit Saturday, finishing 41st.

“I wasn’t confident and flowing and going,” said Nyman, who has all three of his World Cup downhill victories on the Saslong course. “I had some fast splits, but I had some bad splits too. But it’s OK! There are some positives, and right now I’m focusing on ... training, getting the confidence back, getting the movements back, dialing equipment in ... but it’s always great to race here and be back racing.”

Up next, the men’s tech team tackles a giant slalom and nighttime parallel giant slalom in Alta Badia, Italy Sunday and Monday.

Vonn back on top, Mancuso making strides

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

VAL D’ISERE, France – Lindsey Vonn of Vail is back to her winning ways, taking her 78th FIS Ski World Cup victory in super-G in Val d’Isere, France, Saturday. Italy’s Sofia Goggia, who much like Vonn has struggled with early-season results, finally landed on the podium in second. Norway’s Ragnhild Mowinckel scored her first World Cup podium in third.

“I guess I’m not a washed-up old hag,” Vonn said following the Dec. 16 victory and responding to numerous social media comments this week regarding her form as she prepares for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. “I think I proved myself, and karma definitely comes back around. I’ve got some good karma coming my way.”

Indeed, good karma played a key roll in Saturday’s victory as she edged one win closer to the all-time World Cup victory

mark of 86 wins held by the great Ingemar Stenmark.

"I almost went down there before the finish, but thankfully I was able to hold on to it and pull it out," Vonn said following her victory on the slow, soft track.

With snow, fog, and wind wiping out downhill training this week, the women tackled an abbreviated soft and bumpy super-G course – a make-up race from last week's canceled event in St. Moritz. And despite a few course holds due to fog and light snow, four American women scored World Cup points, including Laureenne Ross (Bend, Ore.), who took a huge step toward returning to top form following last season's knee injury.

"The track is in a lot better shape than I thought it would be based off how much it has snowed over the past couple of days," said Ross, who finished eighth. "It is a little bumpy, but it's still totally rip-able and the snow is responsive enough to feel your skis.

"Today was definitely a big step," she added. "I feel really good to be back, and be back in race mode."

Alice McKennis (New Castle, Colo.) was 22nd and 2016 World Juniors Downhill Champion Alice Merryweather (Hingham, Mass.) scored her first World Cup points, finishing 24th. Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) continued her comeback from injury, finishing her first World Cup race in more than two and a half years, in 45th position.

"It was really a bit of a challenge today with the flat light and the snow, but I stuck to my plan and skied really solid, and I'm really happy with how it went," Merryweather said. "I have a little bit of confidence now and I'll take it into tomorrow and charge even more."

With downhill training canceled this week in Val d'Isere due to weather, the women race super-G again on Sunday. On Monday the tech women head to Courchevel, France, for a giant

slalom and a parallel slalom under the lights. Current overall World Cup leader Mikaela Shiffrin, as well as Lindsey Vonn and Resi Stiegler will headline the tech women.

Ganong off to slow start in World Cup

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

VAL GARDENA, Italy – Weather continues to wreak havoc on the men and women's FIS Ski World Cup European circuit. On Friday, the men's super-G in Val Gardena, Italy, was cut off due to snow and fog after 38 racers took to the start, leaving 42 racers no opportunity to tackle the Saslong course.

Germany's Josef Ferstl officially took the victory after FIS officials cut off the remaining portion of the race due to fog and light snow. Austria's Max Franz was second, followed by countryman Matthias Meyer in third. Ferstl started second before light snow began to fall, and with a clear track, was able to grab his first World Cup victory.

As the race progressed, snow continued to fall and course conditions changed dramatically, with grippy snow accumulating on the track hardened by a couple days of rain earlier in the week.

"With this snowfall, the snow is really slow and sticky compared to yesterday," said Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley, the top American finisher in 17th. Ganong ran 18th as snow fell and fog rolled in on the middle section of the course. "Hopefully it will be better tomorrow," he added.

Tommy Biesemeyer finished 18th and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) was 28th. Wiley Maple (Aspen, Colo.), who finished second in Wednesday's downhill training run; Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley), Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, Vt.) and Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) were among the 42 athletes that did not start after the race was cancelled due to weather conditions.

Up next, the men are scheduled to race downhill on the Saslong track Saturday. Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) is expected to make his return to the World Cup circuit on the track where he has claimed all three of his World Cup downhill victories.

Ganong, who admits he's off to a slow start this season, finishing 35th in Wednesday's downhill training, and not finishing Thursday training run, hopes to continue to build confidence with two months remaining before the 2018 Olympic Winter Olympics in Saturday's downhill.

"It was kind of a rough start to the season, so I'm just trying to build some confidence from race to race and find the speed and find the race gear," Ganong said. "When it's going well, it's super easy. When it's not going well it's really hard and you're questioning everything."

"Ski racing is such a simple sport, but the margins are so small, a half a second separates you from a really good day to a really bad day," he continued. "I'm taking it day-by-day and hopefully I'll be building into the Olympics – that's the goal."

Skier raising cash for climate change Super Bowl ad

By Sierra Davis, Powder

About half of all Americans don't believe global warming is caused by human activities, despite the overwhelming consensus by climate scientists who say this is true. Salt Lake City-based pro skier Julian Carr is taking action to change this by attempting to raise \$5.5 million by Dec. 22 to fund what will be the first ever Kickstarter-supported Super Bowl ad.

An ambassador of Protect Our Winters, Carr hopes to bring important climate change data to the largest audience in the United States.

According to Nielsen, 70 percent of U.S. households watched the 2017 Super Bowl, which saw a total audience of 172 million viewers. So far, Carr's campaign has raised \$13,400.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snowboarding competition determines Olympic team

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. – The U.S. riders continued to demonstrate their dominance in the second Olympic qualifying event of the season at Dew Tour. Chloe Kim (Mammoth) led another U.S. sweep of the podium with teammates Kelly Clark (Mammoth) and Arielle Gold (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) in

second and third.

Jake Pates (Eagle, Colo.) put his name on the board with a big victory, and Ben Ferguson (Bend, Ore.) landed his second podium in the same number of Olympic qualifying events, finishing third.

After a win at the Toyota U.S. Grand Prix in Copper last weekend, Kim confirmed her nomination to the U.S. Olympic snowboard team, posting a 93.0 on her first run of the day that would carry her through to victory. After a gnarly crash on her second run, veteran Clark pulled out a solid, clean final run to finish second. Gold landed her first podium finish of the Olympic qualifying season, finishing third.

"I am speechless right now, it hasn't really set in," said Kim. "I just looked at my parents and was like, 'I just made the Olympic team!' I'm still processing it, but I am so excited."

The U.S. women stacked riders into the top spots in the final with Maddie Mastro (Wrightwood) finishing fourth, Hannah Teter (Meyers) fifth and Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe) eighth.

Pates pulled out the biggest surprise of the day, landing a killer last run that included a back double 12 tail grab to score a 97.33, besting Australia's Scotty James and fellow U.S. Snowboard Team rider Ferguson who both also posted scores above 90. It was Pates' first major event win, propelling the 19-year-old into the mix for the coveted Olympic team spots.

Danny Davis (Truckee), Chase Josey (Sun Valley, Idaho), Gabe Ferguson (Bend, Ore.) and Greg Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) rounded out top finishes for the U.S., finishing sixth through ninth respectively.

Olympic qualification competitions continue after the New Year with the Toyota U.S. Grand Prix at Snowmass, Colo., Jan. 7-14.

Sierra had a growth spurt during drought

By Associated Press

Loss of water from rocks during drought caused California's Sierra Nevada to rise nearly an inch in height from October 2011 to October 2015, according to a new NASA study made public Wednesday.

The study also found that in the following two years of increased snow and rain, the rocks in the range regained about half as much water as was lost during the drought and the return of the weight caused the height of the mountains to fall about half an inch.

"This suggests that the solid Earth has a greater capacity to store water than previously thought," study leader Donald Argus of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, said in a statement Wednesday.

Read the whole story

Davis has eye on backcountry post-Olympics



Truckee's Danny Davis is soaring toward the Olympics.
Photo/Tom Zikas

By David Bunker, Tahoe Quarterly

For someone who has lived his life in the snowboarding spotlight, Danny Davis seems utterly comfortable sipping coffee in a tucked away corner of downtown Truckee's Dark Horse Coffee Roasters.

It's a crisp October day, a world away from screaming X Games fans and the international stage of the Winter Olympics. The leaves have fallen from most of the cottonwoods along the Truckee River and the feel of winter is in the air. But for now, Truckee is stalled between summer and winter—that glorious transition where everything slows before the onslaught of snow.

Davis is in transition himself. A Truckee resident for the last decade, the Michigan native has become one of the most accomplished and recognizable halfpipe snowboarders in the

world. He's stood on X Games podiums, won the Dew Tour and Grand Prix events, and competed in the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

Today, he seems totally content to be home for a rare break, healthy and looking ahead to what could be one of his last halfpipe seasons. It could include a final Olympics appearance if he competes well against a stacked class of younger halfpipe competitors.

Read the whole story

McClintock bill would allow bikes in wilderness areas

Efforts to allow bicycles in wilderness areas are moving forward in Congress.

Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Elk Grove, introduced a bill to alter the Wilderness Act.

The House Natural Resources Committee on Dec. 13 voted to pass HR1349.

"Bicycles were allowed in wilderness areas from the inception of the act in 1964 until 1977, when the Forest Service reinterpreted the act to ban them," McClintock said at the Natural Resources Committee hearing.

One of the principal objectives McClintock has set as chairman of the subcommittee on Federal Lands is to restore public access to the public lands. The bill would restore to federal land managers the option to permit non-motorized mountain bikes, adaptive cycles, strollers and game-carts in wilderness areas where their use is compatible with the environment,

trail conditions and existing uses.

The bill now goes to the House floor.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*