Ski report: Searching for powder stashes



Fat Tuesday has so many meanings today.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Leipheimer confident team can win another Amgen Tour of California

By Kirsten Frattini, Cycling News

Levi Leipheimer's (RadioShack) recent the third place finisher at the Vuelta a Andalucia Ruta Ciclista Del Sol is an indication that he is on schedule to target a fourth win at the Amgen Tour of California held from May 15-22.

The California resident believes that the RadioShack team that will be selected for the marquee event will be strong enough to fight for the golden leader's jersey. "I think our team will be strong no matter what, and we will try our best to win," said Leipheimer.

RadioShack scored an early season victory in the Spanish stage

race, with Markel Irizar Aranburu winning by a mere one second ahead of Jurgen Van Den Broeck (Omega Pharma-Lotto) and two seconds ahead of Leipheimer.

Leipheimer is no stranger to the international podium having won the Deutschland Tour and the Criterium du Dauphine Libere along with podium places at both the Vuelta a Espana and the Tour de France. However, he ranks his three Amgen Tour of California victories as his biggest career achievements.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Derby Dames scrimmage in Stateline

Tahoe Derby Dames will show off their derby skills at the first Winter Wonderslam on March 25 at Kahle Community Center in Stateline.

This family-friendly event will blend the full-contact roller derby action the Dames are known for with their love of philanthropy. A portion of the event’s proceeds will benefit Steven Rose, a friend of the Tahoe Derby Dames who is battling cancer. In addition, orange ribbon pins will be for sale in honor of Rose at the scrimmage.

For those looking for Tahoe Derby Dames T-shirts, beanies, and stickers to show their support for Lake Tahoe’s only flat-track roller derby league, the Dames will be selling merchandise at the event.

Tickets are $5, and kids under 5 are free with a paid adult. Tickets may be purchased at the event. Doors open at 7pm and

the roller derby scrimmage kicks off at 8pm. Refreshments will be available at Kahle, and an after party will be at Brothers Bar & Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, visit the Dames online.

Friendship dominates competition for Tahoe riders

By Jessie Marchesseau

KIRKWOOD – Of the 41 competitors hailing from Lake Tahoe resorts at last weekend's The North Face Masters of Snowboarding competition, 14 claim Kirkwood as their home turf.

"Kirkwood's an incredible mountain, and as you can see, we have some of the world's best riders in Tahoe and Kirkwood, right here," said Rosemarie Daiek, one of the weekend's competitors.

Daiek's brother-in-law, Josh, won the North American Freeskiing Championships at Kirkwood the previous weekend.



Rosemarie Daiek, from left, Callan

Chythlook-Sifsof, Iris Lazzareschi and Maria DeBari enjoy a moment of celebration on the winner's podium.

Skiers and snowboarders alike, the Kirkwood riders form a fairly tight-knit group. Many of them ride together regularly, they frequently see each other on the slopes, and in a competition like this one, they are all there to cheer each other on.

As Kirkwood rider Adam DeVargas slid past the finish line after his final run on Day 2 of the competition, he was practically mobbed by riders wanting to give him hugs, high-fives and well-deserved pats on the back.

Daiek was one of the first ones waiting to congratulate DeVargas after his run. At more than 6-feet tall, DeVargas is one of the bigger riders at the competition, something he tries to use to his advantage by throwing extra power into his turns. He dwarfed Daiek as she went in for a bear hug.

Daiek, who is 5-feet tall “on a good day,” may not look like she could dominate the forbidden, rocky terrain of the Cirque the way DeVargas can, but looks can be deceiving. A three-time winner of the Kirkwood Extremes, she won this competition in 2009 and was the only Kirkwood rider to stand on the podium this year, taking home fourth place.

Daiek and DeVargas started competing in big mountain snowboarding in 1996, making them some of the more experienced riders on the tour. In fact, they have been entering competitions since before fellow competitor and Kirkwood rider

Casey Lucas ever picked up a snowboard.

Lucas, 25, has been riding for 12 years and competing off and on for the last six. She said snowboarding with the older, more seasoned riders has taught her to keep her chin up, even if she has a bad day.



Adam Trout rides for his friend as reflected on his shirt and board. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

“They know that every event is a new learning experience for the next contest. So that’s what I learn, is to be humble and appreciate the fact that we’re all out here to have a good time and push each other and progress the sport,” Lucas said. “It’s really great to have people who’ve been doing it for years and years to motivate us youngsters that are coming in and trying to learn from them.”

The experienced riders are equally as pleased with the company of the younger competitors, especially the skill and charisma they bring to the competitions and to the sport in general.

“The talent’s increased immensely,” DeVargas said of today’s up-and-coming riders. “It’s nice to see when you come out here that everyone’s stomping their landings. You have to really be on your game. And to see the talent that’s coming out now

inspires me to go bigger and faster and better."

Daiek agrees that the caliber of riding has increased tremendously over the last 15 years, as has the number of competitors. When she started, she said there would be four or five women entering any given competition. This weekend, there were more than 30.

"Before, you could milk some turns and now you really gotta go for it if you want something," Daiek said. "You can't just take Sally-alley anymore. You're riding with the world's best, so it's awesome."

One of those Kirkwood up-and-comers is Dave Trout. At 32, Trout has been snowboarding for more than 20 years, but he is relatively new to the freeride competition scene. This is his second year on the tour.



Lake Tahoe riders support each other.

Trout, a New Jersey native, moved to Tahoe four years ago with his friend Beau McGrath. The pair talked about entering competitions together, but McGrath was killed in a plane crash in April 2009.

"We always talked about doing it, so I just wanted to show him that I could do it," Trout said.

He joined the tour the following winter. Trout's snowboard and T-shirt still bear the name of his fallen friend with the

words “Always ridin by your side.”

Trout pulled off the best finish for the Kirkwood men at this year’s event, taking home ninth.

“You can’t stress out, it’s snowboarding,” he said of competing. “There’s nothing to ever be stressed out about. Just go and ride your snowboard and have fun.”

That philosophy seems to run true for all of the Kirkwood riders.

“This is what I live for,” Lucas said of the fun she is having riding on this year’s competition tour.

Lucas finished third at Crystal Mountain in February, her best finish to date, and plans to continue the tour for years to come.

DeVargas, who has been doing it for 15 years said competing has provided him the opportunity to snowboard new terrain and meet new, talented riders who inspire him to do bigger and better things.

“And that’s what life’s all about, right?” Daiek said. “Going bigger and better.”

Though this was the last stop on the 2011 The North Face Masters of Snowboarding tour, Daiek, DeVargas and Lucas are all looking forward to attending the King of the Hill competition in Alaska next month.

Ski report: Lifts may be on wind hold



Windy and cold on slopes today.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Alpine to host Lake Triple Jump Line event

Alpine Meadows Ski Resort’s Take the Lake Triple Jump Line Competition is March 18-20.

Take the Lake hosts some of the country’s top amateur and pro-am skiers and snowboarders —- and this year’s competitors can expect a triple jump line judged by some of the industry’s most sought-after judges.

A $15,000 purse is on the line; and the top finishers of the ski and snowboard divisions will walk with the winnings.

In addition to this marquee competition, Take the Lake competitors, spectators, and party goers will have a chance to throw down their best tricks in the TTL Rail Jam, open to anyone. Starting at 4pm March 19, this on-snow rail jam invites skiers and riders to show off their style – right in front of the Alpine Meadows base lodge. Rail jam entry fee is

$5 and prizes include swag as well as cold hard cash.

Registration fee is $100 and includes the March 18 practice day; the March 19 qualifying rounds; and for those who qualify, the March 20 finals. For a detailed competition schedule or to register, go online.

Blister rust threatens to destroy Tahoe's sugar pines

By Kathryn Reed

Orange tinged pine needles signal a tree that is likely to be a skeleton of itself in a couple years. If standing, it will be a dead gray stick of sorts.

White pine blister rust is killing three species of pines found in the Sierra – sugar pine, Western white pine and white bark. With less than 5 percent of sugar and Western white pines having a natural resistance to the fungus, these trees could one day be extinct.



Sugar pines are often more than a foot long.

The Sugar Pine Foundation is attempting to do what it can to prevent them from being wiped out in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

John Pickett founded the nonprofit in 2004. His wife, Maria Mircheva, is executive director. Tressa Gibbard is development coordinator. The trio relies on a wealth of volunteers to further the cause of saving the sugar pine.

Gibbard recently spoke to Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra about the foundation's efforts.

"Blister rust goes from pines to rag weeds to pines. It would not spread if there were no rag weeds," Gibbard explained.

In the short video the group saw it says 45 percent of the trees on Barker Pass are infested with pine blister rust, while the percentage is 40 on Dick's Pass.

Pickett, in the film, talks about the billions of dollars spent on attempts to improve the clarity of Lake Tahoe, but wonders why no money is being spent by the states and feds on what is going on in the higher elevations.

He said fewer trees absorbing groundwater means more will flow downhill – and faster. It will contain fine sediment that clouds the lake. Other impacts to the ecosystem would also naturally occur if a species of trees were killed off.

What the foundation is doing to save the sugar pine species is climbing trees each September to harvest cones from the trees that have a natural resistance to the rust. Then the U.S. Forest Service, Pickett's former employer, grows them into seedlings that can be planted throughout the region.

This spring a group of South Tahoe High School students is slated to plant seedlings in the Angora burn area.

The first plantings by the foundation were in 2008. Gibbard said more than 30,000 seedlings have been planted since then, with the anticipation of 10,000 more going in the ground this

year.

Besides volunteering to plant seedlings, people can also become members of the foundation. Details about that and other aspects are on the Sugar Pine Foundation's website.

Sugar Pine Foundation events:

• March 24: Maria Mircheva and John Pickett will give a talk at Explore Tahoe in Heavenly Village in South Lake Tahoe, 6pm

• April 16: South Lake Tahoe Earth Day at Bijou Park, 10am-4pm

• April 23: Tahoe-Truckee Earth Day at Squaw Valley, 11am-5pm

• April 30: Community Planting in the Angora Burn off Mule Deer Drive, 10am-noon (weather permitting).

Weather system to descend on basin through Monday

A winter weather advisory is in effect from 10pm Sunday to 10am Monday in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The heaviest snow will occur between 10 tonight and 4am Monday. Expect 3 to 6 inches at the lake, with 5 to 10 inches above 7,000 feet.

The Monday commute over the mountain passes is expected to be slick.

Snow was coming down heavy Sunday morning at Sierra-at-Tahoe, while drizzle descended in South Lake Tahoe most of the day.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report



Chart House manager Corinne Best took pictures of three bears March 5 near the Stateline restaurant.



Three coyotes were roaming in the field March 6 on Venice Drive near Sierra Athletic Club. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mammoth snowboarders do well in halfpipe on home terrain

By Lindsey Sine, U.S. Snowboarding

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -– Kelly Clark of Mt. Snow, Vt., was back at it again Saturday as she, joined by first-time Grand Prix winner U.S. Snowboarding Rookie Matt Ladley of Steamboat Springs, Colo., took to the top of the halfpipe podium at the Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix at Mammoth Mountain. The win cemented Clark's Grand Prix overall title, along with fellow champion Louie Vito of Sandy, Utah, who was third for the day.

"It's great to come out and get another win here. More than the placing, I'm happy with my riding. That's the most important thing for me and the good placing follows that," Clark said.

Clark was followed in second by Gretchen Bleiler of Aspen and Sarah Conrad of Canada was third.

In favor of securing an early lead, Clark put together a run she knew she had on lock with a front 9, back 5, front 7, cab 7 and stalefish.

The event marked the seventh win in-a-row for Clark, who moves onto the Burton U.S. Open this week and hopes to add more wins and titles to her arsenal.

Following behind Ladley were hometown favorite Greg Bretz of Mammoth Mountain for second and Vito with the third.

"It's really good that I was able to come home and perform well. It's kind of bragging rights that I can put it down at home," Bretz said.

And, while it wasn't the exact result he was looking for, Vito

was still pleased to come away with his second series title of the season.

The event marked the final tour stop of the Grand Prix series for the 2011 season.

Official results,, 2011 Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix, Mammoth Mountain, Halfpipe Snowboarding

Men

1. Matt Ladley, Steamboat Springs, CO, 45.40

2. Greg Bretz, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 43.90

3. Louie Vito, Sandy, UT, 43.00

—

4. Trevor Jacob, Mammoth Lakes, CA, 41.60

9. Zack Black, Breckenridge, CO, 35.40

Women

1. Kelly Clark, Mt. Snow, VT, 48.20

2. Gretchen Bleiler, Aspen, CO, 44.50

3. Sarah Conrad, Canada, 35.90

—

4. Ellery Hollingsworth, Stratton, VT, 34.60

7. Kaitlyn Farrington, Sun Valley, ID

8. Clair Bidez, Minturn, CO, 14.20

Teller just misses skicross podium

By Freddy Perryman, U.S. Ski Team

MEIRINGEN-HASLIBERG, Switzerland -– X Games champion John Teller of Mammoth Lakes raced to fifth Sunday at Meiringen-Hasliberg, Switzerland. The result moved Teller into fourth in the FIS World Cup skicross standings. Finland's Jouni Pellinen topped the men's podium with Anna Holmlund of Sweden the women's winner.

Teller, who has been working all season to improve his qualifying runs, ran 10th Saturday to qualify for Sunday's finals. The top eight in qualifying get priority in lane choice during the finals, an important advantage.

In the first heat and quarterfinals, Teller was second in his group, advancing him to the semifinals. For the semifinals, he got out of the gate third, but wasn't able to find the opening he needed to move into second and make his way into the championship round.

Making the small final, Teller got out of the gate and found himself at the back of the pack. With a deft move over the first gap hit, he jumped two spots to get into second. Biding his time over the remaining course, Teller found his opportunity to take the lead in the final stretch crossing the line first to win the small final and finish fifth on the day.

"It was a good race, a lot of passing," said Teller of his small finals performance.

Unfortunately for Teller, Pellinen's win today makes his bid for finishing the skicross season in the top three more difficult. Teller, who has moved to fourth in the skicross standings, trails Pellinen by 78 points with two events

remaining.

As the season nears its end, Teller is quick to recognize the roll of his teammates and their support.

“The whole season, it has been really key to have such hard work from my teammates. It is really cool that the ASA [American Skicross Association] team is helping each other, because without them there is no way I would’ve done what I’ve done this season,” said Teller.

Official results, FIS World Cup,Meiringen-Hasliberg, Switzerland, Skicross

Men

1. Jouni Pellinen, Finland

2. Andreas Matt, Switzerland

3. Daniel Bohnacker, Germany

—

5. John Teller, Mammoth Lakes, CA

Women

1. Anna Holmlund, Sweden

2. Katrin Mueller, Switzerland

3. Ophelie David, France