Ski report: 1 of 300-plus days of sunshine



Opening ceremonies for the 30th annual North Shore Winterfest is tonight at 6:30 at Squaw Valley with a torchlight parade, laser show and fireworks.

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

Incline student claims high school ski championship

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Incline's Grace Dolan on Tuesday repeated the feat she accomplished last year, winning a state skiing championship.

The junior Dolan claimed the Tahoe Basin League's state slalom title by nine-hundredths of a second at Sierra-at-Tahoe to secure the overall championship, after she won the giant slalom title on Monday.

Dolan won the overall title a year ago, when there was just one state meet. This year, there was the Northern Region championships and the Tahoe Basin championships.

"There was a lot of pressure on her and a lot of competition from North Tahoe, South Tahoe and Truckee," Incline coach Joe Humasti said. "But she responded with four great runs. She was

real centered, in the zone.”

North Tahoe claimed both the boys and girls team titles.

The Lakers won the girls title by three points, 198-195, over Truckee, and the boys title by eight points, 210-202, over South Tahoe.

Dolan edged out North Tahoe’s Jessica Tidd for the slalom championship.

North Tahoe’s Zach Richenbach posted the fastest time in each of the two slalom runs to claim the boys slalom title by 28-hundredths of a second over South Tahoe’s Michael Suglian.

Kayaking Lake Tahoe – not just a summer sport

By Rachel Levin, New York Times

Bumping along a freshly plowed road in Lake Tahoe, I felt oddly unburdened. No skis were locked on top of my car, no clunky boots rattled in the trunk. After more than a decade of ski trips to the region, I kept feeling as if I were missing something. Sure, it was sunny, but also a biting 17 degrees – and I was going kayaking.

“You’re going what?” asked my friend when she heard I wasn’t joining her for another powder day at Squaw Valley. “Seriously?”



A less congested Lake Tahoe in the winter. Photo/Max Whittaker/New York Times

Seriously. It was the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day – the most crowded week of the season at one of America’s most visited ski destinations. Thanks to a record-setting December snowfall, the actual skiing had been phenomenal. But I was sick of struggling to find a parking spot, tired of waiting in all those lift lines that were as congested as the bumper-to-bumper traffic that led to them.

Of course, Tahoe offers more than just downhill skiing: snowshoeing and cross-country are the go-to alternative snow sports for most crowd-dodgers. But kayaking? In the dead of winter? Not so much. Not even on the largest alpine lake in the United States, and the second deepest in the country. A lake that never freezes over, where the surface appears so placid and the snowcapped scene so screen-saver-serene that it makes you want to leap off the chairlift into the hallowed blue water. For most, though, the primary function of Lake Tahoe in winter is as a breathtaking backdrop.

Read the whole story

Tahoe skiers put the fun into freeskiing competition

By Jessie Marchesseau

KIRKWOOD – Last weekend's Subaru North American Freeskiing Championships was quintessential Kirkwood. Postponed two days due to a gnarly storm, Day 1 boasted blue skies, 4 feet of fresh powder and the steep, rocky, forbidden terrain of the Cirque.

Freeskiers traveled from as far away as New Zealand, Chile, Sweden and France to be part of this year's competition. And Kirkwood did not disappoint.

But one does not need to venture into the closed terrain of the Cirque to find extreme here. Kirkwood is teeming with rocks, cliffs, cornices and some of the deepest snow in the Sierra.



The Cirque at Kirkwood is closed except during competitions. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

"Kirkwood terrain pushes you," Dan Durkin, a local freeskier, said. "I mean everywhere you look there's jumps to jump,

there’s chutes to go through, there’s just natural rock airs that are going to progress you and make you look for the next bigger line.”

And in the end, skiing Kirkwood terrain on almost a daily basis paid off for local competitor Josh Daiek, 27, who took home this year’s title. Daiek, who won the Freeskiing World Tour in 2008, dominated the entire weekend, earning the highest score in the qualifying round, winning Day 1 of the finals and solidifying his place on top with a smooth run on Day 2.

Daiek attributed his win to “good snow and skiing at Kirkwood all the time. It’s one of the coolest training grounds.” He added, “It’s what I do every day; I go out, jump off rocks and try and land on my feet.”

Having primarily stepped away from competition for the last two seasons due to injury, Daiek spends most of his days skiing at Kirkwood or in the nearby backcountry with friends like Durkin and fellow freeskier and two-time winner of Kirkwood’s North American Freeskiing Championships, Craig Garbiel.

Garbiel was prequalified for the weekend’s competition as a result of being in the top 10 overall on the tour last year. He stuck solid runs during both days of the finals earning him a 12th place finish.

Though they both call Kirkwood their home mountain, neither Daiek nor Garbiel grew up in Tahoe. Garbiel, 35, hails from Vermont where he dabbled in ski racing as a kid, but spent most of the rest of his time on a snowboard. He moved to Tahoe 15 years ago because someone told him that it snowed every night and was sunny every day. He has been here ever since.

Daiek, on the other hand, never had any formal ski training.

“I grew up skiing trash heaps in Michigan,” he said.

“Basically, when I came here, I couldn’t really buy a turn. I didn’t know how to turn very well or ski very well and just started following Craig (Garbiel) around and skiing with him a bunch, and my skiing definitely got a lot better.”

That was nine years ago, around the same time Garbiel began entering freeskiing competitions. He recalled how a group of friends paid for his first one at Kirkwood:

“The night before they were like ‘OK, who’s got money?’ and they all just pulled out cash and paid for me to do it. I’ve been doing it ever since,” he said.

Garbiel was ranked the seventh best freeskier in the world three years ago, a standing that earned him the opportunity to spend two seasons skiing around the world as part of the Freeride World Tour. However, a knee injury during the second season took him out of the competition.

Daiek and Garbiel are healthy again and hungry to regain their places on the podium. They ski together often, sometimes at Kirkwood, sometimes hiking in the backcountry, sometimes using snowmobiles. Daiek admits his style and line choices somewhat mimic that of Garbiel because he basically learned to ski by watching and skiing with him. There are, however, still some notable differences.

“Josh is younger and crazier so he goes full out all the time: big backflips, lots of 360s, just kind of full bore going for it,” said Durkin who skis with the duo regularly. “Craig is a little bit older and more reserved .… He’s just real calculated and just nails his lines. Everything he looks at, he just seems to stomp like a cat, just landing on his feet all the time, and real fluid.”

The money to ski

These are the skills that earned both skiers sponsorships from big-name companies like Blizzard and Moment skis and Smith

Optics. Moment, who sponsors Garbiel, even created a signature ski that bears his nickname, Garbones.

Sixpoint Snowwear, owned by South Shore local Teri Jones, also sponsors Garbiel and Daiek. Jones said she has known both skiers for years and was honored when they agreed to ride for her company. A Kirkwood rider herself, Jones admits she cannot keep up with them on the hill, and calls them “friends that are some of the best skiers in the whole world.” She is currently working on the design for a limited edition line of Garbones beanies.

Sponsors are a big part of being able to compete in events like the one at Kirkwood. Entry fees generally run $200 to $300, not including travel, lodging and lift tickets. While the winner of a competition can take home thousands of dollars, skiers can often spend more than they make entering contests.

Money and sponsors add to the pressure to do well in competitions, and both men admit to feeling a little added pressure on their home turf.

Even though they ski Kirkwood all the time, neither skier said they felt like it gave them an advantage. Unlike some of the other mountains on the tour, the terrain Kirkwood offers for the competition is closed except during the competition.

“The local skiers here have no advantage over the other skiers because it’s closed terrain,” Daiek said. “We ski it once a year like everyone else.”

So they choose their lines by looking at the slope from the bottom just like the rest of the field, and hope for the best.

“I got a little off my line and I didn’t quite hit what I wanted to hit,” Garbiel said of his final run. “But I skied fast and that’s what I wanted to do. I skied fall-line top-to-bottom through the Hour Glass.”

However, in a competition that’s judged heavily on factors such as steepness, exposure and airtime of the skier’s chosen line, getting a little off can have big effects. Both Daiek and Garbiel plan their lines ahead of time and stressed the importance of trying to stick to it, but also having a backup plan.

“I have a visual idea of exactly what I want to do. What I want to hit, where I want to land, where I want to take off,” Garbiel said. “It’s ideally 100 percent planned. But it doesn’t always work out that way; sometimes you improvise.”

Back at the comp

Whether they were carefully calculated, or improvised, nearly all the descents at this year’s competition seemed larger-than-life. Big-name pros including JT Holmes, Sebastian Hannemann and Henrik Windstedt from the Freeride World Tour joined the field of competitors making this one of the most stacked competitions of the winter.

And judging by the technicality of the lines and the amplitude of the crowd, no one was holding back. Some skiers, like Garbiel and Daiek, were sticking their lines. Others, like Holmes, were blowing up. However, with this degree of all-out skiing comes inherent danger. Competitors and spectators alike commented on the higher than usual number of skiers coming off the hill with injuries. Two competitors were taken to nearby hospitals by helicopter on Sunday, and at least that many came down in toboggans.

Ryan Hawks, 25, was the second skier to be taken out by helicopter. Just after 3pm on Sunday, as the sun was starting to move behind the peak and the light on the Cirque was getting a little flat, he dropped in for his turn at the rocky terrain. Mid-run, Hawks threw a backflip off a 40-foot cliff, but showed little movement after landing.

Ski patrol immediately tended to the injured Hawks, and the

waiting Care Flight helicopter rushed him to Renown Medical Center in Reno. He was treated for internal injuries, but passed away early Tuesday morning.

Still on a high from his recent win, Daiek's voice went somber when asked about Hawks. Daiek had befriended the young skier earlier this season at a competition in Revelstoke, Canada.

"He was a super positive guy," he said, "always had a smile on his face."

Daiek said he lives by the philosophy that life is short, so you better live it up while you're here. In the past, he found himself getting stressed out preparing for competitions, but has tried to let that mentality go.

"That's never why I fell in love with skiing," he said. "Skiing's just an awesome sport and an awesome feeling of freedom. That's why I do it .… It's not about the comp, or it's not about being the raddest skier or anything like that. Skiing's about having fun."

Daiek and Garbiel plan on competing in the Freeskiing World Tour Championships at Snowbird, Utah, March 8-13.

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Ski report: Freshies all around



Snow fell overnight, with about 3 inches in South Lake Tahoe to shovel.

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

Teller just misses podium in skicross

By Freddy Perryman, U.S. Ski Team

GRINDELWALD, Switzerland -– X Games champion John Teller of Mammoth Lakes just missed the podium, finishing fourth in Thursday's World Cup skicross race in Grindelwald. World Championship bronze medalist Andreas Matt of Austria topped the men's field, while Norway's Marte Hoeie Gjefsen won the women's race.

Teller, who qualified 14th, fought his way through the finals bracket, finishing second in each heat behind World Champion Chris Del Bosco of Canada, earning himself a spot in the final four.

Teller has been having a strong season. He has qualified for the finals in all but one World Cup, with two podium finishes, including a win at St. Johann, Austria.

Patrick Duran of Fayson, Vt., skied his way into his second World Cup finals after qualifying ninth. Duran finished in third in the quarterfinals, ending a career best 19th.

Matt has been on a tear this season, on the podium in six out of the eight World Cups with two wins. Joining Matt on the podium was World Championship silver medalist Jouni Pellinen from Finland in second with Del Bosco third.

Joining Norway's Gjefsen was Ophelie David of France in second and Heidi Zacher of Germany third.

Teller currently sits fifth in the World Cup skicross standings with 254 points, just nine points behind Canada's Nick Zoricic. Thursday's winner Matt tops the leader board with 599 points.

Official results, FIS World Cup, Grindelwald, Switzerland, Skicross

Men

1. Andreas Matt, Switzerland

2. Jouni Pellinen, Finland

3. Chris Del Bosco, Canada

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4. John Teller, Mammoth Lakes, CA

19. Patrick Duran, Fayson, VT

Women

1. Marte Hoeie Gjefsen, Norway

2. Ophelie David, France

3. Heidi Zacher, Germany

Lodgepole pines in British Columbia may be wiped out by 2080

By Gordon Hamilton, Vancouver Sun

Climate change is expected to drive lodgepole pine, the backbone of the central Interior forest industry, from most of its range in B.C. by 2080, says a study by researchers at the University of B.C. and Oregon State University.



The study, to be published in the journal Climate Change, measures how trees respond physiologically to changes in their environment, resulting in precise forecasts for researchers Nicolas Coops at UBC and Richard Waring at OSU. Although lodgepole pine will be mostly gone by 2080, as early as 2020, its habitat will begin shrinking. It is expected to move northward into the Yukon.

The researchers used NASA satellite maps to trace changes in tree physiology, using sophisticated techniques that, for example, can measure the impact of drought by changes in the reflectivity of a tree's needles as seen from space. It is the first time such precise modeling has been undertaken to measure tree response to climate change.

The satellite images show climate-change induced drought is already affecting lodgepole pine. Coops said drought stresses the tree, making them more susceptible to disease and pests like the pine beetle.

The researchers say that lodgepole pine will be gone from almost all of the Pacific Northwest and wiped out in 83 per cent of its range in B.C. by 2080. That's within the lifetime

of seedlings now being planted in the wake of the mountain pine beetle epidemic.

“Even though lodgepole pine is a hardy species, it’s very susceptible to climate change, so it is going to be pushed out of the space where it grows very well,” Coops, a professor at the UBC Faculty of Forestry, said in an interview.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Snow on the slopes, rain at the lake



It’s going to be soggy on the slopes of Lake Tahoe today.

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

Storm system to dump snow overnight



A winter weather advisory in effect from midnight tonight to noon Wednesday.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for snow to begin late tonight near the Sierra crest and spread into the Lake Tahoe Basin early Wednesday morning.

Expect 6 to 12 inches above 7,000 feet, with 2 to 6 inches at lake level.

Slick roads and poor visibility are likely during the Wednesday morning commute in the basin and over the passes.

Workshop about invasive weeds in El Dorado County

El Dorado County is having a workshop on Yellow Starthistle Control and Preventing the Spread of Invasive Weeds on March 11 from 1:30-3pm.

The meeting is in the Planning Commission Room – Building C, El Dorado County Administrative Offices, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville.

Registration for this workshop is recommended. Register online or contact Nancy Starr at (530) 621.5503 or njstarr@ucdavis.edu

Walk-in registration available at the event, if space allows.