Ski report: Could be windy later today



Time to do a snow dance to make sure the storm headed this way arrives mid-week as scheduled.

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

Death by GPS in the desert

By Tom Knudson, Sacramento Bee

Five harrowing days after becoming stuck on a remote backcountry road in Death Valley National Park in August 2009, Alicia Sanchez lay down next to her Jeep Cherokee and prepared to die.

Then she heard a voice.

“I called as I approached, asking if she was okay,” wrote Ranger Amber Nattrass in a park report. “She was waving frantically and screaming, ‘My baby is dead, my baby is dead.’ ”

In the SUV, Nattrass found Sanchez’s lifeless 6-year-old son Carlos on the front seat. “She told me they walked 10 miles but couldn’t find any help (and) … had run out of water and had been drinking their own urine,” Nattrass wrote.

“She turned down a wrong road,” Nattrass said in a recent interview. “She said she was following her GPS unit.”

Danger has long stalked those who venture into California’s desert in the heat of summer. But today, with more people pouring into the region, technology and tragedy are mixing in new and unexpected ways.

“It’s what I’m beginning to call death by GPS,” said Death Valley wilderness coordinator Charlie Callagan. “People are renting vehicles with GPS and they have no idea how it works and they are willing to trust the GPS to lead them into the middle of nowhere.”

The number of people visiting Death Valley in the summer, when temperatures often exceed 120 degrees, has soared from 97,000 in 1985 to 257,500 in 2009. That pattern holds at Joshua Tree as well, which recorded 128,000 visitors in the summer of 1988. Last year: 230,000.

Read the whole story

Expedition: Kirkwood cranks it up a gear for riders

By Jessie Marchesseau

KIRKWOOD – It is the day after a powder day, another blue bird day at Kirkwood. The sun is shining and not a cloud in the sky. No lift lines in sight and plenty of fresh tracks still to be had.

Untracked snow can often be found here for days after a storm. This general lack of crowds is part of Kirkwood’s appeal. The

terrain is the other part: the cornices, the chutes, rock drops and steeps. Kirkwood has the look and feel of a backcountry ski adventure, most of it accessible by chairlift. This is what Expedition: Kirkwood director Jon Copeland calls the “wow factor.”

It was also the inspiration for the only resort-based all-mountain skill development program in the Tahoe area, aptly named Expedition: Kirkwood.

“We step out of the front door and we’re 50 feet away from phenomenal terrain,” Copeland said. “As far as the backcountry side, you step out of the classroom and you’re immediately in avalanche terrain.”



Difficult terrain like the drop into Vista at Kirkwood attracts Expedition and non-Expedition riders. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

Kirkwood has an open boundaries policy that allows riders access to backcountry terrain directly from the resort. Expedition: Kirkwood guide Adam Marshall explained that this policy is directly related to their programs.

“You gotta remember, with open boundaries comes responsibility,” he said. “Our job is to make sure people are going out educated and prepared.”

Now in its 10th season, Expedition: Kirkwood started as a way to provide backcountry awareness and avalanche courses to advanced skiers and snowboarders. Copeland estimates they had about 165 participants the first season, a number that has grown to between 1,200 and 1,500 in recent years.

And people come back again and again. Marshall said he has had guests return for Expedition: Kirkwood tours two, three, four times. It is in these return clients who he and the other guides often witness the greatest progression.

“We see them becoming more and more like the riders we are,” he said. “We see them having fun and exploring the mountain like we do.”

Expedition: Kirkwood’s offerings have also expanded over the years. The program now includes snowcat tours, private guides, women’s camps and clinics, multi-day backcountry courses, and American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education (AIARE) avalanche certification courses, among others.

“The thing we try to focus on in every one of our programs, whether it’s just a two-hour private guide in-bounds or a full-day/multi-day avalanche course is there’s a huge education component to everything,” Copeland said. “Whether it’s based on your skiing or equipment or leave-no-trace ethics and that kind of stuff, really what we try to promote is the safety education aspect in all of our programs.”

To accommodate the expanding program and growing number of participants, Kirkwood recently opened Expedition: Kirkwood Outfitters. The spacious facility located next to Bub’s Pub has a modern mountain look to it with a combination of corrugated metal and natural woods throughout. Directly across from the entrance is a conference room complete with flat-

screen TVs which will be used for avalanche and backcountry awareness courses. A retail store is off to the right offering high-end ski and snowboard gear and backcountry/all-terrain equipment, and a demo center exclusively for all-terrain, and avalanche equipment is on the left. Both are fully stocked with everything from avalanche beacons and shovels to seriously fat powder skis.

Copeland said he expects Expedition: Kirkwood Outfitters will enable the resort to provide better services to guests and allow more flexibility in its programs. They can now schedule classes at the spur of the moment and accommodate more custom courses, something Copeland estimates already makes up around 25 percent of Expedition: Kirkwood's business.

Riders will also have a place to congregate, relax and connect with fellow ski and snowboard adventurists. Since it opened in January, Copeland said he has already seen a greater comradery forming among participants. After all, they all have something in common to start with: a love for the sport and for the mountains.

Marshall describes Expedition: Kirkwood guests as people who want to "ride anywhere, anytime in any conditions." They already had the ability to form friendships on the hill, now they have a place to gather and get to know one another off the slopes, too.



Expedition: Kirkwood Outfitters

demo center offers a variety of backcountry gear.

Since the program is geared toward intermediate and advanced skiers and snowboarders, most Expedition: Kirkwood participants are Kirkwood regulars. They generally come from Tahoe, Reno and the Bay Area, and are often passholders wanting to take their skills to the next level.

“The way we explain it to a lot of people is: it’s your higher level of education. If ski school is high school and college, this is your doctorate degree or your Ph.D.,” Copeland said.

But the education opportunities and recognition of Expedition: Kirkwood do not stop with locals. The word is spreading.

“It’s definitely getting to where Expedition: Kirkwood is noticed all over, even at other mountains,” Marshall said. “If I go to Mammoth or even Colorado, people know when I say I work for Expedition: Kirkwood. It’s become more than just a brand, and it’s actually a new way for people to advance from intermediates to advanced and advanced to expert.”

So with a guide as a professor, and Kirkwood’s awe-inspiring terrain for a classroom, Expedition: Kirkwood could be well on its way to becoming one of the most sought after schools for a Ph.D. in ski. After all, who would argue with fresh powder turns for homework?

U.S. women sweep halfpipe at Winter Dew

By Lindsey Sine, U.S. Ski Team

OGDEN, Utah o– Brita Sigourney of Carmel, Devin Logan of Dover, Vt., and Jen Hudak of Salt Lake City went one, two, three for a U.S. women's sweep of the halfpipe skiing podium at the Winter Dew Tour on Saturday at Snowbasin in Ogden. Reno's David Wise led for U.S. men, finishing fourth.

"It feels awesome to win," said Sigourney. "It's the last stop for me and to go out with a win is just a really good feeling."

Sigourney won thanks to a run that included a 900, a 540, an alley-oop 540 and a 720.

In a heated men's competition, the day's halfpipe wasn't just about a win, but an overall Dew Tour title as well. France's Kevin Rolland and Simon Dumont (Bethel, ME) had gone back and forth throughout the year for the leader's position, but it was Roland who ultimately took not only the title, but the win for the day as well.

Official results, 2011 Winter Dew Tour, Ogden, Halfpipe Skiing

Men

1. Kevin Rolland, France, 96.50

2. Benoit Valentin, France, 90.25

3. Byron Wells, New Zealand, 84.25

–

4. David Wise, Reno, NV, 83.00

6. Simon Dumont, Bethel, ME, 81.00

9. Duncan Adams, Breckenridge, CO, 76.00

10. Tucker Perkins, North Hampton, NH, 75.25

Women

1. Brita Sigourney, Carmel, CA, 92.00

2. Devin Logan, Dover, VT, 91.00

3. Jen Hudak, Salt Lake City, 90.00

–

4. Maddie Bowman, South Lake Tahoe, CA, 85.75

# # #

Tahoe area athletes don’t make podium in snowboardcross

By Lindsey Sine, U.S. Snowboarding

PARK CITY -– Lindsey Jacobellis of Stratton Mountain, Vt., and home mountain rider Jonathan Cheever of Saugus, Mass., took charge of a technical snowboardcross course Saturday, landing a pair of U.S. Championship titles at the Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix at Park City’s Canyons Resort.

Cheever and Jacobellis were presented the ceremonial Green Jacket, a tradition that awards the annual U.S. Champion with a forest green dinner jacket that says “I’m the winner” in a way befitting of the best SBX athlete in America.

Jacobellis, who nailed herself a fourpeat gold medal at the X Games exactly two weeks ago, was in top form, leading the way through the women's heats for the win, as well as the U.S. Championship title. Jacobellis' championship crown adds to the list of her titles, the most recent of which she locked down in 2009. Now, the green jacket and the title of best in the U.S. are both back in her hands.

In a stacked men's field, Cheever kept it consistent pushing his way from round to round in front of a home mountain crowd that included his parents. With a facial scrape sustained in the prior day's qualifications, Cheever was happy to take second and, as the top U.S. athlete, the U.S. crown.

For Cheever, the win was equally as huge due to the depth of the competitors he was up against, as well as the technicality of the course.

Official results, Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix at Canyons Resort, Park City, Snowboardcross

Men

1. Kevin Hill, Canada

2. Jonathan Cheever, Saugus, MA

3. Markus Schairer, Austria

4. Tony Ramoin, France

—

5. Jayson Hale, Sierraville, CA

6. Kevin Leahy, Yarmouth, ME

7. Mick Dierdroff, Steamboat Springs, CO

8. Graham Watanabe, Sun Valley, ID

Women

1. Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton Mountain, VT

2. Deborah Anthonioz, France

3. Faye Gulini, Salt Lake City

4. Chloe Banning

–

5. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK

7. Jenna Feldman, Linwood, NJ

8. Kristen Harvey, Truckee, CA

Bahrke 8th in aerials in Moscow

By Freddy Perryman, U.S. Ski Team

MOSCOW -– Olympic veteran Emily Cook of Belmont, Mass., returned to the scene of her only previous World Cup win using experience and strategy to win again Saturday in downtown Moscow.

Scotty Bahrke of Tahoe City led the U.S. men in eighth as World Championship bronze medalist Anton Kushnir of Belarus won.

“I was pretty psyched. It was a great day,” exclaimed Cook. “I am pretty happy to be back on top of the podium.”

Saturday’s contest was a little unconventional. The jump,

which was constructed of scaffolding near downtown Moscow, was not ideal and a strong headwind compounded to make for very sketchy jumping conditions, forcing both the men and the women to back off on the degree of difficulty. To address safety concerns the finals consisted of a single jump rather than the normal two.

Overcoming the challenges presented by the conditions, Cook continued to find good fortune in Russia. Her only other World Cup victory, back on Jan. 3, 2008, was here in Moscow.

“The biggest thing is that we stuck with the plan,” explained the experienced Cook. “It was our plan to lead out with the full double full and despite the weather challenges we did it anyways.”

In what turned out to be a one run final, Cook was the only competitor to attempt a jump with such a high level of difficulty in the first round. She was rewarded, scoring nearly eight points above World Championship bronze medalist Olga Volkova of Ukraine who was second.

The U.S. men, severely hampered by the wind and lack of speed, lowered their degree of difficulty to maintain safety. Bahrke, who finished eighth, was joined in the finals by Dylan Ferguson of Amesbury, Mass., finishing 13th. Matthew DePeters of Hamburg, N.Y., was 24th.

Official results, World Cup, Moscow, Aerials

Men

1. Anton Kushnir, Belarus, 119.91

2. Stanislav Kravchuk, Ukraine, 102.57

3. Guangpu Qi, China, 102.57

—

8. Scotty Bahrke Tahoe City, CA. 95.35

13. Dylan Ferguson Amesbury, MA. 92.17

24. Matthew DePeters, Hamburg, NY. 61.15

Women

1. Emily Cook, Belmont, MA. 93.06

2. Olga Volkova, Ukraine, 85.83

3. Xin Zhang, China, 84.10

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DNS: Ashley Caldwell, Charleston, SC

Ski report: Windy this afternoon



Bring the sun screen and an extra layer. The wind is likely to pick up this afternoon.

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

Ganong breaks hand hitting gate

By U.S. Ski Racing

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany – Erik Guay is the World Champion. Once again Canada has taken the Worlds downhill title from under the noses of the Europeans. In 2009 it was John Kucera winning a difficult test at Val d'Isere. This time it was Guay with an early run down a decidedly changed Garmisch-Partenkirchen race course who stole the worlds most prestigious ski racing title.

Didier Cuche, a favorite in many eyes, was second. Christof Innerhofer had earned favored status with the super G gold medal three days ago and a courageous first in training run one. He finished third for the bronze medal.

Romed Baumann, in fourth, was more than a second off the winning time.

Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley apparently broke his hand hitting a gate high on the course and finished 24th.

"I think it's kind of broken," he said of his left hand packed in ice. "It hurts."

He said he smacked the hand against the base of a gate about 30 seconds into the course. It hurt immediately and he said that was distracting at best.

"I can't bend my finger. It hurt immediately. I could only hold my pole with two fingers it was so painful. I tried to cut inside all the bumps. … Ultimately I was really hurting and I was distracted."

The Kandahar grew slower for those starting late.

Among those was Bode Miller, in bib 22. He appeared unable to generate speed at any point on course and finished a respectable 15th, but no where near any spot that counted for anything. Nyman, in 13th, led the Americans.

“I tipped over on my hip at the very top, but I don’t think that cost me all that much,” said Miller. “I made a great recovery and then gassed it from there down. I’m happy with the way I skied. I was pushing the line and cutting off the line almost every section of the course. My legs had good power, I felt strong all the way to the finish and I was concerned about that because it has been so bumpy. It’s disappointing, but some days in ski racing there’s just not much else you can do.”

South Tahoe college being turned into winter mecca

Snow was starting to cover the parking lot Friday afternoon near the library at Lake Tahoe Community College.

That’s not unusual in February. But not a cloud was in the sky.



Tracy and Trenten Heer

create the rail jam Feb. 11 at LTCC. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Crews from On Course Events were creating the rail jam apparatus for today's Winter Expo at the South Lake Tahoe campus.

The inaugural expo starts at 2pm, with events scheduled until midnight. The rail jam is from 5-10pm. Sign ups are slightly before the competition begins.

Live music will be going on most of the time. A movie in the Duke Theatre will be the final activity.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Frostbite can sneak up on winter enthusiasts

By Chuck Myers, McClatchy Tribune

Its typical consequences aren't nearly as severe for Sierra enthusiasts as those of the avalanche or blizzard, but frostbite is an ever-present danger of the snow season.



Frostbite’s symptoms may be subtle at first: a slightly painful, prickly or itching sensation; skin that turns red, white, pale or grayish-yellow; numbness; and clumsiness due to joint and muscle stiffness.

The signs of frostbite should not go ignored. Winter campers and backcountry hikers run a particular risk of developing frostbite if they do not take proper protective measures.

Frostbite usually affects smaller or exposed areas of the body, such as fingers and the head. Because of numbness, a person may not realize he or she has frostbite until it’s pointed out by someone else.

Frostbite does not occur at once but in several stages.

Read the whole story