Mountain bikers join forces to have a voice in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Free ride, downhill, cross country, or something else – the mountain bike community is becoming one and a force to be reckoned with.

At a two-hour meeting Nov. 5 at the South Lake Tahoe Parks and Recreation Complex, more than 60 cyclists packed the room to express their desire to unite in an effort to have an influence on what is going on in the Lake Tahoe Basin and beyond.

The gathering came out of the three-day conference put on by the International Mountain Bicycling Association in early October. Since then folks from IMBA have been working in the area. They put on a trail building workshop at Kirkwood Oct. 15-17.



Becky Bell talks about the early days of TAMBA. Photo/Kathryn Reed

On Friday several IMBA representatives spoke at the meeting led by John Drum, a longtime South Shore cyclist. So did

Garrett Villanueva with the U.S. Forest Service.

“What’s lacking is a common voice from the mountain bike community,” Villanueva told the group. Villanueva is the top trail builder for the federal agency. So revered is he that he regularly helps other states and international locales with trail building.

Villanueva organized five trail building days this past summer. No one showed up for three of them.

He wants to bring out an expert to help design a pump track on Corral Trail on the South Shore and bring the Gunmount-Tahoe Mountain trail up to standard – but he needs input from a collective voice of users.

Villanueva said every great cycling destination has a strong bike community.

That’s not the case with Tahoe. It is neither a topnotch mountain bike area, nor does it have the people behind it.

The Whistlers of the world didn’t becom3 cycling meccas solely because city leaders voted for it, but instead they are a reality because the users convinced the powers that be to build the trails, bike parks, pump tracks, and other features.

Villanueva is hoping that same grassroots force will spin out of Friday’s gathering. Based on the enthusiasm in the room Lake Tahoe is ready to rock the mountain bike world.

The assembled group that spanned multiple generations, included both sexes – though mostly guys, had reps from Truckee, North Shore and mostly South Shore, and included a gamut of user groups in the end agreed to resurrect Tahoe Area Mountain Bicycling Association to be the umbrella under which to operate.

Becky Bell, a leader in TAMBA from the get-go with husband Gary, spoke Nov. 5 a bit about the history of the bike club,

the work involved and desire to breath new life into it.

The group that met two days ago and anyone else interested in mountain biking is invited to gather Dec. 15 at 6pm at Blue Angel café in South Lake Tahoe to work on some nuts and bolts issues about how TAMBA will run. Four board members exist. The bylaws mandate they choose board members.

There was talk of having chapters within TAMBA to represent the various areas like North Shore, South Shore, Truckee, Reno, Carson City and Kirkwood. From there, it could be broken down into specialties like downhill, cross country and free ride.

A group of twentysomethings in the back of the room is eager to get dirty and build trails. These meetings aren't what they want to be involved in. But process is something the others tried to tell them needs to happen before the shovels come out.

Wet weekend likely in Tahoe basin

The patchy clouds that have been hovering in the Lake Tahoe Basin for the past couple days are expected to bring moisture this weekend.

The likelihood of showers is 20 percent today in the Lake Tahoe Basin, increasing to 30 percent tonight. The National Weather Service in Reno says there is no avoiding getting wet on Sunday – 100 percent chance of rain during the day, with it turning to snow in the evening.



With clouds lingering in Tahoe, more sunsets like the one on Nov. 3 are possible. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Monday calls for a 30 percent chance of snow. It will be the coldest of the next few days – the high is expected to be 41 degrees, with the overnight low 18 degrees.

The sun will return Tuesday.

Before the storm rolls in the winds will pick up. Sierra ridges could see gusts up to 70mph on Sunday.

The snow levels will start at between 7,000 and 7,500 feet before falling Sunday.

The Weather Service predicts several inches of snow falling over Donner Pass and Echo Summit through early Monday morning.

– Kathryn Reed

STHS athletes bringing home top honors

South Tahoe High School’s athletic program has much to celebrate from the fall season.

· The boys cross country team (team GPA 3.69) and girls tennis team (team GPA 3.73) are the Nevada State Academic Team Champions.

· The boys cross country team is the Northern Nevada Regional Champion.

· The girls cross country team placed second in Northern Nevada Region.

The boys and girls cross country teams compete Nov. 5 in Boulder City in the Nevada State Championships.

· The boys and girls soccer teams are trying to qualify for the state tournament in Mesquite on Nov. 11-12.

· The girls tennis team earned the Sierra League Championship trophy.

· The girls volleyball team qualified for the Northern Nevada Regional Tournament. The is trying to qualify for the state championships.

· Morgan Murphy placed second in the state 3A Girls Golf Championship.

· The All League Teams and All State Academic teams will be named in the next two weeks.

The Fall Sports Award Night is Nov. 10 at 5pm in the Blue Gym.

2 Squaw junior skiers earn scholarships

By USSA

Two-time Olympian Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain) congratulated Mackenzie Bachmeier, Danielle Brownell-Patty, Johanna Gur and Forrest Ferguson this week on winning the 2011 Stacey Cook/Sun Valley Ski Tools Scholarship (SVST). The four young racers will receive $500 worth of ski tools and $500 worth of ski wax to use throughout the entire alpine season.

Now in its fourth year, the scholarship recognizes four J2 (ages 15-16) or J3 (ages 13-14) level athletes who exemplify talent, a good attitude, community involvement and a commitment to alpine skiing

“I had 81 applicants this year and all of them put incredible effort into their applications,” said Cook, who was supported by SVST as a junior. “Truly, there could have been 81 winners, but Dani, Johanna, Forrest and Mackenzie put a ton of time into their applications. In reading them, I could easily see their incredible personalities and their passion for skiing.”

Bachmeier stood out in the application process because of her love of skiing through all seasons. As a nationally ranked water skier in jump, trick and slalom, she turns her focus to the snow in winter and races with Crystal Mountain in Washington, home of U.S. Ski Team alum Scott Macartney.

Originally from Aspen, Brownell-Patty recently packed up her ski bag for the highly acclaimed U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association club program at Burke Mountain Academy in Vermont. Cook says the move proves her passion for skiing, but also

said she was impressed with her desire to help kids both on and off the snow.

As the lone male in this year's scholarship class, Ferguson is a second year J2 with the Squaw Valley Ski Team, where World Cup winner Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) got his start. And, like Sullivan, Ferguson plays high school football, which he says helps him get into shape for the ski racing season.

Gur is a fellow Squaw Valley Ski Team racer and second year J3, She had the inside scoop on the scholarship thanks to U.S. Ski Team member and cousin Will Gregorak (Longmont, Colo.), who started his first World Cup race last weekend in Soelden, Austria.

Orbitz: Tahoe top ski destination

The once and current king of the early ski season is Lake Tahoe, which last year topped Orbitz's list of top ski destinations.

Colorado makes the most appearances of any state with five destinations, led by Breckenridge at No. 3 overall.

Orbitz said, "We bent the rules a bit for our only non-U.S. entrant – Whistler, in British Columbia, Canada – due to its size, scope and popularity as a top destination for the U.S. Pacific Northwest."

Orbitz Index – Top 2010 Ski Destinations

1. Lake Tahoe, CA/NV

2. Park City

3. Breckenridge

4. Vail

5. Whistler, BC

6. Aspen

7. Mammoth

8. (tie) Jackson Hole and Snowmass

10. Steamboat.

Changing seasons bring out Mother Nature's beauty

By Kathryn Reed

WOODSTOCK, Vt. – A kaleidoscope of color more varied than the largest box of Crayolas dance in the breeze.

I just want to stare. So I do.

How does Mother Nature create such beauty?



A lone maple

leaf dangles
in the breeze
ready to let
go.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

New England in the fall. It was better than I had remembered. I had spent part of my childhood on the East Coast and a semester as an exchange student at the University of New Hampshire. Nineteen – that was the age I was when I last experienced this magical collage of foliage. It had been way too long.

Returning last month was mesmerizing. Even though the locals said it was not a great year for color, I said phooey to them. I was enthralled.

It reminded me a bit of being in Tahoe on days where I think the ski conditions are lousy and the tourists are giddy about their day on the slopes. Not being a local has you seeing things from a completely different perspective.

Just driving from Boston to Vermont along the interstate is spectacular. It was like I was a bobble head as I kept looking in one direction, then the other and back again.

Yellows, oranges, reds and even some pink intertwined with the green and the already decaying brown create striking bouquets of maple leaves.

A smell fills the air. Yes, it’s the change of seasons. It’s the leaves on the ground, soaked by a fall shower. No longer alive, but still pretty as they decompose.

Why is it the changing of seasons in nature can bring such beauty, such calm, such an easy transition, whereas we humans fight our natural progression from the fall of life to our winter’s demise?

A carpet of leaves softens the walk. A sense of being one with nature fills me. I smile. Part of me feels like I've returned home. Part of me longs for New England.

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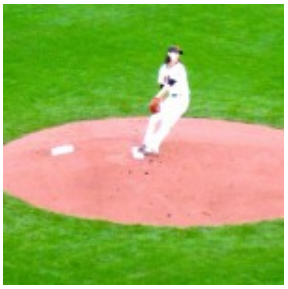
Giants win World Series dominating Texas Rangers

By Kathryn Reed

It wasn't another earthquake Monday night. It was San Francisco fans jumping up and down, celebrating the Giants becoming World Series champions.

The Giants won 3-1 against the Rangers in Texas, clinching it all in five games.

It started as the same pitching matchup as Game 1 when Tim Lincecum dominated Cliff Lee. The duel was closer, but Lincecum, a two-time Cy Young winner, dominated with 10 strikeouts.



Tim Lincecum pitches in Game 1. Photos/Kathryn

Reed

Brian Wilson and his shoe polish black beard closed it out.

The last time the Giants won a World Series was when they called New York home – 1954. They moved to San Francisco in 1958. At that time there was no Major League team west of the Mississippi. And Giants manager Bruce Bochy was 6 month old.

With so many Giants up for free agency, it could be a different team when spring training opens in spring in Scottsdale. But tonight none of that matters.



Buster Posey -- the incredible rookie -- in Game 1.

Tonight the San Francisco Giants are the World Champions.

And for those who have not seen this video, it captures the season.

There will be a parade in San Francisco on Wednesday beginning at 11am.

BLM set to roundup horses near Carson River

By Karren Rhodes, Dayton Courier

DAYTON – The federal Bureau of Land Management is making plans to gather approximately 118 wild horses from the area the agency calls the Pine Nut Horse Management Area, which includes all of the horses southeast of the Carson River in the Dayton area.

Alan Bittner, BLM staff member in charge of the wild horse roundup said, the agency plans to treat approximately 45 of the mares captured from the horse management area and treat them with a 22-month contraceptive. All of the wild horses gathered from the Pine Nut area will be returned to their range.

The roundup is to take begin by the middle of November and last about one week, the BLM reports.

Read the whole story

Pedaling back in time through the hills of Vermont

By Susan Wood

BRIDGEWATER CORNERS, Vt. – I made the summit of the scenic crescendo on the road bike and instantly saw why we took the optional route on the Bike Vermont October tour.

After leaving 40 years ago, the pilgrimage to my hometown of Woodstock, technically the nearby small bedroom community of Pomfret, involved more than Vermont's celebrated history. It involved my own.



Ready to ride through the Green Mountain State. Photos/Kathryn Reed

We passed the road leading to my childhood home a few miles back, then crested the top of the hill on the first day of the two-day 60-mile bike ride, bringing me face-to-face with Pomfret's old town hall in the foreground of a drop-dead killer view of red, orange and yellow maple trees in central Vermont's famous rolling green hills. Across the road, the one-room schoolhouse where I learned to read and write in first and second grades still stands and now functions as town offices. I peeked in the windows and recognized the open front room as my small classroom that resembled something out of "Little House on the Prairie."

And to think this highlight fell on only the first day of the weekend bike tour out of the Bridgewater Corners-based October Country Inn. The tour is aptly named after the bed and breakfast we stayed in for two nights. Owners Chuck and Edie Janisse, who have run the place off Route 4 for nine years, came on board as the third inn operators after she went on a Bike Vermont tour.

The weekend was nothing less than superb on every front. The inn’s food was delicious, the conversation stimulating, the service genuinely stellar. The setting makes me want to return on vacation to hang out in the immaculately groomed grounds or inside the cute, antique-furnished room.

With a roaring fire, cozy furniture and homey environment, the living room is established as a common space for the 18 people on the tour. We are from all walks of life and regions. It’s so relaxed I take off my shoes as if I’m at home. That’s a sign I belong there.

More than a bike ride

With 34 years under their belt, Bike Vermont owners Larry and Dawn Niles, with their staff and tour leaders, have these trips down to an absolute science. Signups were easy, and the tour unfolded exactly how I expected. In 20 years of serious cycling, I’ve never had such detail on a route map.

Tour leaders Meg Davis and Jim Ortuno provided full explanations of what to expect for the day, including a session called “map wrap.” The duo made it refreshingly obvious how much they enjoy their jobs, each other and sharing experiences with fellow cyclists.

Ortuno, who lives in Shoreham, Vt., where one tour is based, thoroughly embraced the meal Edie and her staff were serving from the kitchen’s apron-donned cook Chuck. The October Country Inn meals follow an international theme, with Friday night’s menu of sole, carrots, salad, pilaf and cheesecake representing a French theme.

“This is why I bike. My wife is a good cook (too). I’d weigh 500 pounds if I didn’t,” Ortuno said, while taking a second helping of the perfectly seasoned carrots.

The next morning’s breakfast will long be remembered for its mini maple scones, which many in our group fought over or bid

on because they were so appetizing. But even upon request, the recipe remains closely guarded by Edie.

It soon became apparent that I would actually gain a few pounds on a cycling vacation.

Our charismatic leaders quipped there are “no hills, just gear changes,” on the two routes. Ortuno also assured the group to forget about the recent rains because there are “no bad bike days, just bad clothing choices.”

I was OK with that because after a quick fitting of my Bike Vermont-rented Giant bicycle, Saturday’s first day of touring Woodstock, Pomfret and Quechee was brisk, but sunny. The blue sky after the evening rainfall offered quite a scenic backdrop to the bright foliage, old-time architecture, historic covered bridges and cows grazing on the green rolling hills. A few sightings of wooly bear caterpillars crossing the road are an indication winter is coming to the Northeast.

On the road

The start of the ride took us east, over the iron bridge at the Ottauquechee River, which runs through the quaint, historic town of Woodstock. Three covered bridges, including the Middle Bridge in town and the Taft near Quechee, cross the water about 10 miles apart from each other. A word of caution from our bike tour leaders – go slow or walk your bike on the covered bridges.

The 16-mile Pomfret loop provides some of the best “leaf peeping” one can get in New England. The loop empties into Quechee, known for its so-named gorge with views that dramatically drop hundreds of feet into the river. Rafting and fishing enthusiasts can be seen on any given day in three seasons on the river.

Quechee’s lunch stop included hot soup at a busy café and a visit to the gallery of Vermont glassworks artist Simon

Pearce.

This is the epitome of how I like a bike tour – beautiful without belaboring the exertion at the expense of the sheer enjoyment of being free from work or without a care in the world. (Plus, I knew Kae would go on another bike tour if it were like this.)

The first day's 42-mile jaunt had us ending in Woodstock, where the Billings Farm and Museum was celebrating harvest days. The working farm is operated by a nonprofit founded by Laurance Rockefeller, who married Mary Billings, in cooperation with the national historical park where Route 12 and River Road meet. Cows still graze there.

Added treats

In town, Kae and I hit the Mountain Creamery for homemade ice cream and a walk around my historic, pedestrian-friendly hometown. The sidewalks are packed with tourists. Imagine a place where there are no traffic lights or fast food eateries, but an independent bookstore that has thrived for 75 years.

Karen Greenberg and Steve Pittendrigh of Phoenix end their tour at the Woodstock Inn & Resort with a drink at the bar and massages at the landmark hotel's new full service spa.

At Saturday night's Italian-themed dinner in our home-base inn, Greenberg gave a sign she was melting into the dining room chair to reflect her state of mind. The rest of the group got shoulder massages at the table from the two tour leaders. Beyond being a guide and a nurse, Davis is known for her rubdowns.

My red wine and an eggplant Parmesan good enough to write home about added to my restful evening, which included a rousing game of Scrabble in front of the fire. Unbeknownst to Kae and I, cyclist Ann Chilton of New Hampshire – who was on her sixth Bike Vermont tour – has a penchant for the game. She won with

a 50-point Scrabble bonus for using all seven tiles.

For those who may partake in a night out for a cold glass of Vermont beer, the Long Trail Brewery – named after the trail that runs through the spine of the state – is located directly across the inn from Route 4.

Day 2 began with silver dollar pancakes and pure Vermont maple syrup, then a ride, as Ortuno put it, "with rested bikes" that took us on an interesting journey through the childhood home of Calvin Coolidge. It was here his father swore him in as the 30th U.S. president. The Plymouth Notch Historic District is nothing short of gorgeous and a reminder of one of Vermont's primary food groups – cheese.

The Plymouth Cheese Factory is the second oldest continuously operating cheese factory in the United States. I sampled some and liked it a lot. I'm in good company. According to the St. Petersburg Times, chef Julia Child considered Plymouth cheese "her favorite."

Plymouth is bursting with history. An old Gulf gas pump in front of the general store declared fuel costing 11 cents a gallon.

Relying on my own body fuel, I hopped back on my bike and finished the 18-mile journey along scenic Route 100, where it seemed we stopped every few feet to snap a photo. I didn't mind. I was taking it all in.

We passed the northeast station of Killington Ski Area, Vermont's largest resort recognized for often being the first area in the United States to open in October. But no snow was in the forecast. It was just a cruise back to the October Country Inn, where lemonade and dessert bars await.

If you go:

Bike Vermont offers a multitude of tours, many more ambitious

than our 60-mile, three-day October Country Inn weekender. The company tours Maine, Maryland, Scotland, Ireland, Italy and the outer regions of Vermont, such as Lake Champlain.

The October Country Inn weekend tour costs $545 per person in the fall, a highly recommended time to see the foliage. The Scotland tour runs $2,995.

Road or mountain bike rentals with 21 gears may range from $40 to $100 depending on the length of the tour.

Bike Vermont may be reached by calling 800.257.2226 or via email at bikevt@bikevt.com or online.

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Nevada grasshopper infestation may be worse in 2011

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

After Nevada's worst grasshopper infestation in up to 20 years hit last summer, ranchers and agriculture officials are bracing for a return of the insects next year.



It's unknown if the problem will be as severe, but officials have rectified a situation that prevented them from spraying infested federal land as grasshoppers gobbled valuable range, said Jeff Knight, state entomologist.

“Everything is in line. We shouldn’t have any more hiccups,” Knight said.

Up to 300,000 acres of public and private land – including alfalfa fields – were overrun by grasshoppers last summer, with the problem peaking in July. Hard hit areas included areas near Winnemucca, Battle Mountain, Paradise Valley and south of Ely, Knight said.

Read the whole story