

As baseball season opens, money on Cubs to repeat

By Todd Dewey, Las Vegas Review-Journal

While many Cubs fans left Las Vegas after Sunday's 22-4 rout of the Reds at Cashman Field with a futures ticket on Chicago to win the 2017 World Series, Kyle Hendricks left with a case of food poisoning.

The Cubs pitcher said he made a late-night stop at a taco restaurant here Saturday and called it a "bad decision."

Hendricks made all the right moves in 2016, when he led the majors in ERA (2.13) and helped Chicago to its first World Series title in 108 years. With its core group of young stars returning, the Cubs are the 7-2 favorite to repeat as champs. The season opens Sunday with a tripleheader.

"They've got so many bats, with (Anthony) Rizzo, (Kris) Bryant, (Kyle) Schwarber and (Jason) Heyward, who had such a terrible season he can't do anything but go up," Red Rock sports book director Jason McCormick said. "It's going to come down to their pitching staff. The whole package is there."

After years of fans futilely betting on the Cubs to win the World Series, McCormick — a Chicago native and die-hard Cubs fan — said many of the winning futures tickets from 2016 still haven't been cashed and probably never will be.

Read the whole story

Tahoe girls earn Div. 1 college hockey scholarships



Katie Sonntag, left, and Leah Marino pave the way for girls hockey in South Tahoe. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Susan Wood

If Katie Sonntag, 17, and Leah Marino, 16, were to hear “you hit like a girl,” that would be a big compliment in the world of sports.

These are no ordinary teenagers playing hockey. The local girls, who grew up and practiced their skills at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena, each scored Division 1 NCAA scholarships to play hockey back East.



Leah Marino, left, and Katie Sonntag grew up at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Profound indeed.

First, South Lake Tahoe is the land of skiers and boarders.

Second, it's quite an achievement for anyone wanting to play a higher level of sports.

Third, they're girls – unheard of to expect in most towns.



Leah Marino flies down the ice in South Lake Tahoe. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

When she's done with high school, Marino will accept a full-ride scholarship at Robert Morris University in Pittsburgh – the home state of her parents.

Sonntag will attend Union College in Schenectady, N.Y. – one state over from Vermont where she was born and 45 minutes from relatives.

Their parents sometimes joke about whether they should have just stayed where they were given their daughters' inevitable return to the East to achieve their hockey goals. After all, the duo has found it necessary to attend hockey academies in far flung places to be seen and hone their skill sets. Sonntag attends the Pursuit of Excellence hockey school in Kelowna, B.C., between her studies. Marino plans to spend six months at the North American Hockey Academy in Stowe, Vt.

"She can get more ice time there. Girls hockey is not a sport

that's readily available (at venues)," Leah's father, Jim Marino, said, while joining his daughter on the ice at the South Lake Tahoe rink. He recalled how his family would make eight- to 10-hour round trips to San Jose from September to June to nurture his daughter's hockey passion.

The two girls hit the ice last month when they came home for a break. It's a good, familiar place to unwind as a family, given Marino coached hockey and Katie's dad, Pete Sonntag, plays hockey when he's not running Heavenly Mountain Resort.



Katie Sonntag is happy to be a role model for girls like her younger sister. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

If not for their family moves to Lake Tahoe, perhaps the two girls wouldn't have met – gaining a friendship as solid as the puck they slap.

One could argue the teens' achievements involve a destiny built on lifelong dreams of going to college and playing hockey.

"I think it was always a 'what if.' There are a lot of girls who would just stop (playing). We both knew what we wanted and pushed each other toward it," Marino told *Lake Tahoe News*.

And there lies the dynamics of women in sport.

"It's always been a dream of ours to play hockey," Sonntag said.

Marino nodded, adding: "For women, college hockey is the NHL. There's no equivalent."



Katie Sonntag, left, and Leah Marino met at the South Lake Tahoe Ice Arena. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Sonntag would also like to major in physics; Marino in sports medicine. Sonntag has a head start with the physics of manipulating a hard round object on a slick surface. She picked up the puck, tapped it a few times, then slapped it for fun at the glass barrier square in front of her father watching across the rink.

It was a thing of beauty. The two girls glided on the ice, practicing drills with an uncanny natural ability.

Being on this oval was like being on their home ice. As it should have been. Marino and Sonntag have spent many long hours through their childhoods at that ice arena, giving up traditional teenage girls' pursuits along the way. Boys make up one of those pastimes.

“It’ll be my first time at prom this year,” Marino said.

Sonntag admitted to never having attended a school dance and essentially skipped the high school football games.



Leah Marino knows how to control the puck. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

The two girls began skating at about age 7 and started playing hockey shortly thereafter. When the Sonntags moved to Tahoe with Katie, Marino – a winger – was the only girl competing in the six various hockey leagues at the rink, she recalled.

It was meant to be the duo would become close, supportive friends. Hockey isn't necessarily a girls' sport, so when Sonntag, a longtime center, excelled to becoming a captain of one of the leagues the boys weren't thrilled.

“Now they look up to us,” Marino added of gaining the collegiate honor.

Sonntag hopes the boys they know won’t be the only ones looking up to the groundbreaking females. They’re the first from Tahoe to seize the D1 scholarships for the sport.



Katie Sonntag shows her agility on the ice. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“Where we come from (in the Northeast), it’s not as big a deal, but it’s pretty crazy here,” Marino said.

Both girls want to be inspirational to young girls everywhere in pursuit of their dreams.

"I'd like them to know they can make it and can move away from home to get it," Marino said.

Sonntag is starting with support of her 12-year-old sister, Charlotte, who the older sibling admits "she'll be better than me."

"I want her to have the same opportunities I have," Sonntag told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I'm humbled and honored by my opportunities."

So maybe it takes a little brush with humility mixed with the drive to succeed to be a winner.



Leah Marino is used to putting the puck into the net. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

To achieve a D1 NCAA college scholarship, a student must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average and undergo a strict protocol in the recruitment process.

Among the three NCAA categories, Division 1 schools generally have the biggest student bodies, manage the largest athletic budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships. With nearly 350 colleges and universities in its membership, Division 1 schools field more than 6,000 athletic teams, providing opportunities for more than 170,000 student-athletes to compete in NCAA sports each year.

Getting there is no easy accomplishment. It takes a lot of hard work, talent and dedication.

“It’s incredible what they have accomplished. It’s just nearly impossible to get there – NCAA D1. Think about it, only 35 Division 1 women’s teams, say 27 players per team, some 945 spots total. Of all the women hockey players across both the U.S. and Canada, Tahoe girls take two of them. From our small town, well, that’s the stuff of fiction,” Van Oleson, who owns Tahoe Sports and Entertainment, told *Lake Tahoe News*. The company operates the ice arena, so an emotionally-charged Oleson has watched Marino and Sonntag for years.

“These girls are pioneers, groundbreakers (who) have paved a way and made it clear what a girl from Tahoe can do,” Oleson said.

Eldorado Forest opening some seasonal roads

Native surface roads and trails in the Eldorado National Forest that are subject to the annual wet weather seasonal closure will reopen on April 1.

“Melting snow will continue to create moist conditions in some

areas, so it's important to use good judgement before driving on dirt roads," Forest Supervisor Laurence Crabtree said in a press release. "Visitors will still be responsible for any resource damage they cause."

The seasonal closure is designed to protect roadbeds and watersheds from damage and to protect water quality. To maintain flexibility, the timing of the dirt road closure is determined based on current conditions each year which may cause the closure to go into effect early or be extended. Due to heavy rains in November, this year's seasonal closure began December 1.

The seasonal closure does not apply to the Rock Creek Recreational Trails Area near Georgetown, which has its own wet weather closure procedures.

Meanwhile, a series of heavy storms over the winter has led to other closures due to storm damage ranging from mud, rocks, and debris to roadbed failure in some locations. Storm damage assessment is still in progress, and some damage will not be known until the snow melts. Crews are working to prevent additional damage at sites not yet failed, and engineers are developing cost estimates for repairs. The following roads will be closed until storm damage repairs are completed:

- Georgetown District – 11 Pines Road; Black Smith Flat Road; Pigeon Roost Road.
- Pacific District – Jaybird Springs Road; Granite Springs Road; Weber Mill Road.
- Placerville District – Forebay Road; Slab Creek Road; Plum Creek Road; Alder Creek Road; Bridal Veil picnic area.
- Amador District – Salt Springs Road; Panther Creek Road; Ellis Road.

Outdoors firms in battle over public lands

By Stuart Leavenworth, McClatchy

Two generations ago, they were often written off as a bunch of hippies making backpacks and climbing gear for niche markets. But in recent decades, companies such as Patagonia and REI have become consumer powerhouses and political players, increasingly eager to influence decisions over public lands.

A sign of that clout came this year, when the outdoor industry decided to pull its twice-yearly trade show from Salt Lake City, where it been based since 1996. The shows injected tens of millions of dollars into the Utah economy, but industry leaders decided to pull out after Gov. Gary Herbert and other Utah Republicans started lobbying President Trump to roll back the Bears Ears National Monument, a 1.35-million-acre conservation area in south Utah that Native Americans and environmentalists have championed for years.

Made up of 1,200 companies, the Outdoor Industry Association is based in Boulder, Colo., with an outreach office in Washington, D.C. The group estimates that consumers spend about \$120 billion on outdoor recreation products each year, ranging from apparel to tents, bicycles and camping gear.

Read the whole story

NFL's vote on Raiders also a victory for sports books

By Todd Dewey, Las Vegas Review-Journal

In the equivalent of a two-minute drill, the NFL changed its view of Las Vegas and legal sports betting.

Less than two years ago, Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo was forced to cancel a fantasy football convention here because of the NFL's policy against players being associated with gambling. But on Monday, the league's owners overwhelmingly approved the Raiders' relocation from Oakland to America's gambling capital by a 31-1 vote.

A confluence of factors has led to the growing mainstream acceptance of legal sports betting, from expanding national media coverage to NBA commissioner Adam Silver emerging as a vocal proponent.

But the biggest factor in overcoming the stigma of sports betting and bringing an iconic NFL franchise to Las Vegas was money. As Raiders owner Mark Davis said in April 2016, the team and city made the NFL an offer it couldn't refuse in the \$750 million in taxes that was approved by the Nevada Legislature for construction of a \$1.9 billion domed stadium near the Strip.

Read the whole story

Jitloff second in GS national title race

By USSA

SUGARLOAF, Maine – In the final race of the U.S. Alpine Championships Tuesday in Sugarloaf, Hig Roberts (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) edged out seven-time national champion Tim Jitloff (Reno – U.S. Ski Team) for the giant slalom national title.

Roberts, a former U.S. Ski Team and Middlebury College athlete, showed courage and strength in rugged conditions – powering through the thick fog to his first national title. Jitloff was second, just 0.14 seconds off the pace and 2016 national giant slalom champion Kieffer Christianson (Anchorage) finished third, 0.29 seconds out. Tanguy Nef, who hails from Switzerland and competes for Dartmouth, was the top junior of the day, grabbing eighth.

Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, Vt. – U.S. Ski Team) who grabbed the national title in this year's super G, posted the fastest time in a rainy, challenging first run, but did not finish his second run. Roberts was well-aware that Cochran-Siegle and Jitloff would be charging second run and “sent it for Murph” – his brother, who passed away last August – to come out on top. Though he was ecstatic to win, he wished Murphy were there to cheer him on.

“These days are awesome ... but It's very tough,” said Roberts. “I believe that I'm doing this for a reason, and I'm doing well right now because I'm keeping him close to my heart and I'm not letting that special bond and push he always had for me go away.”

“I do have an affection for the hill,” Jitloff reflected. “I've obviously had some great results here. National titles

aren't that easy to get. I have seven of them, and each one of those was hard work to get – it wasn't an easy thing to do." But he gave credit where credit is due, congratulating Roberts on his victory. "I think Hig can be pretty proud of himself today. He skied great in very challenging, difficult conditions."

Christianson – who, like Roberts, skis independently – was happy to share the podium with Roberts after a challenging season. "We both skied independently this year," Christianson said, "and had to do our own logistics and find our own training – so to share the podium here at U.S. nationals is just awesome."

Trump signs bill killing Obama rule on public lands

By Gary Martin, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON – President Trump signed a bill Monday that kills a federal rule dictating planning on public lands in Western states – including 47.5 million acres in Nevada.

Conservationists and Democrats argued that the Obama administration regulation, known as the Planning 2.0 rule, protected Bureau of Land Management lands from commercial interests.

All GOP senators from Western states, including Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., were co-sponsors of a resolution calling for the repeal of the regulation. It was sponsored by Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, the chairwoman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The Obama administration regulation changed a process at the Bureau of Land Management that had been in place for 34 years.

Read the whole story

Wyoming passes skier safety statute

By Ski Area Magazine

Wyoming has become the 29th state to adopt ski safety legislation after Gov. Matt Mead signed the Wyoming Ski Safety Act into law earlier this month.

According to an NSAA report, the bill defines inherent risks involved with skiing and snowboarding, immunizes ski areas from claims resulting from these risks, and places operational requirements on ski areas to improve mountain safety.

Previously, Wyoming's ski areas had been covered by the state's Recreational Safety Act, which is meant to govern claims for injuries resulting from inherent risks of several different activities, such as skiing, rafting, horseback riding, etc.



Snowboards and skiers enjoy

good coverage on limited
terrain at Heavenly on Nov.
23. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Incline's Lapanja 3rd in U.S. Championship's slalom

By USSA

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, Maine – Resi Stiegler (Jackson, Wyo. – U.S. Ski Team) and AJ Ginnis (Vouliagmeni, Greece – U.S. Ski Team) were victorious under a sunny, bluebird spring day in Sunday's slalom at the U.S. Alpine Championships in Sugarloaf.

On the women's side, Stiegler found herself atop the podium at U.S. Alpine Championships for the first time since 2007, when she won the giant slalom and slalom national titles. Canadian Roni Remme, who skis for the University of Utah, was second, while Lila Lapanja (Incline Village – U.S. Ski Team) was third.

Nina O'Brien (Edwards, Colo. – U.S. Ski Team), who was the junior champion in Saturday's super G, was the top junior finisher once again, landing in seventh.

It's been a career full of ups and downs for the veteran Stiegler, who was stoked to find her way back to the top of the podium. "I won the year I got injured, and I haven't won since," Stiegler said. "I've been second to Canadians for quite a few years, so I thought, 'I've gotta get this one!'"

It was Ginnis' first national title, and he had stiff

competition. Four-time national champion and tech team leader David Chodounsky (Crested Butte, Colo.— U.S. Ski Team) — who is one of the best slalom skiers in the world — landed in second by just 15 hundredths of a second while World Cup mainstay Michael Ankeny (Deephaven, Minn. — U.S. Ski Team) rounded out the podium in third. All three U.S. Ski Team athletes have attended or are currently attending Dartmouth. Erik Arvidsson (Woodside — U.S. Ski Team) was the top junior, finishing seventh.

Nevada sports betting fund shines, then stumbles

By Todd Prince, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Chris Connelly, founder of one of the first sports betting mutual fund in the U.S., was killing it during 2016.

His Contrarian Investments LLC was up 31 percent on Dec. 18 compared with a 10 percent return for the Dow Jones over the same period. His bets on the National Football League and the National Basketball Association rocked.

Then he had his Atlanta Falcons Super Bowl moment.

With less than two weeks to the new year, Connelly lost 10 of his next 13 bets, wiping away all the gains and more. He finished the year down 23 percent compared with a 13 percent gain for the Dow Jones.

Read the whole story