

Congress could dump wilderness bike ban

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Some of America's most pristine wild places could be opened to mountain biking under a proposal before Congress.

A bill by Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Elk Grove, would lift a decades-old national ban on biking in federally designated wilderness areas.

It's similar to a bill that died in the previous session of Congress.

[Read the whole story](#)

Shiffrin top dog in GS at Squaw Valley



Mikaela Shiffrin speeds around a gate in her first run of the giant slalom on March 10 at Squaw Valley. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VALLEY – Mikaela Shiffrin tamed the Red Dog giant slalom course at Squaw Valley on Friday much like she has been doing throughout the world this season.

Three days shy of her 22nd birthday, the Colorado native on March 10 won with a time of 2:16.42. This was 0.07 seconds ahead of Federica Brignone of Italy. Tessa Worley of France rounded out the podium, 0.86 seconds off first place.



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Elisabeth Kappaurer of Austria kicks up snow near the top of the course. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Ninety athletes representing 19 countries are in town competing in the Audi FIS Ski World Cup GS and slalom. The slalom course will also be off Red Dog chairlift, with races at 10am and 1pm on March 11.

After coming out of the starting gate fast in her second run, Shiffrin lost time in the middle of the run, but was able to make it up near the last third of the course.

"In the middle pitch I got bumped around. I tried to change that in the last eight gates," Shiffrin said.

Known more for her prowess as a slalom racer, Shiffrin has been making a concerted effort to be on the podium in GS as

well. The training has paid off.

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Federica Brignone of Italy takes second March 10 in GS. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“I definitely feel my GS has picked up a lot. Getting that repetition is going to be huge,” Shiffrin said. “I know what I have to do to be fast. Now it’s a matter if I can do it every single day. In my training I feel very good.”

It will come down to next weekend’s races in Aspen, Colo., to determine the overall winner of the GS this season. Worley is leading in points with 80 more than Shiffrin.

With the win on Friday, Shiffrin solidified her lead for the overall World Cup title. Ilka Stuhec of Slovenia, who crashed on the bottom third of the course during her first run, is in

second place for points.



Ilka Stuhec of Slovenia crashes on the first run. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Fierce competition

On Friday all eyes were on Shiffrin. This was her fourth career GS win. The crowd was definitely on her side, with numerous U.S. flags in the stands and along the race course.

She was one of three U.S. racers. Megan McJames of Park City finished in seventh. Resi Stiegler of Jackson, Wyo., did not qualify for the second run.



Mikaela Shiffrin is joyous after winning the GS. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Right out of the giant slalom starting gate you gain speed across No Name Face, a relatively easy pitch but no indication of what's to come. Less than 15 gates into the race you hit the Dog Leg where each turn keeps getting steeper and steeper. This is where the athletes encounter the steepest part of the course. Within five giant slalom turns it goes from relatively flat to extremely steep and it's quite challenging for athletes to create a rhythm due to the technical terrain and changing trail directions. After the upper portion of the Dog Leg, there's a false flat at the top of Far East Express. This is where the Slalom course starts. Right from the false flat, athletes are forced to tackle a big change in direction at Coaches Corner. The course bends around to the left

and there's a saddle before you exit Coaches Corner, onto The Face, which has a view straight to the end of the course, the finish and the base village.

—Trevor Wagner, director of snow surfaces for Squaw Valley

After the first race Stiegler told *Lake Tahoe News*, "I need to let it go on this hill and be charging all the way to the bottom."

Italy has been a powerhouse on the circuit this season. They made their presence known at Squaw, with four racers making it in the top seven.

"In our country everything starts with GS. We are pushing each other. You don't want to lose even in training," Brignone said.

Racers started the giant slalom course at the top of Snow King Peak – elevation 7,250 feet. It's 1,267 feet to the finish line.

Red Dog is where the women competed in slalom and giant slalom in the 1960 Olympics. It is considered one of the most difficult courses on this year's tour. It has four major sections: No Name Face, Dog Leg, Coaches Corner, and The Face.

World Cup back in California

The last time an Alpine World Cup event was in California was in 1988 at Mammoth.

1969 was the last time Squaw hosted a World Cup event, which came nine years after the resort first became known to the world when it hosted the Winter Olympics. Snow was a huge factor in 1969 just like it has been this year. Nine feet fell in three days. So much that the men's downhill was canceled.

(Billy Kidd, who took gold in slalom that year, was on hand Friday to watch the women.)

“It looked way different Monday,” Andy Wirth, CEO of Squaw Valley, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday morning. Four feet of snow had fallen and the winds were howling that day. It’s been a record season, with more than 600 inches falling – and more to come.

The resort’s chief admitted to *Lake Tahoe News* that he was skeptical when Julia Mancuso first brought up the idea of having a World Cup event at Squaw. While Mancuso hoped to be a contender on her home slope, she is still recovering from hip surgery that has sidelined her the entire season. She did speak to the crowd in between the two races Friday.



Mikaela Shiffrin in a rare moment of exuberance at clinching

the GS. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

“It’s atypical to see a midseason World Cup in the States,” Wirth said.

The skiers all praised the conditions even though spring suddenly showed up, with temps reaching 50 degrees and the snow starting to melt.

“We injected 10 days ago and re-injected it Tuesday and Wednesday,” Wirth said. The point of this is to make it consistently slick.



This is the first time in 48 years that Squaw has hosted a World Cup event. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Prepping for World Cup

Bringing the World Cup to Squaw has been quite an undertaking. It started about 2½ years ago, got more intense in the last nine months, with Tuesday of last week beginning the final push.

According to Wirth, teams have been working practically around the clock since Monday.

“The most visual preparation has taken place over the last four weeks as our team has been hard at work to prepare the Red Dog course and finish area, including the removal of huge amounts of snow from the course in order to restore its naturally challenging contours,” Liesl Kenney with Squaw told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Squaw Valley CEO Andy Wirth is proud to bring World Cup back to the Tahoe area.

Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Last month the groomers started to build up the natural features. It is groomed without the tiller so there is no corduroy. Red Dog is extremely steep and takes tremendous skill to maneuver the snowcat. The pitch at times is 33 degrees.

“Under these circumstances where we actually have to remove snow from the course to rebuild the natural contours, we are pushing the extra snow off into the woods,” Kenney said.

Crews removed two to three feet from more than 250 yards of the course. With a base of more than 20 feet, there’s a lot of snow to contend with.



Irene Curtoni of Italy flies around a gate. Photo Copyright

2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Grooming came to a halt four days before race day. In the last few days everything has been done by hand.

In many ways the course is like an ice rink. Crews used hoses from the snowmaking system.

“A designated coach from one of the competing countries drills in the gates using a laser range finder to maintain a specific range for the distance between gates and the ‘offset,’ or how big the turn is. After that, paint goes down to highlight terrain changes and direct the racers in poor visibility for flat light conditions,” Kenney explained.



Katharina Gallhuber of Austria is unable to navigate the course. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Last summer finish area pylons and underground conduit went in, as well as upgrades and additions to the timing and race services buildings.

It's not just the two days of race event planners have to contend with. There are four days of free events that run through Sunday. Designing the course, putting in signs, coordinating transportation, and dealing with a cadre of media, spectators, and coaches are part of details many take for granted.

Wirth highlighted traffic not being an issue, saying this coordinated effort should happen every weekend. But then again, during the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles traffic wasn't a problem, but returned to its normal gridlock two weeks later.

On top of the event, the mountain is still open to the general public, so there are all the normal operations to contend with. However, Red Dog and Squaw Creek chairlifts are closed to the public through March 12.

Global warming is slamming California

By Sean Cockerham, McClatchy

The drought has been declared over in most of California, with heavy winter rains sending water over the Oroville dam and forcing the evacuation of nearly 200,000 people.

But climate change is still in the air, and the recent weather pattern is a harbinger of what's to come. The abrupt shift to record rainfall is the kind of extreme weather forecast for a warming planet.

Parched earth could soon return, say climate scientists, who

predict a worsening spiral of intense California drought followed by periods of flooding as the planet gets warmer.

The extreme weather is making it increasingly difficult for California to manage its flood-control and water management infrastructure.

Read the whole story

Truckee's Laplante third in slopestyle

By USSA

SEVEN SPRINGS, Pa. – Caroline Claire (Wilmington, Vt.) swept the Toyota U.S. Revolution Tour slopestyle events at Seven Springs this week, topping both podiums. The overall Toyota U.S. Revolution Tour champions were also crowned, with Claire winning for the women and Ryan Stevenson (Washington, N.J.) for the men.

Cal Carson (Winter Park, Colo.) and Cody Laplante (Truckee) also found the Rev Tour podium, placing second and third, respectively, for the men on Tuesday, while Nikita Rubocki (Boise, Idaho) was second for the women on Wednesday.

Wednesday's event also served as the final stop of the FIS NorAm Cup Tour. Ethan Swadburg (Dillon, Colo.) was third in the NorAm Cup overall standings. Phillippe Langevin of Canada was first overall and his countryman Patrick Dew in second. The Canadian women swept the overall standings: Sofia Tcherntsky taking the top spot, Emma Stevens was second and

Megan Cressey was third.

I-Did-A-Run benefits Humane Society

Tahoe Donner Downhill Ski Area will host the 13th annual I-Did-A-Run winter dog pull event on March 12.

A canine and crowd favorite, the event raises money for the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe.

Dogs of all breeds and sizes compete against the clock, pulling sleds over a snow-covered course across four weight divisions; 0-25 pounds, 26-50 pounds, 51-75 pounds, and “heavy weight” at 75 pounds and over. Prizes are awarded to the fastest competitor in each division with a trophy for the overall winner.

Registration takes place at noon, with the race starting at 1pm. The entry fee is \$20 per dog and includes a goody bag for the competing pooch.

For complete event details, email Ali Kovach at akovach@tahoedonner.com or call 530.587.9424.

Longer ski season means higher risk for injury

By Claudia Buck, Sacramento Bee

As record snowfalls extend this year's skiing and snowboarding season, a Los Angeles children's sports doctor is reminding kids and parents to be aware of injury risks. Children are more at risk than adults for injuries from skiing and snowboarding, especially for beginners, said Tracy Zaslow, director of the Children's Orthopaedic Center Sports Concussion Clinic at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

"Because of the high speeds that are traveled, it can go from a mild injury – bruises and sprains – to severe fractures that require surgery or head injuries that lead to bleeding in the brain," says Zaslow, in a statement.

She said novice skiers and snowboarders are less likely to have mastered the skills needed to avoid obstacles and fall down safely.

Read the whole story

Preparation key to playing in back country

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Skiing, snowboarding or snowshoeing the Sierra Nevada back country can be a magical experience.

Getting away from highways and crowded ski areas is a great way to find untracked lines and spectacular, unspoiled scenery.

It also carries plenty of risks.

They include avalanches, sudden changes in weather, extreme cold, deep snow and early sunsets.

That's why anyone who wants to head into the backcountry should plan for those risks by packing accordingly.

Read the whole story

Mothership Classic benefits High Fives

The third annual Mothership Classic on Squaw Valley's infamous chairlift KT22, also known as The Mothership, will be March 26.

The Mothership Classic is a pledge-driven event benefiting Truckee-based High Fives Foundation. Participants will spend the day lapping KT22 as many times as possible with friends wearing skinny skis, retro snowboards and other throw back gear.

Prior to the event, participants are encouraged to reach out to their network for pledges and donations. All funds raised will go directly to the High Fives Foundation and their efforts to support athletes that have suffered life-altering injuries.

Go to register.

Guided snowshoe trek at Spooner Lake

Rangers will lead a two-mile snowshoe hike at Spooner Lake State Park on March 12 from 10am-noon.

The hike is fairly easy and all skill levels are welcome. Participants should bring snowshoes, water and dress in layers as temperatures can vary. Dogs are also welcome if on a leash.

Meet in the parking lot to the right after the driveway splits. The event is free, but park entrance fees apply. Entry is \$7 per vehicle, Nevada residents receive a \$2 discount.

For more info contact Josh Rhein at 775.831.0494 or spooner.ranger@gmail.com.

Skiers learn from triggering avi at Elephant's Back



Snow debris from the March 3 avalanche at Elephant's Back. Photo/SAC

Publisher's report: *This is a report posted by an unknown person to the Sierra Avalanche Center.*

By Sierra Avalanche Center

Around noon March 3, my partner and I descended the northeast side of Elephant's Back in the Carson Pass area. We parked at Red Lake, skinned up along the old road to the pass, then descended on the northeast side of Elephant's Back, north of the steep chutes coming off the summit.

We observed partly cloudy skies, high winds generally from the southwest and significant wind transport. On the first pitch of our descent, we observed no signs of instabilities in the snowpack – shooting cracks, whoomping, other avalanches in the area, etc. Prior to starting our tour, we drove to the pass, scoped out the terrain and conditions.

After dropping our first pitch with no issues, we trended east into a drainage south of Elephant's hump where my partner – who had skied the area a few times – said there would be some great northeast facing aspects that might not have the wind-textured sastrugi and suncrust mix of the higher elevations. We traversed around until we found a nice pitch to descend.

We stopped atop a rollover, discussed a strategy. I would descend the rollover, then stop midway down to shoot some photos of my partner. Due to the avi advisory and the stable conditions over the past week, I felt secure in stopping midslope on a northeast, loading aspect. We were below the area of my greatest concern and had seen nothing to indicate instability, except the wind transport.

I began my descent of the rollover making what I planned to be four turns. The snow was soft windboard. As I went to make my final right turn to set up for a shot, I felt a sense of vertigo. Much like an earthquake where the whole world moves and it takes a second to realize what is happening, I noticed a spray of snow, then realized that I was moving and the entire slope was cracking apart all around me. I shouted "avalanche! avalanche!" then took stock and just told myself to try and stay on top. After a few seconds, the avalanche stopped and I was still standing in the exact position that I had stopped after my final turn. I estimate that I slid a couple hundred feet downslope, close to 100 vertical feet.

It took a minute or so for my partner to appear at the top of the rollover to see what had happened. The high winds prevented him from hearing my shouts.

I sustained no injuries. My partner and I analyzed the situation, had lunch, then skied back to our car for a beer.

Analysis: My partner and I are fairly experienced back country skiers and locals. We've been skiing the Sierra for nearly 10 years and have avi certs. We tend to be conservative in our decision making. This morning we awoke, checked and discussed the advisory and changed our objective from Stevens Peak to Elephant's Back in hopes of avoiding a day of wind and blowing snow on ridgetops.

This turned out to be the right call on the skin up and first pitch of the descent down. The entire day, we were impressed

with the winds and spiraling snow devils marching down the lee snowfields of the crest.

After our first descent of the area that most raised concern—just beneath Elephant's Back—I let my guard down for areas of concern, despite the loading. We traversed out and right, east, until we reached a nice, steep pitch. We communicated my plans for shooting a photo and also the terrain and conditions, agreeing to pitch it out.

However, as I descended, I lost sight of my partner atop the rollover. After the incident, he never heard me shout and didn't realized that I triggered the slide until we convened below after everything had happened. My partner only saw me after he approached the rollover after some time without hearing my calls to descend so I could shoot and spot.

I feel like we communicated well, checked in with available information prior to our tour and adjusted our plan based on conditions. We skied in a safe, pitched out manner.

We should have never lost sight of each other, even on a small, apparently innocuous feature. My partner and I also agree that we should have also given more credence to the loading that was happening all around us. As we observed the slide path after the incident, we noticed that the crown had all but disappeared after an hour. Rapid loading was occurring on all lee slopes, both above and near treeline in the Carson Pass region.

Be safe out there. This was an amazing learning experience that turned our right. Don't get complacent as that did factor into the incident. I turned off my more critical brain after skiing the initial areas of concern because I felt like I was familiar with the area, the weather conditions and the situation. I was wrong.