

Sierra – a breeding ground for top level athletes

By John Rice

We are keeping our fingers crossed that our athletes earn a chance to compete for their country in the Olympics. Our program to groom athletes at Sierra is newsworthy I think, as it is not accidental that our athletes fare so well against the competition.

I started my career at Squaw Valley, which had a long tradition of producing world-class athletes and attracting those who were looking for a big name mountain to train. In the summers I worked for the U.S. Olympic Committee at Squaw in operations. I did everything from fix the athlete residences to drive them to their training sites. From that experience I learned a few simple lessons:

1. The best of the best share certain characteristics; they are conditioned, focused on goals, generally have good nutrition habits, are confident, have a support system, and are free of distractions. They weren't always the biggest, the fastest, the flamboyant, or those who come from money.



John Rice

2. The support system behind the most confident athletes extended from their family and friends to their home resort. Even if they were training out of Squaw, they were loyal to

their home.

3. They had good coaches, who worked on the whole being, not just the athletic side.

We try to provide all those things to our athletes, which may be part of why we have so much success. When I started at Sierra in 1993, I was approached by two young boys named Travis Ramos and Travis Cabral, then 9 and 11. They told me they had dreams of representing their country and being on the winner's podium. I asked what they needed, to which they replied "a season pass, a locker, and a shovel to build their course".

As the young boys honed their skills, and their fathers found coaches to take them to the next level, the two remained committed to their goals. Result, both were crowned U.S. Freestyle Champion at nationals in different years, and Cabral won the overall World Cup, the youngest to ever accomplish that feat.

Cabral also competed in the Torino Winter Games.

The two boys came from modest homes, had great support from their parents, coaches and from Sierra. They had a strict diet and workout regimen, and both were focused on their goals. Sierra gave support in the way of reimbursements for gas and groceries, event fees and an occasional plane ticket to help get them to the events.

The return on investment was huge, and it forged the way for other athletes to believe they could come from a mid-sized mountain and go against the best in the world some day.

Travis Cabral was concerned he was missing out on educational opportunities because of his world travel schedule as a teenager, so Sierra joined some of the local season passholders in starting an educational fund for him at the local Bank of America. That kind of support allowed him to

finish his studies and find his way after his competitive run.

We found the best support to be tailored to the individual, what are their needs, their goals, their challenges, and how can Sierra help. It starts when the kids are little.

Sierra is a supporter of youth recreation and education, and as such Sierra banners can be found at every soccer, baseball, swim meet, football or other facility in the region. By supporting the feeder system, young talented kids can get to know Sierra and stay in shape. Through support of education, Sierra is able to attract many talented kids, as many students over the years have earned free season passes and become part of Sierra's race teams.

The feeder system brings quality to the resort, and the various step functions along the way provide a path for focused athletes to excel through the programs and reach their peak performance. It's no secret that athletes remain loyal to the resort they learn at.

When winter comes around, the Buddy Werner ski program offers local kids from Tahoe and the West Slope the chance to hone their skills and compete with each other at a young age. Coaching is voluntary, and from the Buddy Werner ranks come some of the high school team's best athletes. It is common to see the top skiers in high school racing with roots in the Buddy Werner Program.

Sierra hosts five high school teams, which allows the athlete/students to compete against each other and train with the best. There are junior ski programs in place like Rippers, and the competitive teams in skiing and snowboarding.

Finally, Sierra hosts a number of competitions that allow the athletes to test their skills. On the ski side, Sierra has training facilities and ski trails that are wired for timing, combined with top talent in the area that produces high quality events like Far West races and high profile freestyle

events. Some of the more talented athletes move on to USSA racing and travel, and some have gone to college on scholarships in winter sports.

The best of the best, however, go from local events to national and then world-class events. Sierra has been fortunate to be a proving ground for winter sports athletes over the years. From training programs to hosting world-class events – even national championships – Sierra has provided opportunities to kids to realize their dreams of competing on the world stage.

A great example of athletes moving through the programs is the current successes shared by the Anderson sisters. Both grew up at Sierra, were part of the development teams, won their events locally and then went on to win gold medals at the Winter X Games. Jamie is currently ranked the No. 1 female snowboarder in the world, was honored by *Transworld Snowboarding* and *Snowboarder* magazines last year with that title.

The two sisters received the same kind of support the two Traveses shared in their young career, from reimbursements to scholarships on the race teams. While either one could easily sign a contract with another resort for the money, both are loyal to Sierra because of the support they have received over the years.

Jamie is vying for a spot on the U.S. Team for the Vancouver Olympics, while Joanie is aiming for the X Games next month. If they qualify, great, if they don't, they are still both world champions. We have no expectations of them other than to have fun and do their best.

Beyond the hype of the Olympic Games, in winter sports the contest is one more in a series of season long events. There is no denying that it is high profile and a gold medal can lead to lifelong endorsements for the athletes, but we try to

keep it in perspective.

So, why would a gold medal winner from the Torino Games, Hannah Teter, call Sierra her home mountain? Call it luck or destiny, the Teter family found a home in Tahoe, and looked around at the various resorts to find a place to train and call home. Elijah and Abe Teter both came to Sierra for a day in the powder and asked if they could ride for the day. Finding it to their liking, the brothers approached us to see if we would support them as athletes. They weren't asking for much, passes and a halfpipe.

It led to much more than that, including a movie spot and training support. When Hannah was in town she asked if Sierra would be interested in supporting her as well. Sierra supported her by donating to her charity through the sale of Hannah's Gold Syrup, and she gave back in numerous ways including advertisements like the famous Burton "I love affair" ad where she talked about why she loves Sierra.

The relationship has blossomed to where the level of trust between the Teter family and the resort is at a high level. Sierra is fortunate to have them as loyal athletes. The deal clincher for Hannah was when Sierra proposed a personalized parking space next to the administration building. The Hollywood Walk of Fame style star that marks her spot was the least we could do to seal the deal.

Perhaps the biggest win for Sierra is having such talent to encourage younger athletes to follow their dreams. When a young 8 year old sits next to Hannah or Jamie, they realize they are real people, and that someday they can achieve the same success as these two world-class athletes.

Sierra supports four levels of athletes. Starting with amateur skiers and riders, those who podium at USASA or USSA nationals are given a free pass, some stickers, a team shirt, and attend events to represent their resort.

As they get more experience and begin to excel, they can move up to the Professional team. This level is comprised of skiers and riders who are competing in large scale events, such as the Dew Tour, Winter X Games, or other regional series. Some of the Pro team contract with photographers and filmmakers, and many have outside sponsors to help with their expenses.

Next comes the Elite team, which is comprised of the top echelon of talent like the Teters and the Andersons.

A new category was added last season, called the Legends division, to which Sierra's "retired from competition" athletes belong. The Travis duo and two-time world record holder Mark Bennett belong to this group.

Any of these athletes could find another mountain to sponsor them, even provide a lucrative package to claim that resort as their home. Sierra's philosophy has never been to "buy" our athletes, but rather to clear the path for them to excel. That may differ from athlete to athlete, some need financial support, others need training and coaching. They all ultimately want a resort to call home, one that appreciates who they are and will do what it takes to help them realize their goals.

As they move to the next level, maybe even the Olympics, Sierra will be rooting for them back home. Win or lose, they are champions.

John A. Rice is general manager of Sierra-at-Tahoe.

Gaines: Worst California bills in 2009

By Ted Gaines

Here are the "worst 9 bills of the 2009 legislative session," which include some of the most extreme and costly measures that show just how out-of-touch the Legislature is with mainstream Californians.

Assembly Bill 3 3X: Tax Increases

Signed into law by the governor in February, this bill increased the state sales tax by 1 percent, the personal income tax by 0.25 percent and the Vehicle License Fee by 1.15 percent. It also reduced



Ted Gaines

the dependent tax credit level to \$99.

To increase taxes at the most financially devastating time for California families is absolutely the worst thing to do. Sacramento got itself into this mess and we need to enact the tough decisions it will take us to get out of it, not pass the burden on to Californians. For too long, Sacramento has irresponsibly spent too much of the people's hard-earned dollars and it's time we stop spending money on programs we can't sustain. You can continue to count on me to fight tax increases.

Senate Bill 572: Harvey Milk Day

This bill, signed into law by the governor, declared May 22 as Harvey Milk Day and encourages schools to conduct commemorative exercises remembering the life of Harvey Milk.

It is not the role of the state government to declare a special holiday for people based on their sexual orientation. Never in the history of state law has the Legislature taken such action and it is reckless to recommend and encourage this type of commemoration into our schools.

Senate Bill 670: Ban on Suction Dredge Mining

This bill imposes a temporary ban on new suction dredge mining permits. The bill, signed into law by the Governor, aims to protect the salmon population, though no scientific information points to suction dredging as the cause of reduced salmon population.

A ban on suction dredge mining permits will only hurt rural small businesses by driving away both miners and tourists. This is another example of a one-size-fits-all regulation that will punish those who rely on suction dredge mining as a way of life.

Senate Bill 2 7X: \$11 Billion Water Package

Signed into law by the governor, this measure will now go before the voters next year. If passed, Californians will pay more than \$11 billion for various water storage and infrastructure projects.

This plan does nothing to help our state by creating more unaccountable bureaucracies that don't answer to those they serve. The plan could take water rights out of the hands of Northern Californians at a time when we should be eliminating boards and commissions and bloated bureaucracies.

Assembly Bill 390: Legalization of Marijuana

This bill would legalize marijuana use and allow those over the age of 21 to grow and sell the gateway drug. The state would be able to tax all sales of marijuana while maintaining no authority to regulate or control it. This bill is scheduled to be heard in the Assembly Public Safety Committee next month.

Sacrificing public safety to increase revenue is a new low for California. This drug is illegal for a reason and putting families at risk to make money is another example of how backwards our state approaches its revenue problems. Drugs like marijuana serve as a gateway to more dangerous, hard-core drugs and will do nothing short of increasing criminal activity and putting our citizens at risk.

Assembly Bill 962: Handgun Ammunition

Signed into law by the governor, this bill makes California the first state to require instant background checks on anyone wishing to purchase handgun ammunition. The bill also requires all handgun ammunition vendors to be licensed with the state Department of Justice and ammunition to be stored behind the counter. The bill also bans Internet sales of ammunition in California.

While we should make every effort to track down and bring to justice those who would commit crimes with a gun, this misguided measure makes it harder for law-abiding citizens to exercise their Second Amendment right and purchase a legal firearm in California. The measure could devastate the ability of gun stores across the state to keep their doors open, while doing nothing to stop the flow of illegal ammunition to criminals who seek to harm our families.

Assembly Bill 1452: Cement Restrictions

This bill, which failed to pass in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, would require the state Air Resources Board to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from the production of

cement, regardless of where the cement originated. The bill would even regulate the emissions from transporting the cement.

Cement is essential to paving and repairing roads across California and improving our traffic infrastructure. Bills like this show how out-of-touch Sacramento is by choosing to impose new regulations during a time when infrastructure and job creation should be our top priorities.

Senate Bill 14: Renewable Energy Resources

Vetoed by the governor, this bill would require all retail sellers of electricity and all publicly owned utilities to acquire at least 33 percent of electricity from renewable resources by 2020.

Californians already pay more for electricity than anywhere else in the country. Yet, some in the Legislature would choose to increase that amount even more. Placing more government mandates on companies would only drive up costs for customers, at a time when they are paying for enough of Sacramento's mistakes.

Senate Bill 18XXX: Early Prisoner Release

This bill, signed into law by the governor, allows thousands of dangerous criminals to be released from prison before serving their terms. The bill also loosens parole provisions allowing easier access to a criminal's early release.

We don't need to compromise public safety to save money. Allowing convicted criminals to get a break on their prison terms because the Legislature cannot spend responsibly is beyond unacceptable. These dangerous felons are in jail for a reason, and they should only be set free when they have completed their sentences and have been properly rehabilitated to return to society.

Ted Gaines represents the 4th Assembly District in the California Legislature, which includes portions of Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado and Alpine counties.

Cops out in force New Year's Eve

By David Stevenson

New Year's Eve is nearly here. Every year, thousands of revelers crowd the casino corridor in celebration. There is actually no sanctioned event of any kind related to New Year's Eve by the city of South Lake Tahoe or by Douglas County.

You will see a large law enforcement presence on both sides of the state line because of our efforts to manage safety issues involved with such a large crowd. We would like our guests to remain aware of a few things in order to help us make this a safe and enjoyable evening for everyone:

1. No glass or other hard beverage containers are permitted in the state line corridor on New Year's Eve; regardless of whether or not they contain alcohol. Cans, bottles and similar hard containers are prohibited. Any violation of this ordinance will be strictly enforced on both sides of the state line as a misdemeanor criminal offense.
2. If you are under 18 and plan to be out for the New Year's Eve celebration, please be with your parents or other responsible adult. The South Lake Tahoe curfew is 10pm, every night, including New Year's Eve. (SLT City Ordinance 18-3)
3. Please, no loitering or remaining on public or private

property once you have been asked to leave. (SLT City ordinances 18-12.1, 18-12 & section 602 Ca. Penal Code).

4. Disorderly Conduct, Public Intoxication, is a misdemeanor criminal offense (647(f) Ca. penal code).

5. Please place all trash in the appropriate containers (SLT City Ordinance 23-26)

6. Possession of opened alcoholic beverages in public, or in vehicles, is a misdemeanor. (SLT City ordinance 18-9)

7. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor is a misdemeanor offense (272 Ca. penal code)

8. Offensive noises, voices, or music, which can be heard 50 feet from a building (or 10 feet from a vehicle) is prohibited, and may be prosecuted as misdemeanor crimes. (SLT City ordinance 18-10)

9. Please keep your party orderly, whether at the hotel or at your residence, so it does not disturb your neighbors (415(2) Ca. penal code).

10. Fireworks of any nature are illegal. Please do not bring these to the New Year's Eve celebration in the state line corridor (SLT City ordinance 12-31A).

11. The lawful age to possess alcohol in California, open or not, is 21. (25662 Ca. B&P code)

The South Lake Tahoe Police Department understands everyone wants to enjoy themselves. Please help us maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone. Thank you for your assistance, and have a happy New Year.

David Stevenson is a lieutenant with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department.

CHP holiday warning

From the California Highway Patrol:

The California Highway Patrol has a few suggestions for motorists looking to stay safe this year: never drink and drive, watch your speed and always buckle up before heading out.

In an effort to keep California's roads safe this holiday season, enhanced CHP presence will occur during the upcoming Christmas enforcement period which begins Dec. 24 at 6pm and continues through midnight Dec. 27.

"The holidays are about family, friends and celebration," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow in a press release. "Unfortunately it's also a time of year when we see too many alcohol-related fatalities."

According to the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System there were more than 4,000 collisions that occurred during last year's Christmas enforcement period in California.

During that same time period, 37 people died on California's roadways and among those killed, 23 lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes.

Along with the increased enforcement effort, the CHP is asking motorists to help keep the state's roadways safe by calling 911 to report a suspected drunken driver.

The CHP will conduct a similar holiday enforcement effort over the long New Year's weekend which begins Dec. 31 at 6pm and continues through midnight Jan. 3.

SLT issues warning about icy roads

Publisher's note: *The following is from the South Lake Tahoe Public Works Department.*

Over the past 24 hours, the city has received a mixture of wintry weather; rainfall followed by snow. Combine this with below freezing temperatures and this can result in icy and slippery roadways. This weather is expected to continue with extreme cold in the evening hours.

City staff is encouraging all motorists to slow down and allow extra room between vehicles. Additionally, please be aware that pedestrians may be sharing the roadway with vehicles.

City crews are responding to icy conditions and to downed signs. In addition, Caltrans is replacing a traffic signal standard at Highway 50 and Tahoe Keys Boulevard. That work should be completed this afternoon or early evening. You can expect delays in the area.

Parking on city streets during snow removal operations is not permitted. This delays the street clearing operation.

Drive safely.

Lake Tahoe News advertising deal

Business owners,

Time is ticking to qualify for 20 percent off *Lake Tahoe News*' 2010 advertising rates. When the new year begins, the prices increase and the discount vanishes with 2009.

Anyone who advertises in 2009 – which you can still do for as little as \$75 – will receive 20 percent off the 2010 rates.

Ad rates can be accessed by hitting the Advertise button at the top of the page. The 2009 and 2010 rates are there in PDF form. The various advertising options are outlined in the 2010 PDF.

If you would like statistics about *Lake Tahoe News* readership numbers, please email info@laketahoenews.net with your request. Address any questions about advertising to that email address as well.

Lake Tahoe News has a strong following inside and outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin. This is why it is considered in-market and out-of-market media. It is the only source of Lake Tahoe news seven days a week. As an online news source you will be able to reach your customers 24/7.

Thank you,

Kathryn Reed, publisher *Lake Tahoe News*

LTN – Your Olympic Connection



In 53 days the Winter Olympics begin.

Lake Tahoe News™ coverage of the Winter Games in Whistler begins today – the first day of winter.

From today until the closing ceremonies on Feb. 28, *Lake Tahoe News* will be covering the Games from a variety of angles – including traveling to Canada before the Games begin. *Lake Tahoe News* will be your Olympic connection.

A slew of athletes from Lake Tahoe are waxing their skis and boards, sharpening the edges and honing their skills in events leading up to the Feb. 12 start of the Vancouver Olympics. We will profile some of the hopefuls in the coming weeks.

With the Olympics returning to the West Coast of North America for the first time in 50 years, it marks a significant anniversary for Lake Tahoe – the 1960 Squaw Valley Olympics. We will mark that historic occasion as well.

So many people have a story to tell about the Winter Games. We would like to share yours with readers of *Lake Tahoe News*. Please email info@laketahoenews.net with your story and any photos you might like to share. Please include a telephone number so someone from LTN can contact you.

Kathryn Reed, publisher *Lake Tahoe News*

Quest for affordable child care

By Tina Barna

The quest for affordable, quality child care continues to challenge parents, according to the 2009 California Child Care Portfolio.

The 2009 Portfolio is a series of statewide and county-by-county reports documenting licensed child care supply and demand in California. The data was collected in 2008 from local child care resource and referral programs and prepared by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, a statewide organization. The 61 locally-based, state-funded child care resource and referral agencies (R&Rs) work to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of child care in their communities. The R&Rs talk with parents daily as they counsel them in their search for quality child care.

The 2009 Portfolio report indicates that:

• The supply of child care would fall far short of demand if all families with children 0-13 in the workforce needed child care. Child care availability varies by county, with licensed care available for 33 percent of children 0-13 in El Dorado County with parents in the labor force.

• El Dorado County has more than 1,800 children living in poverty. More than 600,000 children ages birth to 5 years old live in poverty. Statewide the number of children living in poverty has increased 5 percent between 2006 and 2008. This increase in poverty underscores the importance of maintaining child care subsidies to serve low-income families, including publicly funded centers which represent about a third of licensed center-based programs.

• Parents need full-time care. Sixty-four percent of child care requests to R&Rs in El Dorado County for children birth to 5 years old are for full-time care and 43 percent are for part-time care. Eighty percent of parents are requesting care because they are working.

• Parents lack care options during non-traditional hours. Statewide about 9 percent of parents request care during the evening or on weekends, however only 1 to 2 percent of licensed centers offer this type of care. While family child care homes (27 percent) are more likely to offer care during non-traditional hours, they only represent about one-third of the overall licensed supply.

Conscious of the continuing downward spiral of California's economy, the Network took the initiative in 2009 to survey the local R&R programs to assess if and how child care supply and demand had been impacted in their county since 2008.

Patty Siegel, executive director of the Network, expressed concern about these reports, noting, "At a time when working families are struggling harder than ever to find and keep their jobs, everyone concerned about economic recovery should be paying close attention to what is happening to our licensed child care supply in California."

In response to the Network's survey, in El Dorado County, we have seen a drop in both the demand and the supply of licensed child care. For now this is a hidden problem, as demand for child care has declined due to job losses. However, as people return to employment, families will have fewer child care options which will complicate their return to the workforce. It is clear in our community that supporting the supply of quality child care must be included in steps to our economic recovery.

The 29-year-old California Child Care Resource & Referral Network is a nonprofit association of 57 member agencies in

counties across California. Resource and referral programs (R&Rs) are a unique hub in the world of child care, connecting parents, providers, and policymakers in each community. R&Rs help parents find child care by providing referrals to licensed programs and by offering important information on how to recognize and choose quality care. R&Rs help child care providers by offering training in child development, safety, and business skills, and they help policymakers by gathering standardized data, identifying key areas of local need, and participating in policy discussions.

Tina Barna is director of Choices for Children

Claudio: Tahoe Victims of CPS need to be heard

Letter to the publisher,

On Dec. 8, four members of Tahoe Victims of CPS spoke at the South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting. The Tahoe Victims of CPS asked the council to endorse the Parents Bill of Rights giving better protection to children seized by Child Protective Services (CPS). At the end of the council meeting, under "Announcements", Councilmen Bill Crawford and Jerry Birdwell spoke in support of Tahoe Victims of CPS and the efforts to reform CPS and the foster care system.

Councilman Crawford spent his career in the school system, mainly with the continuation school, which he helped to create in South Lake Tahoe. His position gave him access to information not readily available to the public about the money in foster care. He cited an example involving two girls from Sacramento sent to live in a group home in South Lake

Tahoe. The group home received monthly checks from Sacramento County for \$1,800 for the first girl and \$2,100 for the second girl.

Both girls were in Councilman Crawford's class and one day the girls reported they did not have breakfast because there was no food in the house. Councilman Crawford stated that he has never seen a child from a group home come to school in a new winter coat. He observed that foster care parents fit into two categories; older people trying to make up for their shortcomings as parents and those searching for ways to supplement their incomes. Councilman Crawford said, "There is a real problem out there."

Councilman Birdwell, a former judge in the state of Texas, mentioned his talks with Superior Court judges in the state of California and found they had the same problems with CPS as the judges in Texas. The problems stem from the turnover of CPS employees, often right out of college with no experience, put in stressful positions where they often "over reacted" to the detriment of the children they were supposed to be protecting. Councilman Birdwell concluded by saying he hopes the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors will hear the complaints and do something about the way CPS is handling these children.

Ernie Claudio, co-founder of Tahoe Victims of CPS

**LTN: Suicide coverage
deserves respect**

People say the worst thing anyone can go through is to bury their child.

Parents of a Zephyr Cove Elementary School 11-year-old must do that after their son took his life this week.

News publications have historically shied away from covering suicides. It's personal. It's not usually news. It hits the news meter when it occurs in a public place or the person is well known.

Lake Tahoe News first reported the tragedy by publishing a press release from the Douglas County Sheriff's Department about two deaths investigators were working. We did so because it is unusual for the small South Shore agency to work two unrelated deaths in one night and because of the age of the younger person. At that time it was not known this was a suicide.

We have chosen not to publish the boy's name or do a full story on him out of journalistic integrity and respect for his family and friends.

The *Tahoe Daily Tribune* has criticized us for our original coverage. We stand by what we have done.

We don't believe suicide is preventable. The *Tribune* in its editorial today said it is.

This is wrong. And it is so incredibly callous to chastise parents, friends and teachers "to imply they should have done something more to help this youngster. Their grief is enough to last a lifetime without any publication placing blame and suggesting more should have been done.

The boy was getting help. People knew he was not happy. In the most simplistic of terms, happy, well-adjusted people don't take their own lives.

For a child to even know what suicide is and how to accomplish it is sad in itself. To see no reason to live, especially at 11, is nearly incomprehensible.

We must remember that as humans “ even 11-year-olds “ we are capable of hurting ourselves and others.

As a community we have a choice how we react to this loss, what we learn from it and how we grow.

A child’s death, no matter how or when it happens, is a tragic loss.

Lake Tahoe News offers its condolences to the family and friends of this boy whose life ended far too soon.

Kathryn Reed, publisher *Lake Tahoe News*