



# SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the  
**TAHOE NORDIC SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM, INC**  
 Lake Tahoe • Truckee • Donner Summit

**T**ahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team's biggest and most important fund raiser happens on **March 3: The Great Ski Race**. This is the 26th Great Ski Race, and, as many of you know, is much more than a fund raising event. This 30 km cross country ski race, from Tahoe City to Truckee, is the zenith of many western Nordic skiers' ski season and the largest event of North Lake Tahoe's Snowfest Winter Carnival. Lots of pieces must come together for the race to be a success and the final assemblage of such occurs Monday night, **February 25, 6:30 PM** at the Granlibakken Resort in Tahoe City. This of course is synonymous with the next meeting of the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team and it is important that you're there! Come out and support *your* Team, *your* race, and *your* community!

## Four Searches

Since the last issue of *SnowLine*, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team has responded to four search and rescues, resulting in the rescue of seven individuals.

- The first of these callouts occurred January 21 at about 4:00 PM, just as a particularly intense little snowstorm was bearing down on the Tahoe Basin.

A twenty-something couple, Dave and Jocelyn, husband and wife from Pleasanton, California, were attempting to reach Shirley Lake—near the top of Shirley Canyon—on their snowshoes. By about 2:00 PM they realized they were lost and called for help on their cell phone with weak batteries. They said they were going to begin backtracking.

The Nordic Team dispatched three different ski Teams, one to ski up Shirley Canyon from the valley bottom, and two to ski in from above using the ski lifts of Squaw Valley. The lower ski Team, consisting of Dirk Schoonmaker, Jim Granger, and Ron Driller, came upon Dave and Jocelyn about half way up the canyon. They were in good shape but tired and glad to be found. All were back at the search staging area by dark.

- The Nordic Team was next dispatched at 6:00 PM on January 27 to look for two missing 19-year-old snowboarders from Sugar Bowl. The errant boarders, Justin and Javier,

had made contact with the Sugar Bowl Ski Patrol using their Motorola "family" radio, the like of which have become quite popular among friends and family at ski areas, on the beach, and in the shopping malls. From Roller Pass the Sugar Bowl Patrol had spotted two people ascending the west end of Schallenburg Ridge and declared they had a visual on the lost guys. This initially caused a bit of confusion because as it turned out the two ascensionists were in fact neither Justin or Javier. In the meantime, nine Team skiers were transported to Roller Pass and began searching the area immediately down and to the east. In the flats below the first steep pitches, Team skiers picked up on the lost boarders' tracks and tracked them down. Justin and Javier were located at 8:00 PM, hungry and cold. The Team skiers put them on snowshoes and hiked them out to meet the three Team snowmobiles and Team snowcat that had worked their way up Coldstream Valley. Everyone was out by 10:30. Justin and Javier were found on a ridge above Coldstream Creek, quite a bit south of the usual bottoming-out point of lost snowboarders on that side of Mt. Lincoln.

Dirk Schoonmaker mentioned that the lost guys had climbed a fair amount of vertical—also unusual—in order to gain better reception on their handy-talky.

- The next search was called out at 6:00 PM on January 29, during what turned out to be the coldest night of the winter.

After interviewing the reporting party of a lost skier, Team skiers hypothesized (correctly) that in fact there may be two missing people. A "local" snowboarder and employee of Alpine Meadows (Kris) had met a visiting skier (Nick) on the ski lift and talked him into an out-of-bounds descent after which they could "curl back around" into the Sherwood area of the ski area. There would be no such curling that afternoon.

By 7:30 that evening, five Team skiers, Dirk Schoonmaker, Jeff Rieger, Mike Kennett, Russ Viehmann, and Joe Pace, had dropped off the back of Ward Peak and began tracking the displaced duo. Another cadre of Team skiers "stood by" in the patrol shack at the top of the Summit chair. Both Kris's snowboard track and Nick's ski track were found and easily followed in the foot+ of new powder snow, but the tracks diverged from each other—wildly at times—indicating that the two were descending separately.

In short order the Team searchers descended to Five Lakes Creek—near the confluence with Grouse Creek—where they heard a yell from the other side of the main channel. It turned out to be the "local" Kris. He said he was cold and wasn't doing too well. Russ negotiated a tricky crossing of Five Lakes Creek to reach Kris, finding him standing straight as a lodgepole, shivering, and frozen in place. Russ immediately started warming him as best he could. Kris was dressed for a stimulating afternoon in front of the TV, but not for riding in deep powder snow: he was adorned in layer upon layer of life-liberating cotton. Underneath it all he wore cotton flannel pajamas.



Winners of the 1995 Great Ski Race, Dave McLaughlin and Debbie Hakansson.

Photograph by Randall Osterhuber

**Next General Meeting is Monday, February 25, 2002, 6:30 pm at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut**



Tired of posting through the deep snow, Kris had decided that wading through Five Lakes Creek would be a good idea instead. He was saturated from the nipples down when he clambered out on the far side of the creek. The air temperature was approaching 0° F. Dirk crossed the creek to join Russ and the two got Kris out of his frozen clothes and into dry fleece. Kris's hands and fingers were red and white and wooden and Russ let out a coyote-startling scream as Kris placed his frozen pine paws against Russ's bare stomach.

Meanwhile... the other three searchers had located Nick back on the east side of the creek. Nick was dressed in what the fashion conscious and sexual-orientation aware Alpine Meadows Ski Patrol affectionately call a "fag bag": a one-piece ski suit. Reaching peak popularity in the 1980s, the one-piece suits (which Suzy Chafee filled out quite nicely) are now as they were then: warm and dry. Consequently, Nick was warm and dry (and already busy constructing a shelter for the night). An LZ was located, and, after assurance that Russ and Dirk had the now-thawing Kris under control, CareFlight landed and ferried the three Nordic Team skiers and Nick out there.

Kris was much too weak and lame to cross the creek or even proceed to another LZ on the west side of the channel, so Russ and Dirk decided to make camp for the night. CareFlight returned dropping the trio sleeping bags, a tent, and pizza. I'm not sure if CareFlight's 700 hp Eurocopter A-Star B2 had that little illuminated Jiffy Pizza sign outside the fuselage as it roared overhead.

Dry clothes, a sleeping bag, and food and water helped Kris make a remarkable recovery. The three of them bived the night through; Russ and Dirk suffering Kris's snoring, elbowing, and otherwise ungentelemanly bed manners. Russ's anecdotes from that long, cold sleep-over paint the three of them as the queerest of bedmates since Ishmael and Queequeg. Temperatures that night: -1° F at

the Alpine Meadows lodge, -8° F on Donner Summit, -17° F at the Truckee Airport.

To be frank, Kris's decision to wade the creek portrays him as a young man of very limited knowledge. If the Team searchers had caught up with him even an hour later it may have been too late to warm him in the field, even with the many resources available. Wearing cotton and getting wet is, as any North Lake Tahoe/Truckee fourth grader can tell you, the most foolish and dangerous thing to do in the winter wilderness. This story illustrates the continued need to educate the public—even the "local" public—about the environment in which we all live.

The CHP helicopter H-20 nosed-in at first light and yanked all to safety.

• At 2:30 PM on February 4, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was dispatched to chase down an errant skier off the back of Alpine Meadows. The Alpine Patrol had been watching the 50-year-old skier descend into Granite Chief Wilderness with a spotting scope; he appeared to be following tracks left by the search crew during the January 29 rescue. The Placer County helicopter (Eagle 1) was overhead, landed, picked up an Alpine patroller as a knowledgeable spotter, then chased the skier down. The Nordic Team skiers gave chase too, reaching the lost guy (who was tired and jonesing for a cigarette) just after the helo, and all were airlifted out, just before dark.

These were the Nordic Team's third, fourth, fifth, and sixth searches of the season.

## Team Goings-On

Please call training organizers to let them know you will be attending.

The Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City behind the Chevron gas station.

**February 16:** Steve Twomey (525-7280) conducts a field training on Donner Summit today, in the Castle Peak area. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM or at Wild Cherries Coffee House in Truckee at 8:00.

**February 18:** Russ Viehmann (582-1695) is organizing a ski tour somewhere on the West Shore. Call him for specifics.

**February 24:** Dirk Schoonmaker (583-2929) is directing a Team training at Kirkwood ski area. The Eldorado search team may also be involved. This training is limited to the first 12 skiers who talk to Dirk no later than **February 18 at 6:00 PM**.

**February 25:** The Great Ski Race organization meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team. 6:30 PM at Granlibakken.

**February 28:** Stuffing Great Ski Racers' goodie bags at Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area, 5:30 PM.

**March 3:** The 26th Annual Great Ski Race, Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area, 9:00 AM, SHARP!

**March 9:** Gerald Rockwell (583-5376) leads a ski of Signal Peak. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM or Wild Cherries in Truckee at 8:00.

**March 10:** Contact Peter Sporleder (546-0588) for info about a ski practice day at Northstar. Meet 7:00 AM at the garage, 8:00 in the Northstar Village.

**March 13:** Ski Dick's Peak with Joe Pace (583-1806). Meet at the garage at the very polite hour of 7:30 AM.

**March 23:** Ski Lyon's Peak with Russ Viehmann (582-1695). Meet at the garage at 7:30 AM or in front of the tram building at Squaw at 8:00.

Wondering if the Olympic hockey team parties with the figure skaters,

—Randall Osterhuber

## Team Officers

President	Joe Pace	583-1806
Vice President	Steve Twomey	525-7280
Treasurer	Scott Schroeffer	546-2809
Secretary	Terri Viehmann	582-1695
Board Members	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
	Randy Sharp	587-2877
	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Directors-at-large	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376

## Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroeffer	546-2809
Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
Equipment	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Newsletter	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowcats	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Snowmobiles	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
Training	Bernie Mellor	546-2238

All phone numbers area code (530).

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**26TH ANNUAL  
GREAT SKI RACE  
SUNDAY, MARCH 3**

MARK JOHNSON  
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please keep us informed of your correct address!

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