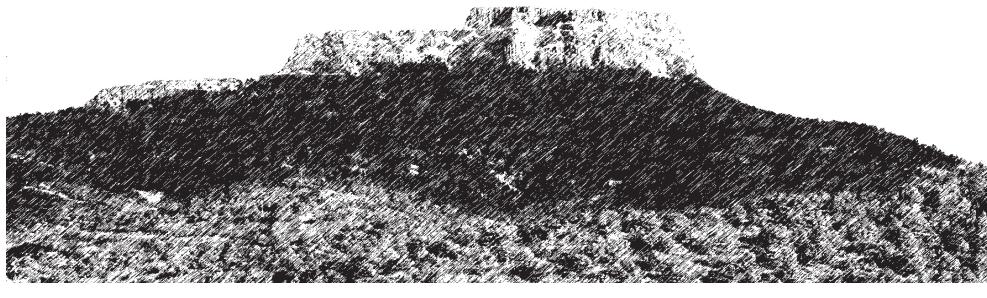


OVER THE PASS



"Probably having a gun held to my head. I used to be afraid of heights—I couldn't even move. I overcame that, but the gun was unexpected and extreme. I was walking in California and a dude asked me for my purse. I said no and he pulled a gun. I still wouldn't give him my purse. Luckily, his gun jammed."

— Chelsea Velasquez, Trinidad



"Having a loaded gun in my face. I was running guns for the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas in 1995. One of my customers turned a loaded gun on me and robbed me. My wife stepped in front of me. It was the most selfless thing I've ever seen anyone do. He didn't shoot, but he took everything."

— Travis "Big Tex" Visage, mechanic, Trinidad

TIM KELLER'S CONNECTIONS

"What's the most frightened you've ever been?"

Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News



"When I was swarmed by police holding guns at me point blank. I was driving home to Boulder from Denver about 11:30 at night when I stopped for gas at a convenience store. When I walked out of the store, the police stopped me. It turned out that someone had robbed the store just before I was there and the police arrived thinking I was the robber."

— Mary Szymanski, officer in charge, U.S. Post Office, Trinidad



"Skiing off the top of Loveland Pass, back in the latter 1950s. We'd get dropped off at the top of the mountain and somebody would take the car to the bottom. We'd just head off cross country and then down the mountain in natural snow, making our own trails that could slide off into an avalanche. It was frightening but we never stopped doing it."

— John Tarabino, retired TSJC vice president, Trinidad

WORLD CUP FINALS

Ilka Stuhec looks to keep breakout season going in Aspen

PAT GRAHAM
AP Sports Writer

ASPEN, Colo. (AP) — It's easy to spot Slovenia's Ilka Stuhec in her lime green speed suit.

Almost as easy is finding her name in the standings — just look near the top.

On skis waxed, tuned and maintained by her mom, Stuhec is in the midst of a breakout season that has her on the verge of clinching the downhill and super-G titles this week at the World Cup Finals. The 26-year-old will certainly be one of the skiers to watch heading into the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, possibly even the one to give four-time overall World Cup champion Lindsey Vonn a strong push in the speed events.

All this success, though, has caught even Stuhec by surprise.

"I knew I was skiing good and capable of a lot of things. But it's quite more than I expected," said Stuhec, who turned in the second-fastest downhill training run Monday, 0.14 seconds behind the time posted by Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany. "After it started to happen, I was just really enjoying it, having fun skiing, getting more and more confident of myself and my skiing. I like it."

Although she's been on the World Cup circuit for quite some time, she's uncovered another gear this season. She also capitalized on Vonn's early absence — along with Swiss skier Lara Gut's season-ending knee injury — to appear on the podium 11 times, including six wins.

Stuhec is 97 points in front of Italy's Sofia Goggia in the season-long downhill title race with only Wednesday's competition remaining. Things are a little tighter in the super-G race, with Stuhec holding a scant 15-point advantage over Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein.

"No pressure. Not at all," Stuhec said. "I was really looking forward to getting here."

She's a fan of this hill, too, with its



Slovenia's Ilka Stuhec speeds down the course during a training run at the women's World Cup downhill ski race Monday, March 13, 2017, in Aspen, Colo.

grippy and spring-like conditions.

"The snow is perfect," said Stuhec, who trails American Mikaela Shiffrin by a nearly insurmountable 378 points in the overall race. "I hope we will get a little bit of sun over the next days. It will be fun."

Really, it's not as if she arrived out of nowhere. Stuhec won a super-G title at the 2008 world junior championships. But she's been hampered over her career by a right knee that's required five surgeries.

She ultimately lost funding on the Slovenian ski team, forcing her to set up her own team. Now traveling the World Cup circuit with her own coach and her mother, Darja Crnko, who prepares her skis, Stuhec has found success. There have been accounts of her mom's willingness to mortgage their house in order to keep her career going.

Asked if that was true, she just smiled.

"Almost," said Stuhec, who switched skis this season. "We did struggle a lot before. Now, it's way easier. I'm not happy that it happened, but I learned a lot. I learned a lot about myself, about people around me. I think I wouldn't be the same as

I am today if nothing would've happened."

Recently, Stuhec captured the downhill title at the world championships in Switzerland. By doing so, she kept the title in the Slovenian family as she succeeded the 2015 world downhill winner, Tina Maze, who's now retired.

Stuhec said she doesn't stay in contact much with Maze.

"It's been interesting, her team compared to Tina's team. They did things a lot differently," said Vonn, dealing with a cold as she finished sixth in the training run Monday. "I was always interested to see what she did. She has her mother as her technician. It's a really interesting dynamic and seems to work really well for her. It's nice to see her having such a successful season."

Especially with Winter Games around the corner. At the World Cup race on the Olympic course earlier this month, Stuhec finished third in the super-G and third in the downhill. She also has Olympic experience, taking 10th in the downhill at the 2014 Sochi Games and 13th in the super-G.

"I never give up," Stuhec said, "no matter how hard it was."

SPORT BRIEFS

Associated Press

Officials ID airman who died in snowboarding accident

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — Authorities have released the identity of a 24-year-old U.S. senior airman who died after hitting a tree while snowboarding at Eldora Mountain Resort.

The Boulder County Coroner's Office identified the victim as Tien Tran of Aurora. Tran was found unconscious and not breathing Tuesday on a black diamond run. He was wearing a helmet.

The Daily Camera reports that Tran was assigned to the 566th Intelligence squadron at Buckley Air Force Base. The base was planning a memorial service.

The coroner's office says an investigation into the accident is continuing.

Galloping moose surprises snowboarder

BRECKENRIDGE, Colo. (AP) — A moose on the loose caught several skiers and snowboarders by surprise as it galloped headlong down a run at Breckenridge Ski Resort in Colorado.

Cheri Luther was snowboarding Friday when she saw the moose approaching, and she shot video of the large animal coming within feet of her.

Luther, who kept snowboarding, is heard saying, "Oh, my God, I don't know where to go" before screaming as the moose runs by her.

Resort officials say no one was hurt, and the encounter is a good reminder that skiers and snowboarders share the mountain with wildlife.

In late December, a rare lynx strolled nonchalantly across the Purgatory resort in southwestern Colorado, walking through a crowd of skiers and snowboarders who stopped to take videos.

Colorado's Eli Tomac wins again at Daytona

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Eli Tomac successfully defended his Daytona Supercross title Saturday night, leading the last 10 laps and easily holding off Jeremy Martin in the 450SX race.

The Kawasaki star from Cortez, Colorado, became the ninth rider to win two years in a row in the 46-year history of the Daytona International Speedway event.

Tomac has a season-high five victories in the Monster Energy AMA Supercross season. He's second in the series standings, 17 points behind KTM's Ryan Dungey.

Honda's Jeremy Martin was second, 17.618 seconds back. Husqvarna's Jason Anderson was third, and Dungey fourth.

Aspen hotels jammed due to races, spring break

ASPEN, Colo. (AP) — Hotel bookings are up in the Aspen area this week as two ski areas are preparing to host a large number of visitors due to a ski competition and school vacations.

The Aspen Daily News reports occupancy is nearing 90 percent for much of this week.

Stay Aspen Snowmass President Bill Tomcich says Snowmass Village will see its busiest night Monday, while Aspen will see its most visitors on Saturday.

The increased visitors this week come as the Aspen area is hosting the 2017 FIS Ski World Cup Finals and students are on spring break.

Tomcich says racers, officials and support staff with this year's ski competition will account for about 820 hotel rooms per night. Aspen started planning for this week's increased demand more than a year ago.