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A multisport day shows the best Tahoe has to offer

STORY BY DAVE ZOOK

~ Moonshine Ink ~

The snap-twang of recoiling nylon was coupled with a piece of post-glacial volcanic plug (read: Eagle Rock) cracking and catapulting skyward. A slackline setup had gone awry and the chunk whizzed over our heads and exploded down the cliff.

"That could have put a damper on someone's day real quick," someone said in the dim light.

Even at dawn, the lookout was surprisingly bustling. As seven of us watched the sun breach the East Shore, coffee and cold air fueled a constant banter, and a nearby kettlebell training duo added to the cacophony.

We were at the start of a four-phase multisport day, weaving together hiking, snowsports, mountain biking, and watersports all along the Hwy 89 corridor from Tahoe City to Truckee. Impromptu sports, like slacklining, would of course arise in the process. We aimed to grab life and drink it up from sunup to sundown, with some of us considering just that.

"I was thinking about opening a beer before every phase," said Shannon Shue while atop Eagle Rock, "but I realized a dawn beer might be pushing it."

Multisport days are nothing new to Lake Tahoe or the adventure

world. Our goal was not to set any records — Matt Bansak, a participant and local photographer, logged 12 activities on his birthday the previous summer — nor be too serious. Rather, we wanted to celebrate the terrain and offerings of the area, and show it could be done without a militaristic schedule. Why? Because the Tahoe outdoors are just that great.

A Most Busy Day at the Office

After the steep 20-minute hike down from Eagle Rock, we returned to a hearty and chaotic breakfast of eggs, bacon, and veggies at my house a few miles north of the hike. The French press was continuously plunged and refilled as we worked out the transportation logistics. About 10 people were taking off together from the house for

the snow and bike portions of the day, and we filled four cars, including one full-size pickup truck, with assorted gear.

While we encouraged people to drop in and out for different phases, a core crew of six friends — Shannon Shue, Dave Wadleigh, Hazen Woolson, Rachel Blum, Matt Bansak, and myself — went the whole nine yards.

Temps around 50 greeted us at Squaw, a strange experience seemingly becoming the norm. With only 200 inches of total snowfall at Squaw by the end of March, the bright spot on the hill was the terrain park. Less affected by snow totals, the parks remained in fine form and offered us endless challenges, even as our hopes of a big powder year evaporated again.

"I'm going to pull some mean quad

extremity blasts today," said Blum in the parking lot, her euphemism for the classic spread eagle. Donning assorted neon garb, we blasted funk from a car stereo and gathered our assortment of skis, snowboards, monoskis, and skiblades. Eager for action, we hit the Funitel.

Tricks of all sorts were fired off in the park, with the quickly softening snow providing forgiveness if the jump distances were miscalculated. As a bonus, the melt-freeze cycle left Mainline Pocket (the steep cliff band above Gold Coast lift) with a smooth and soft surface, so we headed up.

As we scoped our ideal lines, a tentative man peeked down a steep chute over rocky exposure, saying to his friend watching below, "I don't know Bob, she looks a little tricky." A few sidesteps later he committed, swooping a wide turn into the open apron and executing controlled turns all the way down.

"SIXTY-NINE YEARS OOOLD!" hooted his friend, ecstatic with pride. We joined in to cheer on his success.

I rounded the herd to move on to the biking phase, but not before Shue, normally a snowboarder, pushed his 60-centimeter skiblades into the face of Mainline to the delight of the crowd. After >>>



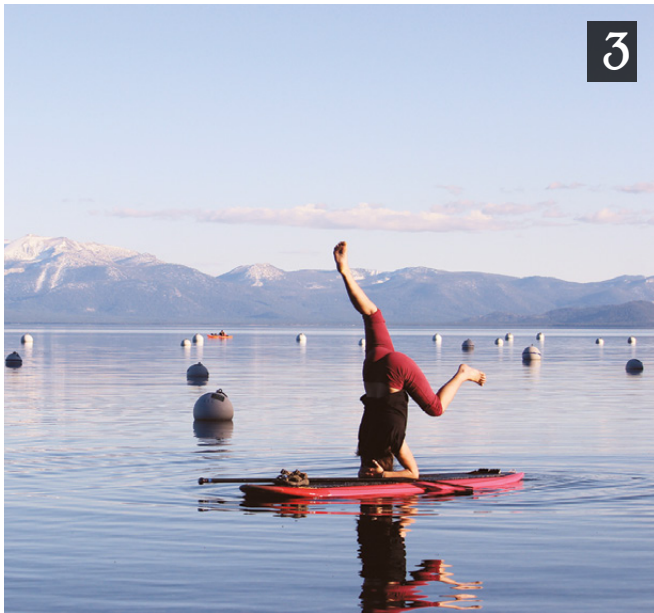
HIKING | SLACKLINING | YOGA | SKIING | SNOWBOARDING | SNOWBOARDING

THE CORE GROUP: Matt Bansak, Rachel Blum, Dave Zook, Dave Wadleigh, Shannon Shue, Katie Harroun, and Hazen Woolson. Photo by Matt Bansak.

PIER JUMPING | 12 OZ. CURLS

MONOSKING | SKIBLADING

MOUNTAIN BIKING | CANOEING | KAYAKING | SUP'ING | SWIMMING



- 1) "THE PEOPLE DEMAND BACKFLIPS," said Hazen Woolson (R) a few seconds before he and Donny Beck (L) launched simultaneous inverts at Squaw. Photo by Matt Bansak
 2) WITH HIS LUCKY YELLOW KAYAK HELMET, Anthony Santos clears a gap jump at Jackass Ridge. Photo by Matt Bansak
 3) THE ONLY ALL-DAY FEMALE PARTICIPANT, RACHEL BLUM winds down the evening with a SUP headstand with the mountains of South Shore in the Background. Photo by Dave Zook/Moonshine Ink
 4) A DELICATE BALANCE: Katie Harroun finds her center as the sun breaches the horizon on Eagle Rock. Photo by Matt Bansak

>>> 20 feet of a shaky left-hand turn, he tumbled to his face, got back on his feet, and then exploded again.

Keep Rolling

By 2:30 p.m. the sun was hammering the pavement on the pullout just south of West River Street, where we had parked to go biking. As we took long pulls of water and slathered on sunscreen, the group radiated enthusiasm about riding the feature-packed trail that comprised Jackass Ridge, but not so much about the climb.

Our group of 11 started up the Jeep road, kicking up a streaming cloud of dust and grateful that the uphill only lasted 40 minutes.

Bike enthusiasts have seized the lacking winter conditions, and trails from Reno to the South Shore to Truckee have been in great shape virtually year-round. Anthony Santos, a biking

enthusiast who joined for the hike, snow, and bike portions, has been fixing up the trails throughout winter in a grassroots attempt to keep them rideable.

Santos is also a ripping rider, and left most of us in the literal dust. Dave Wadleigh, perhaps trying to keep up, got tangled up in an unforeseen wooden bridge feature tucked behind a blind rock rollover, and went over the bars. "Yup, there's a bridge on this one," he said, while limping around the woods and gathering himself, scratched but unbroken.

After the biking leg of the trip, the sun and exertion had taken its toll. We were caked in dust and sweat and walking on limbs that felt more like Jell-O than actual limbs. Sitting on tailgates or on the ground, we indulged in a post-ride, ice-shackled Budweiser from the cooler before

winding down lakeside for the final phase.

The Final Countdown

With plans to meet at the small public beach next to Sunnyside Resort on the West Shore, our group dragged kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, and more to the water, which was as flat and smooth as a sheet of glass.

The sharp light of day wore down to the softened refractions of a sunset, and we took turns pushing off into the lake and paddling lazy loops a few hundred feet out and back. It was refreshing to have no objective and let the light fade away with no track of time. Woolson and I jumped in for a quick swim, the frigid water zapping a burst of life back into our systems, and Walker Brown, a late joiner, pulled a gainer off a pier (two more sports!).

Getting off the water, we clustered in a sun-splashed nook, grilling hot dogs as the air took on a biting chill. It was impossible to ignore how the lake seemed stuck at a permanent low tide, a result of the thirsty Sierra and its lack of substantial runoff.

Our multisport day continually reminded us of both the drought and the world-class recreation available at our fingertips. Though our actions did nothing to alleviate the grander problems, it felt right to take advantage of what we could, while we could.

"Dang, we need to do this again in the summer," said Shue, with a beet-red face and glazed over eyes, 15 hours after starting the adventure and already looking towards the chance to do it again.

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33