

Amgen official: Tahoe may be in the mix in the future

By Laura Weislo, Cycling News

The 2011 Amgen Tour of California has only just wrapped up, and organiser Andrew Messick of AEG has already announced one detail for next year's race: it will commence in Santa Rosa, the home of three-time champion Levi Leipheimer.

"The future starts 51 weeks from now in Santa Rosa, the start of the 2012 Amgen Tour of California," Messick said at the closing press conference in Thousand Oaks, California. "It's been an excellent home to the race as a venue, and for bringing the cycling community in North America together, there's no place better."



Even though the would-be start of the 2011 Amgen bike race had people waiting in the snow May 15, Tahoe could be part of the mix in the future. Photo/Lisa J. Tolda

Messick and the race director Jim Birrell of Medalist Sports looked back on this year's race, the high points – both literally and figuratively – being the two summit finishes on Sierra Road and Mount Baldy, and the lows of cancelling stage one at Lake Tahoe and moving the start of stage two from Squaw Valley.

“If you look at the two summit finishes, you have to be impressed with the work of Jim's team. There was nothing on top of Sierra Road – it was a cow pasture. There was no power, no cell phone, no plumbing. Overnight they built a village. Same on Mount Baldy. It was really impressive,” Messick said

Birrell pointed to the huge crowds, especially on Sierra Road, as a reason to look at continuing the trend of including summit finishes in the race.

“We saw some unbelievable dynamics unfold in the race, and our crowds on Sierra Road far exceeded those we've had in downtown San Jose in the past. It will be something to evaluate for the future.”

Messick said that one feature which will be a part of the Tour of California in the future is Lake Tahoe. “It didn't work out this year because of factors outside our control.

“There is a place for Tahoe in this race. The teams that came early were rewarded with exceptional riding and great weather – we were hit with a fluke storm this year, but it is a fantastic venue that showcases an exceptionally beautiful part of California.”

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