

Skate skiing tests agility, balance, patience



Truckee High School Nordic ski team member Grace Bronstone, left, gives skate skiing pointers to Darla Sadler. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Push, glide, glide. Or was it glide, pole, pole, glide, glide?

Without the instruction of Grace Bronstone, we were a little unsure exactly what to do. Still, we kept at it to the point where we were fluid with our maneuvers, albeit a bit unsteady at times.

Skate skiing looks like ballet on snow when done correctly. We were not the models to emulate.

Bronstone, who is a member of the Truckee High School Nordic

team, effortlessly slid across the snow at Tahoe Donner Cross Country Center on Jan. 10 during National Trails Day. She and teammates were helping out the rookies – and collecting donations for the team. Her patience with us was wonderful, as was her enthusiasm to teach us something she is clearly proficient at. A combination of grace and power.



Dan Hill with Fischer skis explains how the base pattern affects performance.

When Dan Hill, the Fischer-Swix rep, asked what our goals were for the day, I said, “To ski like Olympians.” Why not set the bar high?

While cross country Olympians tend to be in their 30s, the three of us are past the prime age for beginning such an endeavor. But Hill didn’t give up on us.

After Bronstone imparted her words of wisdom, Hill came to check on us. Darla and I needed to raise our poles up, use more force as we planted them, and engage our core for more oomph.

These poles that already seem super long – they come to our lower lip – are now to be raised in front of us to get that added power. I conjured images of past Olympics, remembering how those men and women seemed to be so aggressive. This isn’t just a sport that engages the leg muscles. I give Hill credit

for helping me to achieve my goal in a little way. I was at least envisioning Olympians even though my technique was severely lacking.

Hill said to be an Olympian we would have to excel at classic cross country and skate skiing. We'll keep working on just being proficient at both.



The groomer could use more snow to move around.

“The goal of Winter Trails Day is to gain more lifetime skiers. For anyone who has been unsure about giving cross country skiing or snowshoeing a try, it’s a great way for participants to come out, ski and snowshoe for free, and get some free tips,” Ashley Quadros with Tahoe Donner told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Tahoe Donner and REI put on the Truckee event, with representation from the Tahoe Rim Trail, Sierra Avalanche Center and several equipment manufacturers.

While there were snowshoe demos and guided tours along some of the more than 100 kilometers of trails, Darla, Kim and I stuck to classic cross country and skate skis. We left having gained new skills, gathered a ton of information about Nordic ski equipment and an appreciation for the venue. A state-of-the-art center is under construction that should open this winter, which will complement the on-snow experience.