

Pro sports venues beckon Tahoe-ites



Misaki Doi is ready to crush the ball at the Bank of the West tournament in Stanford. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

Appreciation of athleticism, physique, conditioning, speed, eye-hand coordination, fluid-graceful movement, mental toughness – those are some of the advantages of watching professional sports live compared to sitting in front of the television.

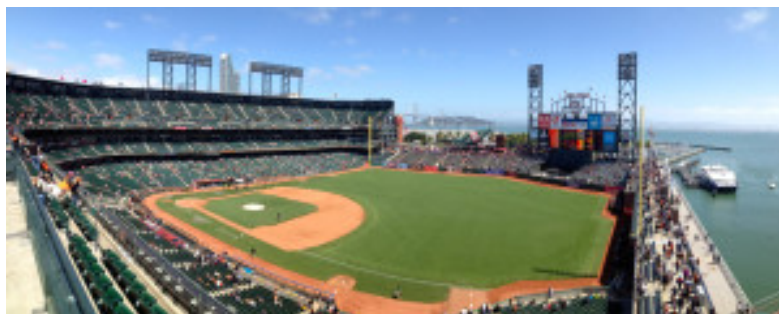
There are things to hear and see, and nuances that TV cameras don't capture.

Watching professional sports does not have to break the bank. There are a plethora of opportunities throughout the year for people in the Lake Tahoe Basin to watch the pros.



Reno Aces seats include an outfield grass area. Photo/LTN file

AAA baseball is east (Reno) and west (Sacramento) of here. An advantage to the minor league ballparks is they are much more intimate than the big leagues'. It's reminiscent of going to spring training in Arizona, only cheaper.



AT&T Park, home of the San Francisco Giants, has views of more than just the field. Photo/LTN file

Still, two Major League Baseball teams are an easy drive – the A's in Oakland and Giants in San Francisco. It's possible to do a down and back without incurring the cost of a hotel room.

A couple years ago the Giants instituted a program where games are valued based on the opponent. This brings the price down when they play a team like the Florida Marlins and up when the LA Dodgers are in town. What it does is make professional baseball affordable.



Stanford is an intimate venue for the Bank of the West tournament. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

While pro football is expensive, there are two teams within driving distance to Tahoe – the Raiders in Oakland and 49ers in Santa Clara.

Taking youngsters to see pros can inspire them to excel in their respective sport. There may be a teaching moment about sportsmanship or strategy; it's also a chance to witness idols or up-and-comers in action; it may even be an opportunity to get an autograph.



Forty-niner great Steve Young mixes it up with fans at the ACC celebrity golf tournament. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

One of the best places to get a signature is at the American Century Championship. The annual celebrity golf tournament at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline brings out a mix of retired and active athletes, albeit golf is not what brought them fame. Even so, the play is impressive by the top third of contenders.

To see an entire field of serious golfers, one only needs to head to Reno for the annual Reno Tahoe Open. This is a PGA stop. The U.S. Open has been played in San Francisco. Then there's always the option to take a little longer road trip to the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.



Live sports allows fans to see the intensity of athletes like Madison Keys. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Sticking with Reno, each June it hosts a rodeo. Each October is the Grand National in Daly City. While the whole cowboy thing isn't a big deal in the basin today, there was a time when it was the norm. Getting around on horseback was common and dairy cattle filled the meadows.

Reno also often has professional boxing. There was a time when the South Shore did, too.

The Bank of the West Tennis Classic at Stanford University, which started in 1971, is the longest running all women's tennis tournament in the world. The stadium is intimate. It's easy to see muscles flex and faces contort with exertion.



Andrea Petkovic's ripped physique is even more evident in person. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Former world No. 1 Lindsay Davenport is on the practice court coaching Madison Keys. They are so close it's like fans can practically touch them.

It's **free** to watch the doubles being played on the outside court.

World Team Tennis is played in Citrus Heights each summer. It's fast, loud, and has different rules like playing let serves. Each team has a recognizable pro play for a season. It was the Bryan brothers' doubles team who played down the road

this summer.

Other opportunities include soccer – San Jose Earthquakes; basketball – Kings in Sacramento, Warriors in Oakland; hockey – San Jose Sharks.

All of these venues are much grander than anything the basin has to offer – except for the ski slopes, which are steeped in history and if others have their way, could see the Winter Olympics in 2026. Each year the resorts bring more competitions to the area, potentially inspiring the next Jaime Anderson or Maddie Bowman.

And while few recreational athletes will turn pro, watching professional sports – especially live – can be invigorating and inspirational.