

Opinion: Remembering South Shore's World Cup

By Garry Bowen

With Friday's announcement of a World Cup event returning to Squaw Valley next spring, another World Cup a long time ago triggered thoughts of another commemoration, that of our own Spider Sabich, whose No. 1 World Cup victory was right here at Heavenly in April 1968.

His fate was not so immortal, as a number of years later (spring 1976), he was shot to death in Aspen by Claudine Longet, wife of Andy Williams, in a controversial "accident" that was also marred by forensic mistakes that obviated prosecution attempts. She was summarily convicted of negligent homicide, serving a very limited sentence and a small fine in the Pitkin County courthouse/jail in downtown Aspen.



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As a local, Sabich need not be forgotten as we continue to honor our three gold-medal women, all from Meyers, as he was from just a bit farther away, Kyburz, and skied the same mountain area that brought their skills to the fore in such spectacular fashion. He learned to ski at the now defunct Edelweiss (now Camp Sacramento). His father was the California highway patrolman along the Highway 50 corridor, using his patrol car to take the Sabich kids (his older sister Mary, Spider, Vladimir Jr.) and his younger brother, Steve (known as

Pinky) to their ski lessons just a few miles down the road from Sierra Ski Ranch (the original name of the now renowned Sierra-at-Tahoe), where Hannah Teter, Jamie Anderson and Maddie Bowman came to such well-earned prominence.

This writer has a personal attachment to memorializing Sabich, as in earlier years, I rode with Spider and his sister Mary each and every day on the school bus to El Dorado High in Placerville for a school year, not an insignificant trip (each way) given Kyburz's distance (and Whitehall, my domicile just prior to South Shore) from our county seat.

In that year, and subsequently, Sabich kept in local touch, particularly in the ski realm, as the FIS (Federation Internationale du Ski) and World Cup attention brought recognition to Tahoe's ski world, and we both had familial contact with the Rothgeb family, who lived next door to the Kuraisa's on Saddle Road above the California Lodge. Chris Kuraisa was one of the founders of Heavenly Valley, and the Rothgeb family effectively ran Heavenly: Wally Sr. the mountain operations, Wally Jr. on the U.S. Ski Team and a contemporary of mine, with mom Betty running Heavenly's business side.

When Sabich came to town, myself, Wally Jr., John Marchini Sr. and a few others would socialize at either the Christiana (now Himmel Haus), as it was built by Peter Brinkman, head of Heavenly's ski school and a couple of brothers from Santa Cruz in the summer of 1965 – or at Harrah's, as Bill Harrah sponsored some FIS events, including the FIS South Shore Room dinner honoring Sabich's World Cup first place win.

Many treasured memories can accrue from an event like the one Squaw Valley has secured for the coming spring, as Squaw Valley's Andy Wirth stated in the *San Francisco Chronicle* recognizing the World Cup as "the single most prestigious event you can host at a ski resort."

My desire to honor one-of-our-own, the ill-fated Spider Sabich, was fueled by the excited knowledge of what that prestige might bring to the area, spurred on by the subsequent wins that Hannah, Jamie, Julia (Mancuso), and Maddie have accomplished, these many years after Spider's No. 1 World Cup win, right here on South Shore.

To not remember the great Spider Sabich would miss adding a humble luster to all of our ongoing skiing efforts, as he would be one of the first to congratulate those accomplishments were he still with us.

Garry Bowen has more than a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health.