

# Stakeholders refuse to give up on Tahoe Olympics

By Susan Wood

PARK CITY, Utah – If the U.S. Olympic Committee would be inclined to open the gate for another Winter Games in the Lake Tahoe area, like it hinted at during its annual summit in Utah last month, the coalition tasked with preparing for it would jump.

Officials will meet this week to discuss the matter.

Albeit those close to the possibility of bringing the Winter Games back to Squaw Valley and beyond after more than a half century admit it's a perceived long shot in the world of sports.



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**– Reno-Tahoe Winter Games Coalition Chairman Brian Krolicki**

If anything, representatives should already get a medal in patience and due diligence. After all, this is the Olympics – a global event that practically invented the word tenacity among athletes.

“It’s a great chance. There are tons of locations for incredible alpine skiing. And to have them back in Reno-Tahoe – just the history of that is pretty awesome,” Tahoe Olympian Julia Mancuso told *Lake Tahoe News* during a roundtable discussion in Utah set up for the 2018 Winter Games at PyeongChang, South Korea.

Mancuso, a never-say-die, four-time medalist in downhill skiing, skis at Squaw, the host mountain in 1960 – a time of another long shot. So the idea of a return sounds intriguing to say the least.

Squaw Valley just hosted the Audi FIS Women’s World Cup Tour, an event Mancuso helped plan with Chief Executive Officer Andy Wirth, but unfortunately had to sit out. At the time, Wirth – who sits on the local Olympic board –told *LTN* having the World Cup offered a chance to showcase the resort on a global level. He was looking down slope at the grand prize.

He’s not alone.

“The flame has never gone out over the years as we review possibilities,” Reno-Tahoe Winter Games Coalition Chairman Brian Krolicki told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nevada’s former lieutenant governor admits the difficulty may have increased with Los Angeles receiving the nod for hosting the Summer Games in 2028 – 44 years from its last honor. By the time the U.S. would host another Winter Games, more than a quarter century will have passed since the Olympics graced Salt Lake City, which received a \$200 million profit from the endeavor and developed venues visitors and residents still use

today.

Getting the International Olympic Committee to buy off on back-to-back or recent returns to one nation is more in tune to a chess match.



Squaw Valley would be an integral part of any future Winter Olympics in the greater Lake Tahoe region. Photo/LTN

The Reno-Tahoe Winter Games Coalition started this effort in 2001 with Reno sports commissioner Jim Vanden Heuvel, who died in 2009. In the last five years, the coalition has bumped its interest from 2022 to 2026, with the latter considered too close to L.A.'s latest windfall.

"I know we were prepared while thinking about 2022," Krolicki said. "We'd be ready to dust off the plan. We were ready to do this yesterday. We'd be ecstatic."

If given the chance, UNR would play an important role alongside the ski resorts.

Nonetheless, reality brings a heavy weight to the table.

“People shouldn’t get their hopes up. In theory, the possibility could be problematic,” Krolicki admitted.

Even though the challenges would not remove the option from the table, finances and infrastructure run a steep price when considering the reality. Since 1960, the Games have been all about sustainability – a catch phrase missing in the vernacular back then. Also, the venues – where to put them, how to build them, how much of them to keep – could represent “the white elephant” in the room, according to Krolicki. There is no quick fix here.

He looks forward to more discussions with the USOC, which will meet Oct. 13 on the matter.

USOC Chairman Larry Probst joined Chief Executive Officer Scott Blackmun in mentioning the Reno-Tahoe region as “definitely interested in hosting the Games” along with other cities in front of large media crowd last month. One interested region is the staging ground of the summit – Park City-Salt Lake City. Denver was also mentioned.



These are the medals that will be given out at the South Korea Games in February; Reno-Tahoe would like to start designing theirs. Photo/LTN

Everyone has an opinion.

World Cup champion Mikaela Shiffrin would like the Olympics in Vail-Beaver Creek in her home state of Colorado. But she believes the practical choice would be Park City-Salt Lake City.

“It would be amazing to compete in the Olympics in front of my hometown (Colorado) crowd. It’s a dream I’m almost afraid to say but think about,” she said during a press conference, but later qualified a more reasonable option during the roundtable discussions.

“(Park City-Salt Lake City) would be incredible for American athletes. It’s fairly accessible (for spectators),” she said.

Halfpipe snowboarder Kelly Clark agrees accessibility matters in making a good host for the Winter Games. But despite its remote nature, she’d like the Olympics to return to California.

“I’ve lived and trained in Mammoth forever. My favorite

mountain is Mammoth. (But) I'm not sure it's conducive (to hosting)," Clark said.

Still, Tahoe athlete Travis Ganong is partial to his home resort of Squaw Valley. He was excited hearing of a bid proposal years ago because he felt he'd be in line to compete, but now 2030 appears too far off for him to go. Either way, Ganong prefers the snow conditions in the United States versus Europe.

If anything, his snowboard cross counterpart, Nate Holland, would at least like to see Squaw host a men's World Cup – which hasn't happened in decades.

Meyers freestyle skier Maddie Bowman said "it would be great" if the Winter Games were to return to the United States because "they do such a good job."

Many choices of where to have the Olympics seem personal for a number of athletes.

Aja Evans, who runs a bobsled, joined Shiffrin in looking close to home – no matter how far-reaching the idea is.

"I'd love them in Chicago," Evans said of her home city. "It certainly gets cold enough there."

Fellow bobsled Olympian Jamie Greubel Poser opts for South Korea because "my sister was adopted from there."

She'll have her chance in a matter of months.