

INSIDE: After tumult, Steamboat Springs Alpine snowboarder Justin Reiter still chases Olympic dreams • page 19

Avalanche injures search and rescue volunteer

Matt Stensland
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Route County Search and Rescue member Jay Bowman is expected to recover after being swept away in an avalanche Thursday during a mission on Buffalo Pass.

Route County Undersheriff Ray Birch said the incident serves as a reminder that the volunteer Search and Rescue members risk their lives every time they go out into the field. "It just amazes me how dedicated the Search and Rescue members are," Birch said.

About 3:45 p.m. Thursday, Search and Rescue was called out to help a skier and snowboarder who had gotten lost and needed help getting out of the North Fork of the Fish Creek drainage.

Incident Commander Chad Bowdre said the men, in their mid-40s, were from Minnesota. They had visited the area before but were ill-equipped to be in the backcountry. They did not have food, water, light, navigation equipment or avalanche beacons with them.

The men made a classic mistake, stayed left and went deeper into the canyon. They called 911, and Search and Rescue was able to pinpoint their location.

Four Search and Rescue volunteers, who are expert backcountry skiers, left in the dark and were able to meet up with the lost men's tracks.

Knowing the avalanche danger was high in the backcountry, the team dug a test pit to determine the

See **Avalanche**, page 2

Work hard, play harder



JOHN F. RUSSELL/STAFF

Lou Tortora works out on the elliptical Friday at the OldTown Hot Springs in downtown Steamboat Springs. Though many people have returned to the gym hoping to make good on their New Year's resolutions, Tortora is a regular — working out at least three times per week and skiing between workouts when he gets the chance.

Bow-legged skiers

Cowboy Downhill harkens Steamboat Springs roots Monday

Tom Ross
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Steamboat is expecting 14,600 visitors in town for the three-day Martin Luther King Day holiday weekend Jan. 14 to 16, and it's a good poker bet that many of them will be looking for validation that this really is a cowboy ski town. Their timing couldn't be better.

Some of the best rodeo cowboys on the planet will be in town, as Steamboat Ski Area plays host to the 43rd

"In traditional ski technique, you try to stay on your feet all day. In cowboy ski technique, if you're on your feet for 8 seconds, it's a victory."

Billy Kidd

Steamboat Ski and Resort Corp Director of Skiing

Bud Light Cowboy Downhill. Like all rodeos, the Cowboy Downhill will result in a certain amount of mayhem, but in this case, the protagonists won't

be rank broncs and snorting bulls, but a slippery ski slope and one nasty drop-off in the middle of a ski race.

If you thought skiing might come easily for bowlegged cowboys and cowgirls who aren't easily bucked off, listen to what Steamboat Director of Skiing Billy Kidd had to say on the subject in a 1982 video interview with Chuck Richardson.

"In traditional ski technique, you try to stay on your feet all day," Kidd

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SKI REPORT

Midmountain base	66 inches
Summit base	79 inches
Trails open	165/165
Lifts open	16/16
Total snow*	192 inches

*Midmountain measurement at Steamboat Ski Area since Nov. 2. For up-to-date road conditions, call 511 or visit cotrip.org.

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Pair of men surprised they won't be charged for rescue effort

Avalanche continued from 1

stability of the snow.

Getting to the men meant rescuers would have to cross a known avalanche slide path the two lost men had already crossed.

"We know that we do take some calculated risks every time we go out on a mission — much less when the avalanche danger is high," Bowdre said. "It's a hard thing to do."

The rescuers took turns crossing the steep slope. The first two made it, and the third to cross was Bowman. He triggered an avalanche and was swept about 300 feet down before hitting an aspen tree.

"If they weren't taking all these precautions, all four of them could have been caught as well," said Bowdre, adding that the avalanche was about 100 feet across, it ran about 600 feet and had a crown of 1

or 2 feet.

The team quickly reached Bowman, who was never submerged in the snow. Later, doctors would determine he had a broken arm, some small leg fractures and a laceration to the head. He had surgery Friday afternoon.

Despite the pain, Bowman was able to continue with the group and reach the lost men.

"Everybody needed to egress the same direction," Bowdre said.

Bowman's injuries were evaluated in the field, and a doctor was consulted. A paramedic and nurse with Classic Air Medical met the group on the Uranium Trail in case additional help was needed.

Bowman was then taken out on a snowmobile.

The lost men were thankful for the help, and Bowdre said they were surprised to learn that Search and Rescue never charges anyone who

needs help.

"We are 100 percent volunteer," Bowdre said. "We do this because we have a passion for helping people. We really care about our community."

Search and Rescue organizations in Colorado operate under the local sheriff's offices. Because of that, the injured rescuer's medical bills will be covered by the county's insurance and workers compensation, Birch said.

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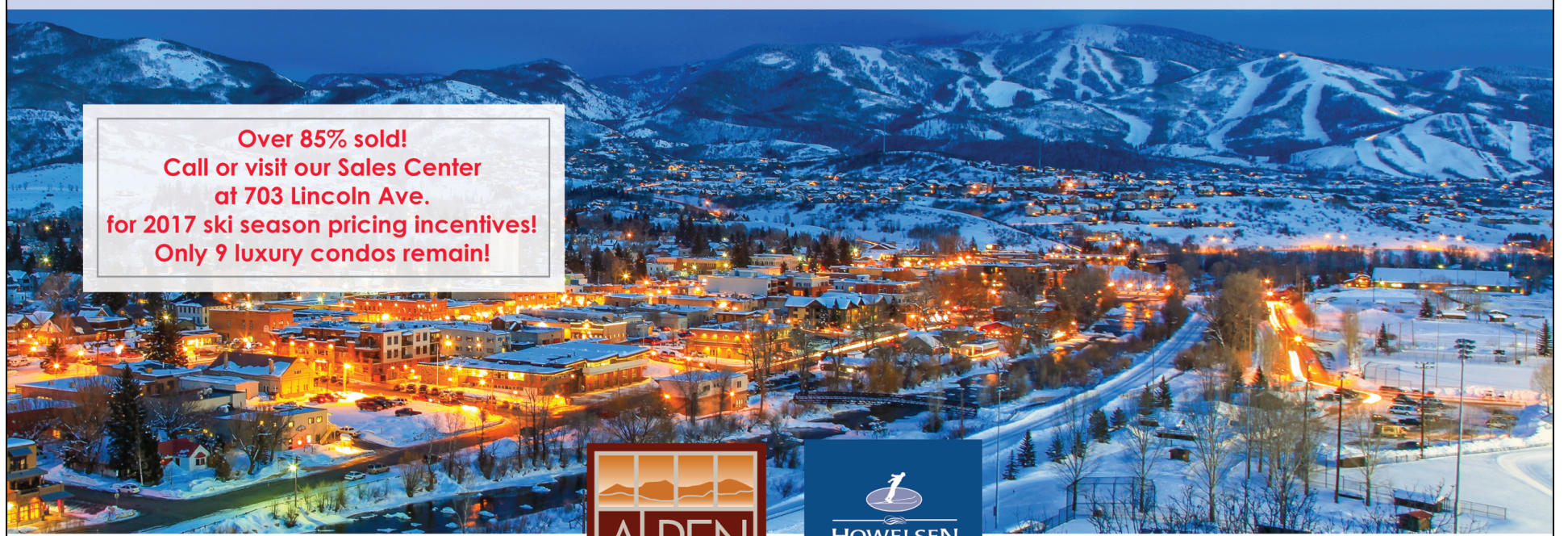

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