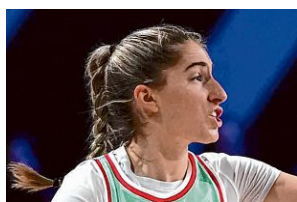


## BUILDING BLOCK

Valkyries' Martin, a WNBA fan favorite, offers versatility.

SPORTING GREEN, B1



## CLUES SOUGHT IN AIR CRASH

Remains of 41 now pulled from Potomac in wake of collision between jet, copter.

NATION, A12



## THREE CUBS ON MEND

Oakland Zoo hospital helps orphaned mountain lions.

BAY AREA & BUSINESS, A5

# San Francisco Chronicle

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## Tahoe skiers eager for snow to return



Photos by Max Whittaker/Special to the Chronicle

While most runs at Palisades Tahoe had adequate snow coverage Wednesday, nearby south-facing slopes were dry in Olympic Valley.

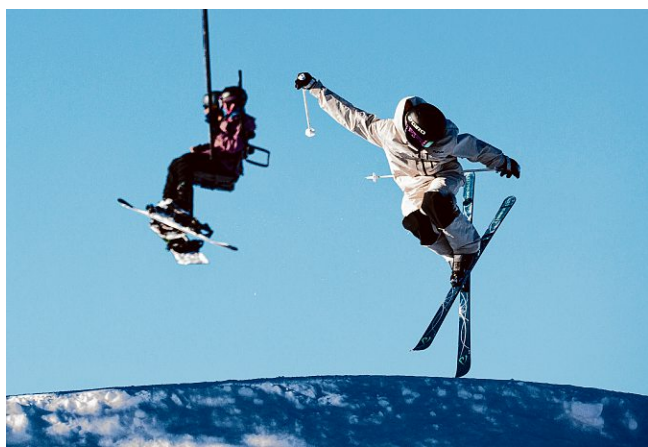
Weekend storm provides respite from dry January that had slope riders spending more time with families, embracing cross-country skiing

By Gregory Thomas

Tahoe snow season often unfurls like a roller coaster of booms and busts — with glorious bursts of powder followed by sometimes frustrating lulls in favorable weather.

January, by all accounts, was a dry bummer for powder-loving skiers and snowboarders. Snowpack in the Central Sierra region encompassing Tahoe was above normal at the end of December. But after a month without much storm activity, it fell to 59% of normal levels, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

"It's just been so darn dry," said Bryan Allegretto, Tahoe forecaster for mountain weather forecasting company OpenSnow. It appears to be one of the worst Januaries for snowfall since 1970, he said.



A skier is able to perform tricks in a terrain park at Palisades Tahoe despite January's low snowfall.

### MORE INSIDE

Waymo self-driving vehicles will be running during the storm, using high-tech equipment to navigate conditions. **A10**

A storm finally moved in Friday to break the spell, with several feet of snow expected at high altitudes over the next few days.

But to date, many of Tahoe's resorts have hovered around 50% or 60% of their historic average annual base depths for this time of year, according to OpenSnow, with a few cresting 70%. Meanwhile, the snow gods are sending implausible dustings to New Orleans and northern Florida.

In a community that lives for snow, Tahoe skiers and snowboarders say they haven't been skiing — at resorts or in the backcountry, or traveling to ski — as much as they'd like this winter. But, as one recently wrote on social media, "Some are polishing this turd of a season."

The Chronicle caught up with **Tahoe continues on A10**

## Muni cutting service on some bus lines

Agency confronts \$50 million shortfall

By Rachel Swan

San Francisco's transportation agency is set to cut Muni service by 4% this summer, a dramatic move as the transit system confronts a \$50 million budget shortfall.

To help close that gap, planners at the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency are contemplating three scenarios, each slashing bus service on some lines to preserve others and save Muni about \$15 million.

"These are all horrible decisions, but it's where we are," said Sean Kennedy, chief planning and implementation officer for Muni. He characterized all three bus service proposals as attempts to stretch existing resources in ways that benefit the most people, although they all require sacrifices.

The cost-saving intervention **Buses continues on A9**

## Despite tax, storefronts sit empty 5 years on

By Aldo Toledo

When San Francisco voters passed a tax on vacant storefronts in 2020, storefronts sat empty in many parts of the city despite a booming economy.

Then Supervisor Aaron Peskin, who sponsored the measure, argued that the tax would incentivize landlords to fill empty spaces for which they were asking sky-high rents. But five years later, there's no clear sign the tax is working as intended, and San Francisco's commercial corridors still are dotted with vacant storefronts.

A recent report from Cushman **Tax continues on A8**

## Deal brings staff to airport near SFO

Contractor sends 3 controllers to replace San Carlos workers, easing safety concerns

By Rachel Swan

Officials at San Carlos Airport expect business to continue without interruption Saturday, saying a new contractor sent three workers to replace air traffic controllers who resigned.

The staff shakeup spurred fears of chaos and confusion at a busy hub for Silicon Valley business travel, nestled along the approach to San Francisco International Airport.

San Carlos air traffic controllers had quit their jobs after the Federal Aviation Administra-

tion switched air traffic control contracts to an Oklahoma firm that offers lower pay, according to airport manager Gretchen Kelly.

Spokespeople for the airport said Friday morning that the new contractor, Robinson Aviation, assigned replacement workers who have previous experience working at the San Carlos Airport. Robinson Aviation CEO Keren McLendon confirmed the replacements in an email.

The San Carlos airport, like those at other small airports, is **Airport continues on A9**



Santiago Mejia/The Chronicle

The San Carlos Airport control tower, like those at other small airports, is staffed by a private company.