Mancuso second in downhill, Vonn third

By Ski Racing Magazine News Service

CORTINA d'AMPEZZO, Italy – Just a three hour drive from where the World Cup men were celebrating the "Super Bowl" of ski racing today in Kitzbuehel, Austria, the women had a classic downhill of their own in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, as Germany's Maria Riesch returned to the top of the downhill podium on a stunning day in the majestic Italian Dolomites.

Riesch, the current overall leader and winner of this season's first two downhills in Lake Louise, was the fastest in today's contest by almost a full second with a time of 1 minute, 39.30 seconds on a day that could not have been much better for ski racing. Cloudless skies and temperatures in the teens all framed by some of the most beautiful, jagged mountain scenery in the world left fans little to ask for as Riesch showed them what a perfect downhill run looks like.

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley (0.91 seconds back) and downhill standings leader Lindsey Vonn of Vail (1 second back) joined Riesch on the podium in second and third, respectively. It was Mancuso's 22nd career podium and her best World Cup result since finishing second here in a super G in 2008 and her first Cup downhill podium in three years. She won the silver medal in the downhill at the Vancouver Games.

"Julia was awesome," said U.S. head coach Alex Hoedlmoser of Mancuso, who finished second in both of this week's training runs and fourth in yesterday's super G. "We're really psyched. We knew that was in her. It was a very good effort from her and a sold run top to bottom and should definitely giver her some confidence."

It was the first time Vonn finished lower than second in a

speed race this season as she collected her 73rd career World Cup podium and 10th in Cortina.

Vonn came into today’s race having won three consecutive races in Cortina (yesterday’s super G and last season’s downhill and super G). Her on-the-edge ways of late caught up with her as she was forced to make yet another mid-course, high-speed recovery.

World Cup racing in Cortina concludes Jan. 23 with a second super G.