

Teter, Hight just miss podium in halfpipe

By USSA

VAIL — Americans Shaun White (Carlsbad) and Chloe Kim (La Palma) won the top spots in halfpipe on Saturday at the 35th edition of the Burton U.S. Open.

Kim continued her dominating season with a run that featured the back-to-back 1080 combination she first put down at the Park City Grand Prix in February, becoming the first woman to do so. At just 15 years of age, Kim became the youngest athlete to win the U.S. Open since Janna Meyen-Weatherby (Bend, Ore.) did so 25 years ago at the age of 14.

In qualifying, Kim had tough fall where she hit her face on the edge of the halfpipe. “It’s an insane feeling. I just cannot believe it at all,” Kim said of her win. “I didn’t even know if I was going to come out here today—I was super sore when I (got hurt) so I’m just stoked that I was able to come back out and put down a good run.”

Four-time Olympian Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) was able to put down a superb run for a third-place podium finish, despite struggling with an injury. “Today was a really tough day for me,” said Clark, who has eight U.S. Open titles. “I’m really thankful that I was able to put a run down; I’ve been dealing with a leg injury since X Games and it just seems to hurt more every day and be more challenging to get done what I need to get done today. I haven’t had tears come after a run in a really long time and after I landed that second run I was overwhelmed with what I was able to do. Just landing a run today was going to be a victory let alone getting on the podium at the U.S. Open a million years after I did my first Open.”

In the almost all-American women's final Arielle Gold (Steamboat Springs, CO) finished fourth, Hannah Teter (Meyers) fifth and Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe) sixth.

White, who used to train at Northstar, proved that he is still the most dominant force in men's snowboard halfpipe, with mind-blowing amplitude on his first-hit backside air and technicality that could not be matched by the rest of the field.

"There's been a lot of talk about me retiring," White said after the competition. "I took last season off to be refreshed and be excited about the sport again. I was playing a lot of music (but) I never lost the passion and love for competing and snowboarding. In my eyes I really feel like I'm just getting started all over again."

The two-time Olympic gold medalist went easily 25 feet out of the halfpipe on his first hit, saying that he dropped in with a little more speed than usual because he "thought the pipe was going to slow down a bit." White also landed back-to-back double cork 1260s in his second run.

Ben Ferguson (Bend, Ore.) locked down the third-place position by landing his third and final run. "I wanted to land the first one and then do some different stuff," Ferguson said. "I didn't get to do what I really wanted to do but I put one down and I'm stoked. I was tripping at the top—I was so nervous." Ferguson has been having a great season, including earning a silver medal at X Games Aspen in January.

Matt Ladley (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) finished fourth, Judd Henkes (La Jolla) fifth, Greg Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) sixth and Danny Davis (Highland, Mich.) eighth.