3 U.S. women in top 30 in super G in Austria

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

ZAUCHENSEE, Austria -– Olympic champion Lindsey Vonn of Vail kept the podium streak alive in Zauchensee, finishing second in Sunday's super G behind Switzerland's Lara Gut. Vonn continued to close the gap in the overall World Cup standings, gaining 40 points on German Maria Riesch. Vonn now has five consecutive top three results in the postcard Austrian valley.

Vonn, once again proved her focus, fighting the entire way to the finish. While exiting the extremely difficult Panorama turn, Vonn went down on her right hip, bounced back to her feet and nearly flew over the tip of her skis before regaining her balance and diving back into her tuck. It was the fourth speed race this season where Vonn was able to turn what could have been a serious crash into a World Cup podium and Sunday was her career 71st World Cup podium.

"I really have to stop making those saves. It's probably pretty fun to watch on TV, but they're definitely not fast," joked Vonn. "But first and second is a great weekend. I'm skiing well but I could have cleaned up some sections and skied a little bit better."

Vonn led a trio of U.S. athletes inside the top 30. Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley finished 16th and Laurenne Ross of Klamath Falls, Ore., in 23rd.

The remainder of the U.S. women finished just outside of the World Cup points with Stacey Cook of Mammoth Mountain 31st, Leanne Smith of Conway, N.H., 32nd and Chelsea Marshall of Pittsfield, Vt., 34th.

Mancuso had a near mishap just out of the start, losing

balance in her tuck, but was able to recover without losing a considerable amount of time to place just outside the top 15.

“It’s a really fun course the way it turns through the trees – it’s exciting. I’m just still looking for speed, things have been a little off lately,” said Mancuso. “Things are good. I just have to find it again. I hopefully figure it out for the next races.”

Official Results, Audi FIS World Cup, Zauchensee, Austria, Super G

1. Lara Gut, Switzerland, 1:12.82

2. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:13.35

3. Dominique Gisin, Switzerland, 1:13.54

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16. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, CA, 1:14.64

23. Laurenne Ross, Klamath Falls, OR, 1:15.13

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31. Stacey Cook, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 1:16.05

32. Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 1:16.25

34. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:16.62

Tahoe Rim Trail’s

breathtaking views highlight Trails Day

By Jessie Marchesseau

STATELINE – For the most part, the trek was silent, save for the sounds of nature and the crunching of crusty snow beneath nearly a hundred snowshoes.

The troupe of 37 participants and six guides traveled single file along the already packed down trail. The snow was unusually deep for this time of year, with a crunchy crust on top from the sunny days of the previous week.

Tahoe Rim Trail Association volunteer trail designer and builder Clay Grubb took the lead, stopping periodically to share interesting tidbits about the trail and its natural environment such as the species of trees growing in the surrounding forest, the type of animals making tracks in the nearby snow or where any forks in the road may take you.



Winter Trails Day introduces three dozen people to the Tahoe Rim Trail. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

The 2.8-mile guided snowshoe hike Jan. 8 was hosted by Explore Tahoe and the Tahoe Rim Trail Association. Participants departed the Kingsbury North Trailhead at 9am to hike the Castle Rock loop that follows the Tahoe Rim Trail part of the way and then switches to the Castle Rock Trail.

Starting under blue skies and morning sunshine it was perfect conditions for a jaunt on the Tahoe Rim Trail in honor of the 16th annual National Winter Trails Day.

As the tour neared its destination of Castle Rock, clouds began to roll in, turning the morning bluebird skies a soft gray. The clouds, however, did little to wilt the cheery demeanor of the hikers or the beauty of the views from the series of vistas along the way.

“One thing we try to do when we build a trail is make sure it leads to great view points,” said Chuck Kelley, a volunteer trail builder for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association and guide for the day. “It makes it attractive to hike to and keeps people on the trail.”

There is no shortage of spectacular view points on the Castle Rock loop. With the overall pace for the day being rather leisurely, participants took full advantage of the numerous photo ops along the way, especially from the top of Castle Rock.

Jared Odell of Brentwood and Mary Visceglia of San Mateo had their photo taken at the top of Castle Rock with Lake Tahoe glistening in the background. The couple was in town celebrating Odell’s 40th birthday and testing out his new snowshoes. They had learned to cross country ski at Kirkwood last year on National Winter Trails Day and wanted to give snowshoeing a try this time.

“I’m liking it,” Odell said halfway through the hike. “I’m thinking we might try Yosemite in the winter next year.”

By the time the trek was over, Visceglia was in full agreement. “It was awesome,” she declared. “We’re addicted.”

That was exactly the outcome Lauren Thomaselli from Explore Tahoe was hoping for. She said the whole point of National Winter Trails Day is to “promote winter recreation and the health and social benefits of winter recreation.”

Thomaselli pointed out how this coincides with Explore Tahoe’s focus “to encourage people to be involved in the natural environment and outdoor recreation opportunities right out our backdoor.”

“This is the kind of recreation really in demand right now,” she said. “People want to have a deeper connection to the environment.”

This was evident in the fact that the event had originally been limited to 15 participants. However, the overwhelming response prompted organizers to open it up to everyone interested, resulting in more than twice the original expectations.

The second goal for the event was to inspire people to get involved in the Tahoe Rim Trail and other stewardship projects. That goal was reached as well.

“People at the end, they didn’t care about the refreshments or anything else,” Thomaselli said. “They wanted to know how to sign up and make donations.”

Odell and Visceglia were among those ready to donate time to trail building this summer. Since they enjoy using the trails, Odell said it would be a great way for them to give back. He also pointed out that any excuse to come to Tahoe is worth taking.

This was the inaugural Winter Trails Day event on Lake Tahoe’s South Shore, but, considering the success of the event,

Thomaselli predicts more National Winter Trails Day events on the South Shore in the future.

Meanwhile, locals and visitors to the Lake Tahoe area may enjoy free guided snowshoe hikes on the Tahoe Rim Trail every Saturday through the end of March. Visit the website for more information.

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Ski report: Warming up



Enjoy another beautiful day on the mountain, with temperatures in the high 30s. Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Vonn wins World Cup downhill, Mancuso 16th

By U.S. Ski Team

ZAUCHENSEE, Austria -– Olympic champion Lindsey Vonn of Vail nearly skied into the fence Saturday, but reeled it back in to win the women’s Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill in Zauchensee, her fourth win of the season. Vonn gained 50 points on overall leader Maria Reisch of Germany, who finished

fourth.

In the tiny mountain village nestled above Altenmarkt, just south of Salzburg, Vonn charged out of the gate to beat the women's downhill field by 0.43, marking her second career World Cup win and fourth podium in Zauchensee.

"I don't know what's gotten into me this year. I seem to be making big mistakes in almost every downhill that I race in and still have a good result," Vonn said. "For me, it's just a matter of keeping my cool. It's just belief and the cool factor – just staying cool even though you make mistakes."

Teammate and fellow Olympic champion Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley experienced trouble on the same section as Vonn finishing 16th.

Sweden's Anja Paerson finished behind Vonn in second with Austria's Anna Fenninger in third. Despite gaining 50 points on overall World Cup leader Riesch, Vonn remains 136 points behind heading into Sunday's super G.

The women will push out of the Zauchensee start house again on Sunday for a super G race.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Zauchensee, Austria, Downhill

1. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:46.39

2. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 1:46.82

3. Anna Fenninger, Austria, 1:47.37

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16. Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, CA, 1:48.50

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34. Stacey Cook, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 1:49.87

37. Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 1:49.91

40. Laurenne Ross, Klamath Falls, OR, 1:50.27

46. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:51.03

Weibrecht joins Sullivan on U.S. Ski Team’s injured list

By U.S. Ski Team

Olympic medalist Andrew Weibrecht of Lake Placid will miss the remainder of the 2011 Audi FIS Alpine World Cup tour with a season-ending shoulder injury, announced U.S. Ski Team Medical Director Kyle Wilkens Friday. Weibrecht suffered a dislocated left shoulder while training slalom in Hinterreit, Austria, prior to the annual post Christmas downhill in Bormio, Italy. The injury will require surgery to repair.

The unplanned time off snow will allow Weibrecht to recover while attending Dartmouth where he’s in his third year of an Earth Science degree.

Fellow teammate Marco Sullivan of Squaw Valley, who suffered a downhill training crash in Bormio, remains sidelined as well. Sullivan is currently home in Squaw Valley undergoing tests.

“Both Andrew and Marco are members of our family,” added Rearick. “But these guys know how to be smart and put in the hard work it takes to come back strong.”

Study to determine if rare plover is on verge of extinction

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

The bird wears anonymous tan plumage and often tries to blend into a crowd. Few people know it visits California, much less spends most of its time here.

The mountain plover has been hiding in plain sight in California for decades. But that’s about to change.

A major new survey starting in January aims to find out just where this rare shorebird spends its time, with the goal of figuring out once and for all if it merits protection as an endangered species.

The Audubon Society, working under a $35,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will conduct the survey Jan. 20 through 24 at many locations in California, including the Central Valley.

Volunteers are needed to help.

Read the whole story

Snowshoe to Fallen Leaf Lake – a wonderous trek

By Kathryn Reed

FALLEN LEAF LAKE – Snow glistens as though ice crystals are diamonds in the wild. Wind gusts send clouds of snow off the top of Mount Tallac. Fallen Leaf Lake is still, beckoning the dogs to swim in the icy water.

It’s one of those postcard days in Lake Tahoe. Everywhere you look it’s a Kodak moment.

We have the trail to ourselves – the eight of us, plus four dogs.



Dormant aspens line part of the trail near Fallen Leaf Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Strapping on our snowshoes in the Cathedral Road parking lot off Highway 89 we begin our journey into the wild. At least it seems that way as the quiet envelops us.

The snow-covered road is wide enough to stride along in pairs and not be knocked over by one of our four-legged friends.

At times the trail closes in from the thick conifers, then suddenly it’s as though there is a meadow of snow.

Not far in we veer to the left to take the trail to get off the road even though no motor vehicles can drive on it this time of year.

It becomes single track. One by one we saunter forward. At times water crosses our path and we do a bit of improvising. With it being one of the wettest Decembers on record, water seems to be everywhere.

Taylor Creek is heading toward Lake Tahoe at what looks like capacity. Though it’s not rushing, the level seems high – especially for late December.

Onward we go, deciding to head to Fallen Leaf Lake to the left instead of going right which would have us loop back to the parking lot. Good choice.

Up and over the dam with snowshoes on takes a bit of dexterity and concentration. No problem.

Contrails line the blue sky, crossing through the wispy clouds to create a one-of-a-kind canvas. The still water reflects the mountains of Desolation Wilderness until the canines send ripples across the alpine lake.

Break time means peeling off clothes as the sun beats down on us. Most of the dogs venture into Fallen Leaf Lake to retrieve sticks, unfazed by the ice floating nearby.

Back we go, though not exactly as we came. We end up making a loop to our left through what during late summer is one of the most incredible patches of lupine. This day it’s the stark white bark of this grove of aspen that captures our attention.

The whole time it’s just the 12 of us. What a Christmas Eve to remember.

Getting there:

Head north on Highway 89 from the Y in South Lake Tahoe.

Go past Camp Richardson. Pass the turn for Fallen Leaf Lake.

Cathedral Road is on the left. A Sno-Park permit is required

or take the chance of being fined. The permits may be bought at various locations or online. They are $5 for the day or $25 for the season.

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Mammoth's Teller makes history in skicross

By Freddy Perryman, U.S. Ski Team

ST. JOHANN, Austria – John Teller of Mammoth Mountain made history scoring the first World Cup win for an American in Thursday's skicross race.

Thursday's result was a career best for the American Skicross Association skier as he landed on the podium for the second straight event. He started the podium trend in Innichen, Italy, last month with third before taking top honors in St. Johann. Teller's win will go down in the history books for the USA as the first ever American skicross World Cup victory.

"He absolutely killed it! I had a good feeling yesterday when he qualified in fifth," said American Skicross Association's and five-time Olympian Casey Puckett. "I know that course. If you have a good start position you have a good chance."

Teller qualified in fifth position for the final rounds. Once in the finals, he didn't look back sweeping the three heats including his quarterfinal and semifinal on the way to the final four man race. Teller's competition in the final heat was Nick Zoricic of Canada, who finished second, Thomas Zangerl of Austria in third, and Austria's Andreas Matt who

came in fourth.

“The course is St. Johann is the most technical course on the World Cup and the only course that injects the snow with water,” said Puckett, who was on the USA’s first Olympic skicross team last year.

Injecting water into the course makes it much harder, in turn increasing the difficultly level and requiring better skiing abilities. Also, with injection, the landings become much firmer and less forgiving furthering the difficulty.

Teller crossed the line first with Nick Zoricic of Canada in second and Thomas Zangerl of Austria in third place.

Official results, FIS Freestyle World Cup, St. Johann, Austria, Skicross

1. John Teller, Mammoth, CA

2. Nick Zoricic, Canada

3. Thomas Zangerl, Austria

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45. Pat Duran, N. Fayston, VT

49. Jean Christophe Rudigoz, Ketchum, ID

Ski report: Get outside



Conditions today are expected to be gorgeous. Check out the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

Slopestyle to be part of World Ski Championships in February

The fast-paced action sport of slopestyle skiing has been confirmed for the International Ski Federation's Freestyle World Ski Championships being hosted by February by Deer Valley and Park City Mountain Resorts. The slopestyle event, which is one of three new action sports events being considered for inclusion in the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, will be at Park City ski resort.

FIS Freestyle World Ski Championship's organizers confirmed that slopestyle would be added to the schedule Feb. 3, with qualification runs taking place a day earlier. The event will be on Park City Mountain Resort's King's Crown run, home of one of the resort's popular terrain parks. Park City Mountain Resort is also the site of the halfpipe competition, while moguls, dual moguls, aerials, as well as ski cross, will be at Deer Valley Resort.

Slopestyle tests a skier's ability to handle a variety of terrain by executing freestyle maneuvers down a course. Each course is filled with features including rails, jibs, hips and

a variety of jumps allowing riders to combine big air and technical tricks into one run. Competitors are scored in an overall impression judging format on amplitude, execution, difficulty of line, landing and use of the course.

Slopestyle skiing, as well as halfpipe skiing, and slopestyle snowboarding, was given support for 2014 inclusion by the International Olympic Committee at its executive committee meeting in September. The final approval for these action sports to make it onto the Sochi, Russia, Olympic schedule will come following a review of the new sports taking place during World Championship competitions this season. IOC President Jacques Rogge is empowered to make the final call.

In November, the FIS Council voted to add slopestyle skiing and snowboarding to the respective World Championships beginning this season. Organizers for the FIS Snowboard World Championships in La Molina, Spain, recently confirmed adding slopestyle snowboarding to the schedule.

Park City Mountain Resort has been a leader in winter action sports since the 2002 Winter Games. The Resort has successfully hosted a number of international caliber halfpipe events as well as received numerous awards for the terrain parks built at the resort. The resort has continued to push the limits of winter action sports and is considered a training ground for some of the industry’s best freestyle skiers.

The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association is expected to name up to four men and four women to compete in the slopestyle event with spots expected to be hotly contested. Qualifying will be primarily based on the Association of Freeride Professionals ranking system which includes events such as the USSA’s Revolution Tour as well as the Dew Tour and X Games.

Deer Valley was also the host for the 2003 FIS Freestyle World Ski Championships. Both Park City Mountain Resort and Deer

Valley Resort were venues for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games.

The World Championships will be televised on NBC Feb. 5 from 1:30-3pm and Feb. 6 from noon-1:30pm.