

Palmer out of Olympic contention despite podium finish

By Lindsey Sine, USSA

STONEHAM, Quebec – And so, one chapter ended and another began for U.S. Snowboarding Thursday as Graham Watanabe (Sun Valley, ID) took second and Shaun Palmer (South Lake Tahoe, CA) third in their final shot for Olympic qualification during a snowboardcross World Cup in Stoneham. With his second place, Watanabe locked up a spot to compete on the largest athletic stage in the world – the Olympics.

“I don’t even really know how to summarize it,” Watanabe said. “It’s a confirmation of everything I have worked for. It’s not the end all be all, but making it to the Olympics is a difficult task, especially with a team like ours, and achieving that goal is a big step in achieving a bigger goal in my snowboarding, which is to be the best I can be.”

But, it was not all smooth sailing for Watanabe. In qualifications he went down on his first run. The pressure was on for the second run with Watanabe needing to qualify in order to be considered for the Olympics. With some heavy concentration and focus, Watanabe came through to not only qualify, but post the fastest qualifying time.

“That made it interesting for today because it added more pressure for myself. I wondered if I could continue it or if I had used up all my gusto in qualifiers,” Watanabe.

The gusto remained, though, with Watanabe advancing each heat with excellent riding.

Watanabe was also a member of the 2006 Olympic Team, but under

interesting circumstances. Sent to Italy as a wax tech after he failed to qualify, Watanabe was plugged into the Olympic lineup when a teammate was injured during training. Watanabe said he feels like this time he belongs in Vancouver.

"I felt like I was Olympic caliber in 2006. I had raced all season against all those same people. But I also felt like I had teammates who were better suited for that position and it took injuries for me to get in there," Watanabe said. "But this time I feel like I belong there. I put in several years of progress and consistent riding in the top group."

Palmer, a legend of the sport, marked the third World Cup podium of his career as he rounded out the top-three Thursday. He needed at least second to make the Olympic Team.

With the final event out of the way, the U.S. Olympic Team for snowboarding will be announced Monday.

Stoneham, Quebec Jan. 21, Snowboardcross

Men

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
2. Graham Watanabe, Sun Valley, ID
3. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA
4. Drew Neilson, Canada
5. Mike Robertson, Canada
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9. Ross Powers, Okemo, VT
10. Alex Deibold,
11. Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, MI
19. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA

- 23. Jonathan Cheever, Saugus, MA
- 30. Mick Deirdorff,
- 32. Jason Smith, Basalt, CO
- 35. Pat Holland, Squaw Valley, CA

Women

- 1. Maelle Ricker, Canada
 - 2. Helene Olafsen, Norway
 - 3. Dominique Maltais, Canada
 - 4. Sandra Frei, Switzerland
 - 5. Mellie Francon, Switzerland
 -
 - 16. Faye Gulini, Salt Lake City
 - 17. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK
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Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 21



After a break in the morning, storms continue this afternoon and evening in the Lake Tahoe Basin. Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, delivers his ski report for the day.

Horn 64th in skiercross

By Lindsey Sine, USSA

BLUE MOUNTAIN, Quebec -â€ Caitlin Ciccone (Littleton, NH) was at it again Wednesday, leading the way for the U.S. and cracking the top 30 as she finished 27th during a skiercross World Cup in Quebec.

Norwayâ€™s Marte Hoeie Gjefsen won the womenâ€™s race followed by Ashleigh Mcivvor of Canada in second and Sloveniaâ€™s Sasa Faric in third.

According to U.S. Ski Cross Head Coach Tyler Shepherd, the key to Cicconeâ€™s day was her start.

“Our focus today was to get her out of the start faster and I think we accomplished that,” Shepherd said. “The last several World Cups she has been out of the gate last and here we got her more even with the rest of the women, and in the mix.”

In the menâ€™s competition Andreas Matt of Austria won, followed in second by Lars Lewen of Sweden and Austrian Patrick Koller in third. No U.S. men made finals. The USA’s Casey Puckett (Aspen, CO) is taking a break before the Olympics, while Daron Rahlves (Sugar Bowl, CA) will be back for Lake Placid.

Now, the skiercross contingent will head to Lake Placid for what will be the final opportunity for freestyle athletes to make the 2010 Olympic Team. The Nature Valley Freestyle Challenge runs Jan. 21-24, with skiercross on Sunday. The Olympic Team will be named next Tuesday.

Blue Mountain, Quebec, Jan. 20, skiercross

Men

1. Andreas Matt, Austria
2. Lars Lewen, Sweden
3. Patrick Koller, Austria
4. Michael Schmid, Switzerland
5. Brady Leman, Canada
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47. Justin Johnson, Park City, UT
52. Patrick Duran, Fayston, VT
53. John Teller, Mammoth Lakes, CA
55. Biche Rudigoz, Ketchum, ID
64. Scott Horn, Truckee, CA

Women

1. Marte Hoeie Gjefsen, Norway
2. Ashleigh Mcivor, Canada
3. Sasa Faric, Slovenia
4. Katharina Gutensohn, Austria
5. Ophelie David, France
-
27. Caitlin Ciccone, Littleton, NH
30. Langely McNeal, Ketchum, ID

Countdown to naming U.S. ski-snowboard team



By the end of the month the skiers and snowboarders representing the United States in Vancouver Olympics Games in February will be announced.

Here are the hopefuls, in alphabetical order, from the Lake Tahoe area:

Jamie Anderson, South Lake Tahoe, snowboarding halfpipe

Shannon Bahrke, Tahoe City, freestyle skiing

Scott Bahrke, Tahoe City, freestyle skiing

Ross Baker, Reno, snowboarding halfpipe

Jayson Hale, Sierraville, snowboardercross

Elena Hight, South Lake Tahoe, snowboarding halfpipe

Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, snowboardercross

Pat Holland, Squaw Valley, snowboardercross

Tim Jitloff, Reno, alpine skiing

Sho Kashima, South Lake Tahoe, freestyle skiing (injured and no longer a contender)

Errol Kerr, Truckee, freestyle skiing (races for Jamaican team)

Julia Mancuso, Squaw Valley, alpine skiing

Bobby Minghini, Squaw Valley, snowboardercross

Shaun Palmer, Squaw Valley, snowboardercross

Daron Rahlves, Sugar Bowl, freestyle skiing

Justin Reiter, Truckee, snowboarding

Shelly Robertson, Reno, freestyle skiing

Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley, alpine skiing

Elijah Teter, South Lake Tahoe, snowboarding halfpipe

Hannah Teter, South Lake Tahoe, snowboarding halfpipe

Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 20



Stormy weather is still swirling around the Lake Tahoe Basin. Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe, delivers his ski report for the day.

Tahoe teens make U.S. junior ski team

By USSA

PARK CITY – The U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) has

named seven men and six women to the Alpine World Junior Championship Team to compete in the Mont-Blanc region of France Jan. 30-Feb. 6. The athletes, ages 15-19, qualified for the team based on NorAm Cup results this season.

The World Junior Championships are an important international event in the development pipeline, matching the best ski racers in the world together. The events in the Mont-Blanc region will be held in Chamonix, Megeve and Les Houches.

Among the veterans are returning athletes Will Gregorak (Longmont, CO) from Ski and Snowboard Club Vail, who was fourth in downhill at last year's Championships. He'll be joined by Holderness School's Julia Ford (Plymouth, NH), who was fourth in combined. Both are now on the U.S. Ski Team. Ford is current second in the NorAm Cup standings, while Gregorak is fifth.

Evans will serve as team leader for the group, with Randy Pelkey heading the men and John Hale the women.

The men open with the giant slalom in Les Houches on Jan. 31, with the women kicking it off with super G in Megeve.

Two athletes qualified for the team but will miss the Championships due to injury including Kara Shaw (Norwich, VT/Burke Mountain Academy) and Keith Moffat (Berkeley, CA/Squaw Valley Ski Team).

2010 U.S. Alpine World Junior Championship Team

(name, birthdate, hometown, USSA club)

Men

Michael Ankeny, 1/17/91, Wayzata, MN (Buck Hill Ski Club) *

Kieffer Christianson, 8/11/92, Anchorage (Burke Mountain Academy)

Nick Daniels, 4/5/91, Tahoe City, CA (Squaw Valley Ski Team) *

Jared Goldberg, 6/17/91, Salt Lake City (Team Flow)

Colby Granstrom, 9/21/90, Lake Stevens, WA (Mission Ridge Ski Team) *

Will Gregorak, 9/30/09, Longmont, CO (Ski and Snowboard Club Vail) *

Wiley Maple, 5/22/90, Aspen, CO (Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club) *

Women

Vanessa Berther, 2/11/92, Sammamish, WA (Team Alpental Snoqualmie) *

Greta Byrne, 5/12/93, Vail, CO (Ski and Snowboard Club Vail) *

Devin Delaney, 2/24/91, North Conway, NH (Green Mountain Valley School) *

Julia Ford, 3/30/90, Plymouth, NH (Holderness School) *

Abigail Fucigna, 1/9/91, Hopkinton, MA (Burke Mountain Academy)

Brooke Wales, 8/28/90, Sammamish, WA (Mission Ridge Ski Team)

Anderson keeps it real riding to slopestyle fame



By Melissa Larsen, ESPN Action Sports

It's Dec. 10, 2009. Some of the world's best snowboarders gather atop a 22-foot-tall halfpipe at Copper Mountain, Colo. Each has prepared a diligently practiced contest run to debut in the first of five competitions that will determine the final rosters of the U.S. and Canadian Olympic snowboarding teams. The air is quiet, the vibe tense. Two-time Winter X Games Slopestyle gold medalist Jamie Anderson – a 19-year-old phenom who is one of the best female snowboarders on the planet – gets ready to ride.

She is, understandably, a little nervous. On a slopestyle course she is almost impossible to beat, but her record in the halfpipe is spotty. She's placed in the top three a handful of times, but she's ended up 18th more than once. And unlike her halfpipe-focused peers who log countless hours perfecting their routines, Anderson's love for park riding is so strong that she has a hard time talking herself into leaving the park for the pipe. That makes her halfpipe training routine so sporadic, it could hardly be called "training" at all.

Read the whole story

Telemark clinic

Geoff Clark, director of Nordic skiing for Alpine Skills International, is hosting a telemarking clinic on Feb. 7.

The course will combine a variety of techniques for dynamic skiing, including dynamic parallel, dynamic telemark, and ungroomed and variable conditions.

Skiers need to be comfortable on black-diamond terrain.

For information, go to www.alpineskills.com.

Lake Tahoe ski report, Jan. 19



"Winds definitely affecting the operation of upper mountain lifts at Heavenly, Kirkwood, Alpine, Squaw, Mt. Rose and Sugar Bowl. Call ahead," says Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe. Here is his ski report for the day.

Lake Placid final tune-up for freestyle athletes

By USSA

LAKE PLACID – The last stop for freestyle athletes to qualify for the U.S. Olympic Team touches down in Lake Placid Jan. 21-24 for three days of excitement with aerials, moguls and ski cross competitions at the Nature Valley Freestyle Cup.

"Lake Placid is a pivotal event for our athletes with the

final chance to qualify for the Olympic Team,” said U.S. Ski Team Freestyle Head Coach Jeff Wintersteen. “The battle is especially intense in both men’s and women’s moguls where we still have a large number of athletes who have a chance to get on the podium and possibly grab an Olympic spot. I expect to see an amazing competition in Lake Placid.”

The Nature Valley Freestyle Cup kicks off Jan. 21 with moguls, where the likes of World Champion Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA), World Cup moguls champion Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT) and Olympic contender Bryon Wilson (Butte, MT) will each be fighting their way down the bumps for a World Cup win.

Even being the last event in Olympic selection, there will still be a large number of athletes who can hit it big and qualify for the Team so competition is expected to be intense.

On Friday night a huge crowd is expected at the Intervale Jump Complex as the focus then shifts to aerials at its finest – under the lights. There, Jeret “Speedy” Peterson could attempt his famous “Hurricane” jump, and teammate Emily Cook (Belmont, MA) hopes to lock in her trip to Vancouver.

Known for the grueling training regiment he puts down each summer in Lake Placid, World Champion Ryan St. Onge (Winter Park, CO) is looking forward to competing in his home away from home.

“Coming back to Lake Placid is awesome for me because it feels basically like a home base,” St. Onge said. “I train there five to six months out of the year and for me to get to back and compete there, it’s almost a home court advantage.”

Aerials finals begin at 8pm with qualifying earlier in the day.

The weekend wraps up that Sunday with a ski cross race during which fans can catch X Games gold medalist Daron Rahlves (Sugar Bowl, CA), and up and coming female crosser Caitlin

Ciccone (Littleton, NH) in their last stop before the sport's Olympic debut. Rahlves narrowly missed a World Cup win, finishing second earlier in January.

"Lake Placid is a great place to showcase the newest Olympic sport of ski cross," said Coach Tyler Shepherd.

Qualifying is set for Saturday beginning at 10:15 with

"We anticipate another amazing event in Lake Placid, with Olympic spots on the line every day," said USSA Vice President, Events Calum Clark. "Lake Placid is a great partner and fans can expect to see the best athletes in the world putting on quite a show each day."

The 2010 Olympic Freestyle Team will be named Jan. 26.