

Ostensen, Grevsgaard Snare Top Five Finishes

BUFF SKIERS IN FOURTH AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

BETHEL, Maine — The University of Colorado ski team had five performers post top 10 finishes, all earning All-America honors in the process, with the Buffaloes in fourth place at the halfway point of the 56th Annual NCAA Ski Championships after four events were concluded here Thursday.

Defending national champion Denver owns the lead with 330 points, but it's a logjam near the top. Vermont, which did not win a meet all winter, is in second place with 327 points, just three out of the lead despite DU fielding a full 12-skier team and UVM competing with just 10 athletes. Utah, which also has a full squad, is third (317.5), with the Buffaloes holding fourth with 299; CU is participating here with 11. New Mexico rounded out the top five (277), with Alaska-Anchorage next (276) to give western schools five of the top six spots. Dartmouth, which dominated the east all winter in winning all six carnivals, is a distant seventh at this point (261.5).

Through four events, it's one of the tightest championships in recent memory; 68.5 points separate the top seven schools at the midway point this year, compared to 117.5 last year. With the hazardous slalom ahead of Friday, quite often the field would naturally separate, but that remains to be seen this year with a new scoring format, weighted on the front end for the top eight finishers.

All four events took place on Thursday after freezing rain forced the postponement of the giant slalom races for a day. It marked the first time since the sport went coed in 1983 that alpine and Nordic events were run on the same day at the NCAA Championships.

Sophomore **Jesper Ostensen** turned in CU's top performance on the day with a third place finish in the men's 10-kilometer classical race in a 24:29.0 time. Vermont's Juergen Uhl won in 24:19.9, with Alaska-Anchorage's Raphael Wunderle second in 24:25.5.

"I felt really good today, better than in a long time," Ostensen said. "The feeling that I had in warm-up was a lot like what I had in the beginning of the season. I knew that my skis were really good, which makes me more comfortable and I look forward to running up the hills. To get a podium finish again this year but in the other technique (classical) is a really good feeling. You can see that what we've done this year has given us results.

"This was my first race in these types of snow conditions with a different type of wax on my skis," he added. "I was nervous at first because I haven't skied on that for over two years but it seemed to work perfect for me. I am hoping to be up there again on Saturday, too. I think I'm in real good shape right now and when I'm in good shape I know I can ski fast."

Sophomore **Vegard Kjoelhamar** was sixth in 24:45.4, just 1.7 seconds out of fourth; the race featured 30-second interval starts, thus there were no sprints for a particular position. Junior **Matt Gelso** was 11th in 25:07.4, struggling for the first time all winter in finishing outside of the top five for just the second time in 11 races. Colorado won the race with 110 points, the second straight year the Buffs were the male classical champions.

In the women's 5-kilometer freestyle race, defending national champ **Maria Grevsgaard** finished fifth after a time of 14:22.3, well behind Denver's Antje Maempel, who won in 13:52.4. This is the discipline CU is one skier short in, so the higher the two Buffaloes can finish, the better, as to offset the disadvantage, especially with weighted scoring in the first eight spots. That happened Thursday, when sophomore **Alexa Turzian** was seventh in 14:28.0; the 74 points CU scored between the two was still fourth.

"I'm a little bit disappointed about today," Grevsgaard said. "I know that it was still a good result, but I was definitely going for a podium finish. After the first split, I was a little further back in the field so I knew I had to ski fast to the end. Jesper gave me a lot of motivation up the final hill which helped me push harder. The

tracks were decent and my skis were really good but the course was kind of weird. It took me awhile to get into the race with 1K of downhill early on, and by the time that I did it was too late.

“We’re going to train lightly tomorrow and cheer for the alpiners and I’m just ready to ski fast on Saturday,” she continued. “I still think that we have a great shot. It’s not over yet.”

“I think we did very well overall. We came into the championships with a goal of having everyone in the top 10 and we came just about as close as we could to doing that,” CU Nordic coach **Bruce Cranmer** said. “We always go in with high hopes, so it’s a good feeling. There were very challenging conditions on a challenging course, and a lot of people don’t give as much credit to the western (skiers) as they might deserve. Coming down from the altitude is a bit of an adjustment. It’s hard to have the same expectations of our athletes as we would when racing in our own backyard in the western environment.

“Maria skied from about midway through the pack all the way to the top five, which was very good for her and shows what she is capable of,” he said. “Jesper had a great race in a tough field. He is probably a little stronger in the classic but he is in good shape here. Matt being out of the top 10 was the only small surprise, though it’s hard to have everyone having a good day at the same time, but team-wise we did great so I’m happy with that.”

Ostensen and Grevsgaard earned first-team All-America honors, with Kjoelhamar and Turzian earning second-team nods.

In the men’s giant slalom, junior **Drew Roberts** posted CU’s best finish Thursday of any alpine skier. Despite starting 32nd, he zoomed all the way into 13th place after his first run and then used the ninth fastest time in the field his second time down to finish 10th overall in 2:34.20, snaring second-team All-America honors in the process. Vermont’s David Donaldson won in a two-run time of 2:30.24.

“It was a pretty plush day,” Roberts said. “I got to go up and watch the girls’ race and check out the snow before we got up there and I just couldn’t have asked for better snow when I raced. On my first run, the course was virtually untouched, and on the second I had an advantage because I knew what the course would be like since I was running further back. It was really close after the first run and the standings were stacked with people within a half of a second so I knew we had to ski well the second time down otherwise I could have easily ended up in 20th or worse.

“I think my experience at NCAA’s helps, along with the fact that I usually ski better on this kind of snow,” Roberts continued. “I still don’t really like what we ski on throughout the season. I think what really helped me with the GS was that I’m using Tony’s (Cesolini, teammate) race skis this week and they’re way faster than mine. I tried them out on Sunday and realized that they made me faster. I was confident with how I was skiing on his skis but he would have skied top five if he were here. This result gives me a lot more confidence going into tomorrow. This sport is a lot about confidence so I’m excited about the slalom.”

Junior **Gabriel Rivas**, CU’s highest seed, had some technical issues with his skis that led to him pulling a muscle on his first run, which placed him 28th. He corrected the equipment issues, and then endured the injury to ski the fourth fastest second run to finish 18th in 2:35.43. Colorado’s third performer, junior **Stefan Hughes**, was the last skier on the first run out of the 34th position, moving into 27th, but then crashed and had to hike on his second time down, finishing in 34th in 4:14.66. But instead of taking a DNF (did not finish), his hiking back up and finishing the run earned CU six team points it could need down the road.

Colorado finished sixth in the men’s GS, the Buffs best effort at the NCAA’s since a similar finish in the 2003 meet.

The women had an uncharacteristic day in not recording a single top eight finish for the first time all season, barely getting into the top 20 in the GS as the Buffs finished 20-21-22. Sophomore **Katie Hartman** had that 20th place effort, skiing the two runs in a 2:39.53 time, followed by senior **Lisa Perricone** (2:39.55) and sophomore **Carolina Nordh** (2:39.65), with the three Buffs on the tail-end of a seven-skier logjam just 38/100 of a second apart. St. Lawrence’s Lindsay Cone won in 2:35.70.

“Overall for everyone as a team combined, it was a good day,” head coach **Richard Rokos** said. “We maintained contact with the lead and will still be able to strike later. For the Nordic team it was a typical, good, solid day for them. They had a great performance and got everything in place in order to secure things for alpine, which can be treacherous.”

“On the alpine side we had a variety of issues,” Rokos said. “They skied consistent, but fairly slow. Without any obvious mistakes, I think they were just a little overwhelmed with the conditions of the hill and the ice, which is a condition that didn’t appear this year anywhere in our previous races or training. Drew had an absolutely stunning performance coming from 32nd at the start and finishing 10th in an event where we didn’t have too much luck this year. He’s proven occasionally that he can be fast this season but for him to have two solid and fast runs is great to see. Gabriel rallied from a first run with technical and injury issues and took fourth on the second run, which is about how he should finish in a race like this.”

Colorado is looking for the school’s 18th national title in the sport of skiing, last winning in 2006; it shared the title with Dartmouth in 1976, the only time two schools have tied for the title, and bested rival Denver by 14 points in 1999 in the two previous championships held here and in Rumford, where the Nordic events take place. Seven of CU’s 17 titles in skiing have been won in the east.

“Not having a day of rest will not be a problem for us,” Rokos said of the revised schedule and the back-to-back days of alpine racing. “It just like the format of a regular season race when you ski on consecutive days. Gabriel with his injury will be okay tomorrow, it’s just a sore muscle and I think the rest of the team will be more comfortable as well. They know what they need to do. Slalom is typically our stronger event and we’re all seeded better, so we’re looking forward seeing what we can accomplish.”

The alpine portion of the meet concludes with Friday’s slalom, followed by the Nordic freestyle competition on Saturday that will conclude the championships. The schedule (all times mountain):

Friday, March 13

- 7:30 a.m. Men’s Slalom (*first run*)
- 8:15 a.m. Women’s Slalom (*first run*)
- 10:15 a.m. Men’s Slalom (*second run*)
- 11:00 a.m. Women’s Slalom (*second run*)

Saturday, March 14

- 8:00 a.m. Women’s 15-Kilometer Freestyle Race
- 10:00 a.m. Men’s 20-Kilometer Freestyle Race

NOTES: Had the scoring format for the last 12 years been utilized, **Utah** would be holding a slim lead over Denver; the team scores at the top of the standings would be as follows at the halfway mark: Utah 307, Denver 304, Vermont 295, Colorado 283, Alaska-Anchorage 264, New Mexico 254, Dartmouth 253, Middlebury 220 ...

NCAA Championship Team Scores (4 Events)—1. Denver 330; 2. Vermont 326; 3. Utah 318; **4. Colorado 299**; 5. Alaska-Anchorage 283; 6. New Mexico 277; 7. Dartmouth 261; 8. Middlebury 229; 9. New Hampshire 195; 10. Nevada 138; 11. Northern Michigan 105; 12. Colby 96; 13. Williams 81; 14. St. Lawrence 75; 15. Bates 72; 16. Alaska-Fairbanks 62; 17. Michigan Tech 51; 18. Montana State 28; 19. Wisconsin-Green Bay 18; 20. St. Michael’s 10; 21. Gustavus Adolphus 7; 22. St. Scholastica 3.

Men’s 10K Classical (39 finishers)—1. Juergen Uhl, UVM, 24:14.9; 2. Raphael Wunderle, UAA, 24:25.5; **3. Jesper Ostensen, CU, 24:29.0**; 4. Harald Loevenskiold, DU, 24:43.7; 5. Franz Bernstein, UVM, 24:44.4; **6. Vegard Kjoelhamar, CU, 24:45.4**; 7. Simeon Hamilton, Midd., 24:49.5; 8. Martin Kaas, UNM, 24:56.4; 9. Tor-hokon Hellebostad, UNM, 25:01.6; 10. Even Sletten, Utah, 25:04.7. **Other Front Range Finishers:** 11. Matt Gelso, CU, 25:07.4; 12. Mike Hirkley, DU, 25:08.5; 22. Daniel Clark, DU, 25:37.2.

Women’s 5K Classical (39 finishers)—1. Antje Maempel, DU, 13:52.4; 2. Polina Ermoshina, UNM, 13:58.9; 3. Sadie Bjornsen, UAA, 14:09.8; 4. Rosie Brennan, Dart., 14:14.2; 5. Maria Grevsgaard, 14:22.3; 6. Caitlin Patterson, UVM, 14:25.8; 7. Alexa Turzian, CU, 14:28.0; 8. Annelise Bailly, DU, 14:28.3; 9. Sophie Caldwell, Dart., 14:29.8; 10. Jennie Bender, UVM, 14:33.0. **Other Front Range Finishers:** 12. Kate Dolan, DU, 14:49.7.

Men’s Giant Slalom (34 finishers)—1. David Donaldson, UVM, 2:30.24; 2. **Leif Haugen, DU, 2:30.82**; 3. Andrew Wagner, Midd., 2:33.28; 4. Eric Mann, Williams, 2:33.55; 5. Nick Cohee, Utah, 2:33.77; 6. Michael Cremeno, UNH, 2:33.87; 7. Joshua Kernan, Colby, 2:34.10; 8. Greg Berger, UN, and William Ford, UNH, 2:34.19; **10. Drew Roberts, CU, 2:34.20**. **Other Front Range Finishers:** 15. John Buchar, DU, 2:34.36; 18. Gabriel Rivas, CU, 2:35.43; 24. Ian Lochhead, DU, 2:37.05; 34. Stefan Hughes, CU, 4:14.66.

Women’s Giant Slalom (35 finishers)—1. Lindsay Cone, St. Lawrence, 2:35.70; 2. Estelle Pecherand-Charmet, UNM, 2:36.30; 3. Eva Huckova, UU, 2:36.39; 4. Alexandra Parker, UAA, 2:37.00; 5. Stefanie Demetz, UNM, 2:37.12; 6. Courtney Hammond, Dart., 2:37.21; 7. Jilyne McDonald, UVM, 2:27.36; 8. Aileen Farrell, UNH, 2:37.29; 9. Lyndee Janowiak, UVM, 2:37.34; 10. Veronique Archambault, UNH, 2:37.59. **Front Range Finishers:** 19. Ida Dillingoen, DU, 2:39.51; 20. Katie Hartman, CU, 2:39.53; 21. Lisa Perricone, CU, 2:39.55; 22. Carolina Nordh, CU, 2:39.65; 25. Molly Ryan, DU, 2:41.92; 32. Claire Abbe, DU, 2:44.95.

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