

Rivas Is NCAA Slalom Champ

BUFF SKIERS SLIP TO FIFTH AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

BETHEL, Maine — The University of Colorado ski team won the men's slalom for the first time in nine years here Friday, but a key disqualification on the women's side took away several points as the Buffaloes slipped one spot into fifth place with two events remaining in the 56th Annual NCAA Ski Championships.

Vermont assumed the lead with 484 points, with Denver (482) and New Mexico (481) right on UVM's heels. Utah is in fourth (444), followed by the Buffaloes (439.5); Alaska-Anchorage is a distant sixth (376), though it gives the west schools five of the top six spots.

"Overall we're still alive and kicking," head coach **Richard Rokos** said. "This puts a lot of pressure now on our Nordic team, but as long as it's mathematically possible, there's always a chance that we can still take it."

UVM and New Mexico are atop the standings despite being two skiers below the maximum 12, DU, Utah and UAA have full squads and CU is one shy with 11; the non-qualifiers from the aforementioned three all were in Nordic, so CU could pass Vermont and UNM since it has one more cross country performer, and for the Buffs to win, CU would somehow have to outscore the Pioneers by 45 points in Saturday's freestyle races while also holding the others off.

It's only the third time in the last 13 seasons the lead has been in single digits at the three-quarter point; in 1997, Utah led CU by seven and went on to win by 39.5 points; and in 2006, Colorado led Denver by five before posting a 98-point win.

The three-point difference between the top three teams is the closest heading into the final two events in the NCAA Championships since the sport went coed in 1983; the previous tightest margin among the top three through six events came in 1997, when Utah (533), Colorado (526) and Vermont (524.5) were separated by eight-and-a-half points.

Junior **Gabriel Rivas** won the men's slalom, as he blistered the course in a two-run time of 1:36.69, easily defeating New Mexico's Petter Brenna (1:37.50). Rivas led the field after a first run of 47.77, and then posted the second fastest run despite starting in the 30th position to become CU's first male slalom champion since **Andy LeRoy** in 2000. LeRoy currently is the head coach for Denver.

As a team, the Buffs won the men's slalom for just the fourth time since 1983, and for the first time since 2000. To show how far the men's alpine team has come, the Buffs were 11th in the event last year. CU finished sixth in giant slalom Thursday after a 12th place showing in 2008.

Rivas' win was the 14th men's slalom crown and the 79th overall individual title by a CU skier, the most by any school. Denver is second (72), followed by Utah (63) and Vermont (54). The victory was his third in the slalom this winter, having previously won the event in the UAA and CU invitationals, and also earned him first-team All-America honors.

"Since I've been in the U.S., I've thought about this race, and it's very special because it's only a one-day race, not a ranking," Rivas said. "It's really an achievement to do that. I won, but everyone won at CU. It's teamwork. I felt really good today. I have been waiting for today for a long time since I've had good slalom results this whole season. I just wanted to get out front early and show what I'm able to do. The snow conditions were great, almost perfect, especially for the first run, it stayed very consistent throughout.

"I am pretty excited and satisfied with my season, mostly in slalom," he added. "I definitely want to work harder on my GS side to be more consistent and improve my GS ranking for next season."

Colorado Men's Slalom Champions

1961	Buddy Werner	1984	James Marceau
1963	Jimmie Heuga	1986	John Skajem
1966	Bill Marolt	1987	John Skajem
1970	Mike Porcarelli	1990	Chris Pedersen
1972	Mike Porcarelli	1995	Scott Wither

1977	Stephan Hienzsch	2000	Andy LeRoy
1983	Niklas Scherrer	2009	Gabriel Rivas

Junior **Stefan Hughes** finished 10th in a time of 1:39.71; he was excited and not worried about drawing bib number 13 on Friday the 13th. He moved into 10th place after his first run and held the spot to pick up second-team All-American accolades.

"I don't know if it was being in the East itself that made me more comfortable but it's really a great feeling to be home and to see so many familiar faces," said Hughes, who is from Killington, Vt. "The men's team woke up this morning psyched. We had a bad day yesterday and we were ready for it today. I felt good; and I liked my bib number. The snow was hard and everything came around to be a good day. Gabs' result was really motivating and exciting."

Junior **Drew Roberts** rounded out the CU men's efforts, tying for 14th in a 1:40.94 time, starting in 17th position, the same spot he was in after his first run.

The bad news came on the women's side, as after the completion of their slalom, CU sophomore **Katie Hartman** was disqualified for straddling a gate. She had finished 19th in the standings (in 1:48.25), but tapes revealed the miscue two-thirds into the race at the 41st out of 60 gates. "It was an obvious straddle, there was no question about it," Rokos said. "Nothing really the skier can do, it's almost impossible to correct and they keep on going and hope for best."

The disqualification cost Colorado 20 team points, plus another to both UVM and DU in the standings with one Pioneer behind that position, otherwise the Buffs would have been within 22.5 of the lead and 20.5 of the Pioneers.

And that came after sophomore **Carolina Nordh** hooked the tip of a ski around a gate with just five or six left on her first run, which was at the time appearing to be one of the top three or four morning runs. She had to stop and hike, costing her several valuable seconds and wound up 32nd after the first run. Even though she skied the second time down the ninth fastest, she could only improve to 29th in the final standings with a time of 1:55.19.

Senior **Lisa Perricone** closed out her Colorado career with a 16th place finish in 1:46.89, finishing exactly where she started on the day. New Mexico's Malin Hemmingsson was the women's slalom champ, winning in 1:42.36, or by well over a second over teammate Estelle Pecherand-Charmet.

"Today was tough, the snow is a lot different than what we're used to and none of us really adjusted that well," Perricone said. "Since I've been a freshman, the girls' team has been a powerhouse and it was great to see the guys step up and really carry us, we were psyched for them. Everyone was a little bummed after the girls' race, we're really not sure what's going to happen (team-wise) but we definitely haven't lost hope just yet."

"In general, the men skied the slalom the way they did most of the year," Rokos said. "With Gabriel winning, it puts a crown on it. He's been doing the same thing on and off all year and capitalizing on the last race at NCAA's makes it all that more beautiful. The rest of the guys skied very consistent in a race where there was no room for error. They can't go all out but they still went fast enough to place well among a very competitive field. Winning the men's portion of the slalom is huge for us."

"For the ladies, unfortunately they didn't have a great day," he continued. "If this would have gone like the average of the rest of the season they would have been way ahead. But anything can happen in this sport and we weren't the only victims of these conditions. The Nordics will resolve it tomorrow and hopefully we are still in position to vault well up in the standings, even all the way to first."

The championships conclude Saturday with the longer Nordic freestyle races, which to Colorado's favor, have been its strong suit this winter. The women's 15-kilometer race is set for an 8 a.m. mountain start, with the men's 20-kilometer version to begin at 10 a.m.

NOTES: The closest margin in the final standings since 1983 came in 1998, when Colorado edged Utah by 2.5 points; the final spread has been 10 points or lower just four times (1986, 1989, 1995 and 1998). In the 55 previous championships, the closest was zero, when CU and Dartmouth tied for 1976 title; in 1964, under completely different scoring rules, Denver edged Dartmouth by 1.4 points ... Only Colorado (2006) and Denver (2008) have won titles while be short the maximum 12 skiers; each was one shy with 11 ... Had the scoring format for the last 12 years been

utilized, Denver would ahead with 449 points, followed by UVM (441), Utah (433), New Mexico (429), Colorado (412.5), New Hampshire 354.5 and Alaska-Anchorage 353 ... Colorado was the defending champion in the women's slalom but placed 11th this time around ... 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.

NCAA Championship Team Scores (4 Events)–1. Vermont 484; 2. Denver 482; 3. New Mexico 481; 4. Utah 444; **4. Colorado 439.5**; 6. Alaska-Anchorage 376; 7. New Hampshire 368; 8. Dartmouth 359; 9. Middlebury 331; 10. Nevada 233; 11. Colby 193; 12. Williams 140.5; 13. Bates 123; 14. St. Lawrence 118; 15. Northern Michigan 105; 16. Alaska-Fairbanks 62; 17. Michigan Tech 51; 18. St. Michael's 31; 19. Montana State 28; 20. Wisconsin-Green Bay 18; 21. Gustavus Adolphus 7; 22. St. Scholastica 3.

Men's Slalom (34 finishers)–1. **Gabriel Rivas, CU, 1:36.69**; 2. Petter Brenna, UNM, 1:37.50; 3. Leif Haugen, DU, 1:37.70; 4. Joshua Kernan, Colby, 1:38.10; 5. Sean McNamara, UNH, 1:38.16; 6. Vincent Lebrun-Fortin, Colby, 1:38.25; 7. Gregory Berger, UN, 1:38.30; 8. Andrew Wagner, Midd., 1:39.45; 9. William Ford, UNH, 1:39.60; **10. Stefan Hughes, CU, 1:39.71**. **Other Front Range Finishers:** 11. John Buchar, DU, 1:39.73; 14 (tie). Drew Roberts, CU, 1:40.94; 25. Ian Lochhead, DU, 1:48.75.

Women's Slalom (34 finishers)–1. Malin Hemmingsson, UNM, 1:42.36; 2. Estelle Pecherand-Charmet, UNM, 1:43.58; 3. Jilyne McDonald, UVM, 1:44.29; 4. Meg Ryley, UVM, 1:44.36; 5. Aileen Farrell, UNH, 1:44.74; 6. Courtney Hammond, Dart., 1:45.30; 7 (tie). Alexandra Parker, UAA, and Veronica Archambault-Leger, UNH, 1:45.41; 9. Lindsay Cone, St. Lawrence, 1:45.61; 10. Eva Huckova, UU, 1:45.62. **Front Range Finishers:** 14. Ida Dillinggoen, DU, 1:46.78; 16. Lisa Perricone, CU, 1:46.89; 17. Claire Abbe, DU, 1:47.20; 25. Molly Ryan, DU, 1:50.95; 29. Carolina Nordh, CU, 1:55.19. **Disqualified** (2nd run): Katie Hartman, CU.

(Assistant SID Allie Musso contributed to this report.)

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