

Colorado Women Finish 5-6-7 In Slalom

BUFFALO SKIERS SLIP INTO THIRD AT NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS - Despite a history-matching performance from its women's alpine team, the University of Colorado ski team slipped a notch into third place with just two events remaining in the 57th NCAA Skiing Championships.

Two-time defending champion Denver continues to lead with 589.5 points, with New Mexico taking over second place with 535, slicing the Pioneer lead from 69 to 54.5 points; Colorado is in third with 504, with Utah (472) and Vermont (423.5) rounding out the top five.

Denver needs to hold off CU and UNM in Saturday's final two races, freestyle cross country. New Mexico is handicapped to an extent, skiing with one less athlete than DU and the Buffaloes. CU had the best Nordic team in the west this winter, though the Pioneer women have come on strong.

"We don't care for second place, never have," CU head coach Richard Rokos said. "Our goal, which is always to win, is looking fairly distant right now. But we'll see what will happen tomorrow. The Nordic team is loaded with talent and charging every single race. I have confidence in their ability to perform and it depends on our competition and how well they will come prepared for the race. We were hoping to be in a much better position, but we'll be ready."

Friday's slalom races took place at night, the second time in NCAA history; the first occasion was four years ago, also at Steamboat's famed Howelsen Hill, and it proved so popular among the skiers and townsfolk that it was a basic no-brainer to hold them in the evening again. Over 2,000 people were in attendance for the races.

In the women's slalom, the Colorado women had the fifth, sixth and seventh place finishers, matching the best performance by any CU alpine team, male or female, since the sport went coed in 1983.

New Mexico's Malin Hemmingsson won the race in an impressive two-run time of 1:19.91, and in the process became just the second woman to win three NCAA slalom titles, joining Vermont's Gabriella Hamberg, who did

it in the late 1980s. CU junior Carolina Nordh took fifth in 1:21.18 followed by freshman Erik Ghent in sixth (1:21.61) and junior Katie Hartman in seventh (1:21.86); the three Buffs at one point were 1-2-3 on the scoreboard to the delight of most of the onlookers.

On two other occasions, in 1991 and 1993, the Buff women also had three in the top seven in the slalom, the same three performers each time, Jennifer Barrett, the late Hana Pochobradaska and Andreja Rojs.

Following the first run, Nordh was fifth, Ghent eighth and Hartman 17th, as all three began the climb up from their respective starting positions (10th, 14th and 18th). Hartman set the tone early in the second run, blazing down Howelsen with what proved to be the second fastest second run (41.44).

"That was one of the best performances either team has had in the NCAA slalom," Rokos said. "It is a dream come true for a college performance. It demonstrates the consistency and the ability to perform under pressure. I am really proud of those girls and deeply humbled by their achievement today."

"I'm super happy. I usually get super nervous before a race, but today I was really calm and I just wanted to ski fast and that's what you have to do to ski fast," Nordh said. "This hill feels like home (Sundbyberg, Sweden), it kind of looks like my hill at home, only 10 times bigger. It felt great to have my parents around, the rest of the team and all the Nordic's came out to cheer us on and a bunch of other friends from Boulder, so it was just a great night."

"This experience is different than any other experience I've had in ski racing," Ghent said of her first NCAA Championships. "You're not racing for yourself, you're racing for the team so any mistake hurts the team not just you. I was I guess what you would call an 'excited nervous' but at the start, all three of us helped calm each other's nerves. Carolina was singing at the start and that helped. Gabby (men's team member Gabriel Rivas) told me before the race that it's just another slalom course so I had to approach it like that."

"I love the hill and I love this mountain," Hartman said. "I was mad from the first run and that's what fired me down the hill in the second run. I haven't been skiing as well all week and I hit my face in training. So all around I was just upset but at the same time psyched to go out and do well for the team."

"I'm so proud of my teammates," she added. "Carolina and Erika stepped it up and pulled through with two solid runs. I'm really proud of them right now.

All three women earned All-America honors for their finishes, Nordh first-team status with Ghent and Hartman named second-team.

The always treacherous slalom reared its ugly head in the men's race at one particular gate near the finish, and it proved costly to several skiers, CU junior Rivas among them. With eight gates remaining, Rivas, the defending NCAA slalom champion, was flying down with possibly the fastest first run time when he fell, costing him at least 10 seconds in finishing the run in 46.27, and in 28th place when the run ended. However, officials ruled that he did not hike back far enough after he fell and was thus disqualified after the race. Recent rules call for skiers to hike back to a specific point a bit further back from where the skier left the course to continue a run.

"I felt pretty good, I tried to make it down, I saw myself finishing that run a little bit too early," Rivas said. "Disappointing, but I'll be back next year, and it will be even bigger. There's no doubt about it."

Seven skiers in all had trouble at Gate 39, the one that ended Rivas' night, though others caused trouble for some as well.

Senior Drew Roberts completed his career with a 15th place finish in a 1:17.18, as he started in the 16th position. Freshman Spencer Nelson did manage a 23rd place effort (1:19.17) after starting 31st. Roberts was tied for 10th, Nelson was 25th after their first runs. Alaska-Anchorage's Andreas Adde, one of the hottest skiers entering the week, won in a 1:14.91 time.

"For a variety of reasons, the guys underperformed both days here," Rokos said. "It is a little frustrating to see the skiers with such potential couldn't carry that potential through to the very end. During the regular season, the guys would ski in a race like this close to matching what the girls achieved. It is unfortunate that it happened right here, right now."

The freestyle cross country races will finish off the NCAA's Saturday, with the men's 20-kilometer is set for a 9 a.m. start, with the women's

15K to follow at 11 a.m. The award ceremony will follow the completion of the women's race.

NOTES: Former CU and United States Olympic Team head coach Bob Beattie was in attendance for Friday's action, along with some of his famous alumni, most notably Billy Kidd and Moose Barrows ... Gary Gisle ('59 NCAA Champ team) and Jeff Temple were other Buff alums "in the house" at Howelsen Hill ... Members of the CU varsity alpine team who were not among the top three qualifiers served as forerunners for the slalom races: Stefan Hughes, Arman Serebrakian and Taggart Spent were introduced and zipped down Howelsen Hill ahead of the competitors, and then after the men's first run, Jennifer Allen, Khyla Burrows, Joelle Chevalier and Sara Hjertman were introduced and did the same for the women's race.

NCAA Championship Team Scores (6 of 8 events)-1. Denver 589.5; 2. New Mexico 535; 3. Colorado 504; 4. Utah 472; 5. Vermont 423.5; 6. Dartmouth 413; 7. Alaska-Anchorage 361; 8. New Hampshire 276; 9. Middlebury 233.5; 10. Montana State 218; 11. Nevada 178; 12. Colby 148.5; 13. Williams 140; 14. Bates 90; 15. Northern Michigan 88; 16. Alaska-Fairbanks 87; 17. Wisconsin-Green Bay 35; 18. St. Lawrence 32, 19. Michigan Tech 23, 20. St. Michael's 19; 21. Wellesley 10; 22. Gustavus Adolphus 6.

Men's Slalom-1. Andreas Adde, UAA, 1:14.91; 2. Torjus Krogdahl, UU, 1:15.03; 3. David Donaldson, UVM, 1:15.30; 4. Petter Brenna, UNM, 1:15.67; 5. Ace Tarberry, DAR, 1:15.81; 6. Bobby Poehling, MID, 1:16.22; 7. Vince Lebrun-Fortin, CBC, 1:16.48; 8. Christopher Acosta, UNM, 1:16.61; 9. Josh Kernan, CBC, 1:16.68; 10. Ben Manter, BAT, 1:16.70; 11. A.J. Avrin, DU, 1:16.72; 12. Jake Lund, MID, 1:16.75; 13. Kyle Kung, UU, 1:16.87; 14. Paul Atkinson, UNH, 1:17.14; 15. Drew Roberts, CU, 1:17.18; 16. Max Lamb, UU, 1:17.20; 17. Andreas Kilde, DU, 1:17.36; 18. Alex Dyroff, WIL, 1:17.74; 19. Chris Colpitts, UVM, 1:17.89; 20. Thomas Schwab, UNM, 1:17.94; 21. Mike Cremeno, UNH, 1:18.00; 22. Leif Haugen, DU, 1:18.39; 23. Spencer Nelson, CU, 1:19.17; 24. Trevor Leafe, DAR, 1:21.08; 25. Martin Harris, UN, 1:23.16; 26. Halfdan Falkum-Hansen, UAA, 1:23.21; 27. Brad Harden, SMC, 1:23.91; 28. Willie Ford, UNH, 1:29.03; 29. Erik Gilbert, UVM, 1:32.85; 30. Michael Mackie, MSU, 1:34.51; 31. Chris Barber, MSU, 1:38.80; 32. Bump Heldman, BAT, 1:52.64; 33. Luke McLaughry, DAR, 2:04:16; 34. Bryan Schpall, MID, 2:19.38.
Disqualified (1st run): Gabriel Rivas, CU.

Women's Slalom-1. Malin Hemmingsson, UNM, 1:19.91; 2. Lindsay Cone, DU, 1:20.68; 3. Anna Kocken, UU, 1:21.00; 4. Anne Brusletto, UNM, 1:21.03; 5. Carolina Nordh, CU, 1:21.18; 6. Erika Ghent, CU, 1:21.61; 7. Katie Hartman, CU, 1:21.86; 8. Veronique Archambault-Leger, UNH, 1:22.02; 9. Kate Williams, UNM, 1:22.14; 10. Ida Dillingoeen, DU, 1:22.15; 11. Kelsey Roddick, DAR, 1:22.50; 12. Petra Gantnerova, UAA,

1:22.54; 13. Annie Rendall, DAR, 1:22.65; 14. Lyndee Janowiak, UVM,
1:22.95; 15. Kayla Fry, UAA, 1:22.97; 16. Valerie Kechian, UVM,
1:23.15; 17. Sofia Smith, UU, 1:23.16; 18. Jennie VanWagner, DU,
1:23.17; 19. Geordie Lonza, WIL, 1:23.33; 20. Courtney Hammond, DAR,
1:23.38; 21. Aileen Farrell, UNH, 1:23.64; 22. Nicole Poleschuk, UN,
1:24.12; 23. Nicole Dvorak, MID, 1:24.33; 24. Dana Breakstone, CBC,
1:25.03; 25. Emily Porter, WIL, 1:25.32; 26. Amy Lattimer, MSU,
1:26.53; 27. Amy Harris, UN, 1:26.83; 28. Marie-Elaine Lepine, UNH,
1:29.75; 29. Alexandra Parker, UAA, 1:30.33; 30. Meg Ryley, UVM,
1:38.14; 31. Laurel Carter, WIL, 1:49.89; 32. Tasha Woodworth, MID,
1:56.63; 33. Eva Huckova, UU, 1:57.95; 34. Erika Horst, UN, 3:14.99.
Did Not Start (2nd run): Ashley-Kate Durham, SLU.

COLORADO BUFFALOES

(Associate SID Curtis Snyder contributed to this report.)

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