

# Reno's Jitloff snags gate, disqualifies in GS

By Matthew Piper, USSA

ALTA BADIA, Italy -â€ The U.S. had to put its podium hopes on ice Sunday as Ted Ligety (Park City, UT) finished seventh in sub-zero conditions at the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup giant slalom in Alta Badia, Italy.

On a sun-soaked morning at the infamous Gran Risa slope, Ligety struggled to get a hold on his first run and fell well behind the pace of eventual winner Massimiliano Blardone of the host nation.

“This hill is really tough this year, it’s so icy,” Ligety said. “First run, I think a lot of guys were taken by surprise by how icy it was. I for sure was one guy. I just felt like I had no grip on the top.”

Blardone and compatriot Davide Simoncelli were 1-2 for the Italians after one run, and they finished the day in the same order.

Twenty-year-old Tommy Ford (Bend, OR) impressed with 24th place in just his fourth World Cup event. Ford was able to put aside his butterflies for a clutch second run after qualifying for the first final of his World Cup career.

Ford’s finish in the top 30 at the prestigious course gains the U.S. another World Cup starting spot for GS, making six.

Ligety and Ford may have stayed alive for the second run Sunday, but it was Tim Jitloff (Reno, NV) who would have had the U.S. team’s best early run â€ were it not for the final gate.

“Just wanted to get across the line and next thing you know, I

was crashing," Jitloff said. "I felt my leg kind of get torn apart there."

Despite having just one top-20 World Cup finish to his name, Jitloff's time would have led the Americans with a tie for ninth place in 1:20.11, but he came tumbling through the finish after clipping the last gate with his left ski and lay against the fence clutching his leg.

Jitloff eventually rose to his feet and gave the Italian fans a bow, drawing an ovation despite his pending disqualification.

"I stood up and they started clapping like you would at a soccer match or something like that, and so I figured I'd say thank you to them, because these guys are amazing fans," he said. "Every year, there's 20,000-strong usually that are really excited.

"It was a great run, I'm really satisfied," Jitloff added. "Especially with the kind of difficulties that I've been struggling with in the early season here."

Bode Miller (Franconia, NH), with six top-10 finishes this season, began the day 12th in the standings and lost control early before recovering to finish well back in a first-round 32nd.

The U.S. will return to the podium hunt in the slalom Monday. Slalom starters are Ligety, Miller, Jitloff, Jimmy Cochran (Keene, NH) and World Cup first-timer David Chodounsky (Crested Butte, CO).

Alta Badia, Italy, Dec. 20, Men's Giant Slalom

1. Massimiliano Blardone, Italy, 2:35.76
2. Davide Simoncelli, Italy, 2:39.19
3. Cyprien Richard, France, 2:37.39

4. Benjamin Raich, Austria, 2:37.46

5. Manfred Moelgg, Italy, 2:37.72

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7. Ted Ligety, Park City, UT, 2:37.77

24. Tommy Ford, Bend, OR, 2:40.79

DNQ – Bode Miller, Franconia, NH

DNF – Jake Zamansky, Aspen, CO

DQ – Tim Jitloff, Reno, NV