

U.S. snowboardercross teams medal

By Tom Kelly, USSA

TELLURIDE – It was a hot day Sunday on the SBX course for the U.S. as Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton, VT) and Faye Gulini (Salt Lake City) took first, and Nate Holland (Squaw Valley, CA) and Nick Baumgartner (Iron River, MI) second at the Visa Snowboardcross Cup team SBX event in Telluride.

In the team SBX format, national teams of two race each other. Four racers go down the course and once they cross the finish line, a sensor drops the gate of their teammate and the racing ensues till the first athlete crosses the finish line.

The Olympic silver medalist Jacobellis, who aced each of her heats, was teamed up with newcomer Gulini who, at just 17, was able to hold off world-class competitors for the Team win.

“I was so proud of her. She was riding so well down the whole course. She definitely nailed it and that’s what it’s going to take to hold off the Canadians,” Jacobellis said of Gulini. “It’s amazing as a rider to see her develop at such a young age.”

As for the women’s strategy – Jacobellis led for the holeshot and Gulini made sure the gap never got closed.

“I have a weaker pull, so having Lindsey go first to give me that holeshot definitely made a huge difference,” Gulini said.

Jacobellis and Gulini were followed in second by Canadians Maelle Ricker and Dominique Maltais and Switzerland’s Simona Meiler and Tanja Frieden were third.

The men’s team races were all intense with little room for first and second lap mistakes. In the end, the French team of

Xavier De Le Rue and Pierre Vaultier took first, followed in a painstakingly close second by Holland and Baumgartner.

“Today was a blast. I knew I had three good races in me. Baumgartner did a great job getting me out of the gate in either first or second,” Holland said. “It’s pretty cool, this team event. I was Baumgartner’s biggest fan today. I’d watch him go out of the gate, root for him as much as I could, and then it was time for me to put up my end of the bargain.”

According to Baumgartner, the team format is exciting because of the reliance on teammates to do well, and the two run chance to win the event.

“I dig it. Everyone knows we have the U.S. team, but it’s mainly an individual sport. It’s a different bond you get when you start to rely on each other,” Baumgartner said. “He’s my biggest fan when I go out of the gate and when I finish down here, I’m screaming for him. It makes you closer, tighter and makes for great racing.”

Ross “The Boss” Powers (Okemo, VT) and his team SBX comrade Graham Watanabe (Sun Valley, ID) were also poised to make the final with Powers winning each of the first runs and Watanabe keeping the lead. But, in the semi final round after Powers crossed the finish line first, Watanabe’s start was a little too strong.

“I got a little too jazzed in the start and made an early move over a tall roller – but it was too early and I got bucked off balance. I had to hike up over a feature. I made up time, but not enough,” Watanabe said.

But, all in all, Powers, who was third in the SBX World Cup Saturday, enjoyed the racing regardless of the finish.

“I feel better and better every day, and today’s team race was a lot of fun. It was cool for me to be out there with Graham having a good time,” Powers said. “Just to go out there and

win each one of my heats was huge. I can leave here with great confidence, enjoy the holidays, and go to Europe strong and try to make this team.”

The snowboardcross athletes now have a break before heading to Bad Gastein, Austria, Jan. 9-11.

2010 Visa Snowboardcross Cup, Dec. 20, Team SBX

Men

1. France 2 (De La Rue, Vaultier)
2. USA 2 (Holland, Baumgartner)
3. Canada1 (Robertson, Nielson)
4. Austria (Schairer, Fuchs)
5. USA 2 (Watanabe, Powers)

Women

1. USA 1 (Jacobellis, Gulini)
2. Canada (Ricker; Maltais)
3. Switzerland 1 (Frieden, Meiler)
4. Switzerland 2 (Francon, Aubry)
5. Japan (Doi, Kuwashima)
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7. USA2 (Chythlook-Sifsof, Yamada)