

Bahrke returns to podium at Deer Valley

By Lindsey Sine, USSA

PARK CITY – It was all smiles and tears for Heather McPhie (Park City) and Shannon Bahrke (Tahoe City) who finished first and third, during the Nature Valley Freestyle Challenge at Deer Valley Resort in Park City, putting them at the top of Olympic selection with two events remaining.

Beneath clear, cold skies, skier after skier took to the hillside of snowy bumps at Deer Valley, throwing out the best tricks they could in an attempt to boost their chances of making the 2010 Olympic Team.

Tying for her win, McPhie was overwhelmed with the joy that came with her first World Cup victory and fought back tears when she explained what the moment meant to her.

“I’ve believed in myself for a long time, but you never know – there are so many variables. I just wanted to give it everything I had and I did,” McPhie said. “My parents are here to see my first podium, and my family and friends. I have so much support.”

According to McPhie, being able to overcome such a strong field in her hometown means a lot to her, and potentially her future as an Olympian.

“This is so exciting! We’re at Deer Valley, and with six U.S. girls in the top 12, to end up on top is unreal,” McPhie said. “I hope and can’t wait to walk into Opening Ceremonies representing my country. There are still so many days and so much more training before that.”

The fiery Bahrke, who famously won her silver medal in 2002 on

the same Deer Valley course, had a feeling about Thursday's competition.

"I just felt like today was going to be my day. I was a little bummed because I went a little big and set it a little hard on my back flip, but I was so happy to be on the podium. With this good a team and it just really means the world to me."

Bahrke was relieved to have a solid finish, but in what she says will be her last season of competition, she wants her shot at the gold.

"Until today I was one of the last in line, so for me to be on the podium is just incredible, I'm really excited," Bahrke said. "I really hope I'm going to be there [Olympics] too. I'm going just keep plugging away and try to get a win like Heather."

While Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT) already has her Olympic spot locked in, the Vermonter is still in the hunt for wins, which she says are within her, despite her finishing eighth.

In the hunt for Olympic berths with just two more events to go, McPhie and Bahrke moved up to the top level of selection with their top threes. Up to four women will be named to the team on Jan. 26 at a press conference in Deer Valley.

In the men's competition Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA) led for the U.S. men in fourth, while Australia's Dale Begg-Smith won.

"Fourth place isn't bad. I can think of 56 other guys that would love that place. I'm really happy with my run right now and I want to keep doing it," Deneen said.

Night finals action begins at 8pm Friday for aerials and Saturday for moguls at Deer Valley Resort.

Park City, Jan. 14, Moguls

Men

1. Dale Begg Smith, Australia, 26.12
2. Guilbaut Colas, France, 25.48
3. Dmitriy Reiherd, Kazakhstan, 25.10
4. Patrick Deneen, Cle Elum, WA, 24.85
5. Jesper Bjoernlund, Sweden, 24.84
-
6. Jeremy Cota, Carrabassett Valley, ME, 24.44
8. Michael Morse, Duxbury, MA, 23.76
9. David Babic, Washington, VT, 23.43
11. Dave DiGravio, Farmington, ME, 23.02
13. Shane Cordeau, Sun Valley, ID, 19.32
16. Bryon Wilson, Butte, MT, 10.50
- (16 make finals)
21. Jimmy Discoe, Ridgway, CO, 22.44
38. Joe Discoe, Ridgway, CO, 20.09
57. Nate Roberts, Park City, UT, 8.38

Women

- 1-T. Heather McPhie, 24.59
- 1-T. Jennifer Heil, Canada, 24.59
3. Shannon Bahrke, Tahoe City, CA, 24.18
4. Margarita Marbler, Austria, 24.14
5. Aiko Uemura, Japan, 23.93

–

6. Michelle Roark, Denver, 23.88

7. Shelly Robertson, Reno, NV, 23.84

8. Hannah Kearney, Norwich, VT, 23.65

11. Laurel Shanley, Squaw Valley, CA, 22.00

13. Eliza Outtrim, Steamboat Springs, CO, 21.25

16. Heidi Kloser, Vail, CO, 14.82

– (16 make finals)

43. Emiko Torito, Denver, 2.58