

Holland 15th in snowboardercross

By Lindsey Sine, USSA

VEYSONNAZ, Switzerland – The race to make the snowboardcross roster for the 2010 Olympics just got a lot tighter as Nick Baumgartner threw it on the line Friday to notch a third-place finish during a SBX World Cup in Switzerland.

In addition to marking himself a contender for the Olympics, the shining light in Baumgartner's day were his starts.

"The course was great and my starts were awesome," Baumgartner said. "In the first heat where I kind of just missed stepping up the main feature in the straightaway in one heat, but other than that I won every holeshot so that was really good."

However, despite the podium finish, Baumgartner was left wanting to have gone further.

"Under different circumstances I'd be more stoked. I was in the lead for the top half and even second would have been alright, but I blew it right at the end," Baumgartner said. "I just knuckled something and got passed in the finish stretch. But, third is better than fourth."

In a competition where France's Pierre Vaultier took the win, Baumgartner said that he could have been more aggressive with the victor, but didn't want to risk them both losing it all.

Joining Baumgartner in the top 10 were teammates Graham Watanabe (Sun Valley, ID) who was ninth, and last week's World Cup winner Nate Holland (Squaw Valley, CA) who was 10th.

With the strong men's field, even U.S. Snowboarding Head Coach Peter Foley is uncertain who will assume the Olympic spots with just one competition left to qualify.

In the battle for up to four Olympic starting spots, Holland – who has now mathematically clinched a spot – leads the selection criteria with his win last weekend in Austria. Reigning Olympic champ Seth Wescott (Sugarloaf, ME) is next with a second place finish in the season opener in Argentina. Three riders now have a third, including Baumgartner, Watanabe and 2002 Olympic halfpipe champ Ross Powers (Okemo, VT). Baumgartner and Watanabe are tied in the first two tiebreakers (next best result).

In the women's race, Lindsey Jacobellis (Stratton, VT) was running fast when, in the semifinal round, she was landed on coming down off a feature and then run into by Switzerland's Simona Meiler to finish eighth. With just one event remaining, Jacobellis, with a win last weekend, has clinched an Olympic spot.

Helene Olafsen of Norway won, followed by Canadians Dominique Maltais in second and Maelle Ricker in third.

Callan Chythlook-Sifsof (Girdwood, AK) was next for U.S. women, finishing 14th.

The World Cup tour now moves on to Stoneham in Quebec Jan. 21. It will be the final stop before the U.S. Olympic team for snowboarding will be named.

Veysonnaz, Switzerland, Jan. 15, Snowboardcross

Men

1. Pierre Vaultier, France
2. David Speiser, Germany
3. Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, MI
4. Francois Boivin, Canada
5. Alex Pullin, Australia

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9. Graham Watanabe, Sun Valley, ID
10. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA
15. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA
16. Pat Holland, Squaw Valley, CA
17. Seth Wescott, Sugarloaf, ME
23. Ross Powers, Okemo, VT
35. Jonathan Cheever, Saugus, MA
43. Mick Dierdorff, Steamboat Springs, CO
45. Jason Smith, Basalt, CO

Women

1. Helene Olafsen, Norway
2. Dominique Maltais, Canada
3. Maelle Ricker, Canada
4. Alexandra Jekova, Bulgaria
5. Tanja Frieden, Switzerland

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8. Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton, VT
14. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK
21. Faye Gulini, Salt Lake City