

Kashima, Bahrke 7th in moguls

By Matthew Piper, USSA

CALGARY – The U.S. Freestyle Ski Team’s women’s moguls squad continued its scorching start to the 2010 season with four top 10 results in Calgary on Friday night, showing little signs of cooling off in a month-long break from the FIS World Cup circuit.

Heather McPhie (Park City, UT) was fourth, Emiko Torito (Denver) followed in fifth, 2002 Olympic silver medalist Shannon Bahrke (Tahoe City, CA) was seventh, and Shelly Robertson (Reno, NV) finished eighth in an event won by Canada’s own Jennifer Heil.

“McPhie skied great,” said U.S. Ski Team Freestyle Head Coach Jeff Wintersteen. “She’s had a couple fourths before, but in the Olympic year it’s really good for her to get that result.”

For Torito, it was the second top-five finish this year, putting her on top of the hunt for an Olympic spot now behind Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT). McPhie has a fourth and a sixth-place to her credit this season.

“Emiko also got another top five, which we’re really excited about,” said Wintersteen. “She skied fantastic coming from 16th. It was a rough set, but she was great in the finals. Had she been a little closer in the semi finals we probably could have gotten a podium.”

Outdone only slightly, the U.S. men were able to sneak three into the top 10 with Michael Morse (Duxbury, MA) taking sixth, Sho Kashima (South Lake Tahoe, CA) seventh with the same score (22.78), and David Babic (Washington, VT) in 10th. Canadian native and defending Olympic champion Dale Begg-Smith, now skiing for Australia, took the win.

It was a tough day on a tough course for some of the top U.S. men. Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA), Bryon Wilson (Park City, UT) and Nate Roberts (Park City, UT) all missed finals.

“We’re a little disappointed in the semis, obviously,” said Wintersteen. “Nate, Patrick and Wilson had some problems, so that was hard. The course was just tricky. It was flat up top then drops 30 degrees into the bottom air.”

Kearney qualified fifth among women but was unable to summon the same form she had in her win in Finland almost a month ago. The defending World Cup champion took 11th when she bobbled her bottom air in the finals.

The U.S. Olympic Trials winner trails only Canada’s Heil and Kristi Richards (sixth Friday) in the World Cup standings after three events.

Four events remain for the skiers before the Olympic Team is named Jan. 26 including one more in Calgary on Saturday night, two at Deer Valley Resort in Park City, UT next week and a final event in Lake Placid just prior to Team selection.

Calgary, Jan. 8, Moguls

Men

1. Dale Begg-Smith, Austria, 23.73
2. Vincent Marquis, Canada, 23.38
3. Alexandr Smyshlyaev, Russia, 23.27
4. Guilbaut Colas, France, 23.22
5. Jesper Bjoernlund, Sweden
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6. Michael Morse, Duxbury, MA, 22.78

7. Sho Kashima, South Lake Tahoe, CA, 22.78

10. David Babic, Washington, VT, 21.92

33. Bryon Wilson, Butte, MT, 16.58

46. Nate Roberts, Park City, UT, 8.18

50. Patrick Deneen, Cle Elum, WA, 6.30

Women

1. Jennifer Heil, Canada, 23.95

2. Nikola Sudova, Czech Republic, 23.39

3. Margarita Marbler, Austria, 23.16

4. Heather McPhie, Park City, UT, 23.03

5. Emiko Torito, Denver, 22.83

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7. Shannon Bahrke, Tahoe City, CA, 22.49

8. Shelly Robertson, Reno, NV, 22.28

11. Hannah Kearney, Norwich, VT, 21.82

18. Eliza Outtrim, Steamboat Springs, CO, 19.45

RNS – Michelle Roark, Denver