

Lake Placid final tune-up for freestyle athletes

By USSA

LAKE PLACID – The last stop for freestyle athletes to qualify for the U.S. Olympic Team touches down in Lake Placid Jan. 21-24 for three days of excitement with aerials, moguls and ski cross competitions at the Nature Valley Freestyle Cup.

“Lake Placid is a pivotal event for our athletes with the final chance to qualify for the Olympic Team,” said U.S. Ski Team Freestyle Head Coach Jeff Wintersteen. “The battle is especially intense in both men’s and women’s moguls where we still have a large number of athletes who have a chance to get on the podium and possibly grab an Olympic spot. I expect to see an amazing competition in Lake Placid.”

The Nature Valley Freestyle Cup kicks off Jan. 21 with moguls, where the likes of World Champion Patrick Deneen (Cle Elum, WA), World Cup moguls champion Hannah Kearney (Norwich, VT) and Olympic contender Bryon Wilson (Butte, MT) will each be fighting their way down the bumps for a World Cup win.

Even being the last event in Olympic selection, there will still be a large number of athletes who can hit it big and qualify for the Team so competition is expected to be intense.

On Friday night a huge crowd is expected at the Intervale Jump Complex as the focus then shifts to aerials at its finest – under the lights. There, Jeret “Speedy” Peterson could attempt his famous “Hurricane” jump, and teammate Emily Cook (Belmont, MA) hopes to lock in her trip to Vancouver.

Known for the grueling training regiment he puts down each summer in Lake Placid, World Champion Ryan St. Onge (Winter Park, CO) is looking forward to competing in his home away

from home.

“Coming back to Lake Placid is awesome for me because it feels basically like a home base,” St. Onge said. “I train there five to six months out of the year and for me to get to back and compete there, it’s almost a home court advantage.”

Aerials finals begin at 8pm with qualifying earlier in the day.

The weekend wraps up that Sunday with a ski cross race during which fans can catch X Games gold medalist Daron Rahlves (Sugar Bowl, CA), and up and coming female crosser Caitlin Ciccone (Littleton, NH) in their last stop before the sport’s Olympic debut. Rahlves narrowly missed a World Cup win, finishing second earlier in January.

“Lake Placid is a great place to showcase the newest Olympic sport of ski cross,” said Coach Tyler Shepherd.

Qualifying is set for Saturday beginning at 10:15 with

“We anticipate another amazing event in Lake Placid, with Olympic spots on the line every day,” said USSA Vice President, Events Calum Clark. “Lake Placid is a great partner and fans can expect to see the best athletes in the world putting on quite a show each day.”

The 2010 Olympic Freestyle Team will be named Jan. 26.