

Sullivan showing signs of Olympic caliber skiing

By USSA

KITZBUEHEL, Austria – Bode Miller (Franconia, NH) was ninth in the 70th year of the legendary Hahnenkamm Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill, the final chance for American speed skiers to earn their U.S. Olympic Team start. Switzerland's Didier Cuche won for the second day in a row as five Americans landed in the top 26.

"From top to bottom, it was a challenging race," said U.S. Men's Head Coach Sasha Rearick.

"Everybody was coming out to win today. The slope was perfect, bluebird sun, and every single one of the guys in the top 30 was out there with one mission: to win this race."

Miller, who had been the fastest in training Thursday, took an early lead but lost it about a third of the way down the hill in the only major World Cup downhill the two-time overall champion is yet to win.

"Bode skied very aggressively up top, but he lost some time in the middle," Rearick said. "On the bottom he didn't quite ski as aggressively on a fine line as he normally can do."

Making a final statement for the coaches before Vancouver picks, Erik Fisher (Middleton, ID) tied Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley, CA) for 18th.

"It's fun to be here, but I feel like it's time that I start doing some things," Fisher said. "I had a big mistake and was able to make up a lot of time at the bottom. I know the speed's there, I've just gotta put a full run together.

"I usually make a mistake after I have one, because I'm trying

to go to hard," Fisher said. "I was able to pull it together and have a clean bottom half."

For his part, Sullivan also finished 11th in the super G, and is showing signs he's rounding into top form.

"It was really fun," he said of the downhill. "Not the best result I was looking for, but even coming through the finish, I had a big smile on my face. It's such a pleasure to run this course."

More than 40,000 fans were on hand for Scott Macartney's (Crystal Mountain, WA) first downhill start in Kitzbuehel since his famous crash two years ago. Macartney recovered last year only to tear his ACL in Wengen, one week before his return.

"It's good to be back," Macartney said. "It was tough the first day, tough to really wrap it up on this hill, but I kept getting better, and every day I was faster. I had a couple of mistakes today and was out of the points, but it was nice to get back to Kitzbuehel and charge down the hill again.

"You're always nervous at Kitzbuehel. The very first day, I was probably as nervous as I've ever been for a World Cup. I was more relaxed today."

Sunday's slalom concludes competition at Kitzbuehel, where there will be a podium for the top three slalom racers and another for the fastest combined racers from Saturday's downhill and Sunday's slalom. It is the only traditional combined of the World Cup season and does count toward the discipline title.

Together with Saturday's downhill, Miller, with his top 10, will have a shot in the combined. The slalom skiers then head to Schladming for Tuesday's night race.

The Olympic Team is expected to be announced Monday.

Kitzbuehel, Austria – Jan. 23, Men's Downhill

1. Didier Cuche, Switzerland, 1:53.74
2. Andrej Sporn, Slovenia, 1:54.02
3. Werner Heel, Italy, 1:54.13
4. Mario Scheiber, Austria, 1:54.25
5. Aksel Lund Svindal, Norway, 1:54.42
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9. Bode Miller, Franconia, NH, 1:54.90
- T-18. Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley, CA; and Erik Fisher (Middleton, ID), 1:55.49
24. Steven Nyman, Sundance, UT, 1:55.70
26. Andrew Weibrecht, Lake Placid, NY, 1:55.83
41. Ted Ligety, Park City, UT, 1:57.16
44. Scott Macartney, Crystal Mountain, WA, 1:57.52