

U.S. Olympic halfpipe contenders ready to tackle Mammoth



By Lindsey Sine, USSA

MAMMOTH – Following an opening event that took halfpipe riding to new realms of creativity, Mammoth Mountain welcomes the 2010 Sprint U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix Jan. 6-10 for two full field halfpipe competitions. The event will help determine the roster of the U.S. Olympic halfpipe team.

Known for being the only resort in North America to offer three different-sized halfpipes, Mammoth's 22-foot super pipe will give athletes their last two competitions in which they can qualify for a spot in the reduced field at the final tour stop where the Olympic team will be named.

The men's field looks to again be stacked by all who can land double corks. The one and only Shaun White (Carlsbad, CA) won the first stop of the Grand Prix with a double double corked run, and Louie Vito (Sandy, UT) was right on the gold medalist's heels with his own variations of the trick.

Also looking to attach the phrase 2010 Olympian to their name will be hometown heroes Greg Bretz and Luke Mitrani (both Mammoth Lakes, CA) and wildcard Zach Black (Breckenridge, CO) who took third at the first stop of the Grand Prix in Copper, CO.

In the women's field Kelly Clark (Mt. Snow, VT) is her usual dominating self this season. After taking the win in Copper Mountain, she is looking to throw down in Mammoth. Joining her

will be partners in crime Gretchen Bleiler (Aspen, CO), who was second at the tour's first stop, and reigning Olympic gold medalist Hannah Teter (South Lake Tahoe, CA).

Taking the competition up a notch in the women's field are Olympian Elena Hight (South Lake Tahoe, CA), Ellery Hollingsworth (Stratton, VT) and U.S. Snowboarding rookie Maddy Schaffrick (Steamboat Springs, CO).

The action in Mammoth goes down starting with men's and women's qualifications for the first halfpipe competition on Jan. 5. Finals for the first pipe competition take place on the sixth, then, after a little break, qualifications for the second pipe will take place on Jan. 8 with finals on the Jan. 9. Slopestyle will cap things off at Mammoth on Jan.10.

If you can't catch the action in person, look for the future of the U.S. Olympic team appearing in the U.S. Snowboarding Grand Prix show on a TV near you Jan. 10 on NBC at 10:30am.