

Vonn 1st, Mancuso 14th in downhill

By Lindsey Sine, USSA

HAUS IM ENNSTAL, Austria – It was Lindsey Vonn's (Vail, CO) day Friday as the World Champion showed that her bruised left arm was no problem, charging through flat light conditions to win the downhill Audi FIS Alpine World Cup in Austria.

"I needed this win today to get my confidence back on track and to feel like I could ski well again. It's been a couple of bad races since my arm injury," Vonn said. "I was able to concentrate really well on my run. I'm happy with the way the weekend is starting and hopefully I can keep the ball rolling and have a good race tomorrow and Sunday."

It was the 26th career win and third downhill of this season for Vonn, who said her injured arm was not really a factor for her.

"It hurt, but thankfully the start is only five or 10 seconds of the course. After that I was able to concentrate on my run and not be thinking about my arm too much," Vonn said. "I'm just thankful that it doesn't hurt as bad in downhill as it did in slalom. Hopefully the self-confidence will transfer over into the technical events, too."

After incredibly snowy conditions for the women's downhill training on Thursday, Friday's speeds were four to five seconds faster in the much clearer conditions. For Vonn, who regained the overall lead by 35 points, this meant having a different race.

"The downhill was really fun today. The snow was very good, it was just a little bit bumpy at the bottom and it made it a little bit difficult because the light was flat, but I just

kept charging," Vonn said. "I went in a complete snowstorm yesterday and today was a different track. When you're going five seconds faster everything feels different."

After Friday's win, Vonn is looking to stay on top and hopes to be able to do so throughout the weekend.

"I need to look at the video, see where I can be more aggressive tomorrow and hopefully I'll stay ahead of the girls," Vonn said.

The day of racing in Haus also treated Stacey Cook (Mammoth Mountain, CA) and Olympic champion Julia Mancuso (Olympic Valley, CA) well as each cracked the top 15 with Cook 13th and Mancuso 14th. The two were separated by only a hundredth.

"It was awesome and once Jules came down, no one could come between us. It was pretty cool to be in there with her," Cook said.

For Cook, being able to follow through on her plans and overcome conditions was what brought her success on Friday.

"I think I executed my plan and skied well. The light was pretty flat, but that was luck of the draw. I had one of the best runs I could for the conditions," Cook said.

Rookie Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, CO) continued to shine with her third points-scoring downhill of the year, finishing in a tie for 21st.

There's more racing in store for Haus with another downhill on tap Saturday, and a super G Sunday where weather may again be a factor with snow predicted. Women's Alpine Head Coach Jim Tracy is hoping the weather forecasters are wrong.

"We're all really happy with the way the girls executed today. We were a little bit leery about the weather and what it was going to do, but it held," Tracy said. "A lot is going to be dependent on the weather now because they're calling for snow."

Hopefully they'll be wrong and the girls can go and execute again tomorrow."

Haus Im Ennstal, Austria, Jan. 8, Women's Downhill

1. Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO, 1:38.84

2. Anja Paerson, Sweden, 1:39.19

3. Maria Riesch, Germany, 1:39.23

4. Nadia Fanchini, Italy, 1:39.68

5. Marion Rolland, France, 1:39.78

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13. Stacey Cook, Mammoth Mountain, CA, 1:40.43

14. Julia Mancuso, Olympic Valley, CA, 1:40.44

21. Alice McKennis, Glenwood Springs, CO, 1:40.83

33. Chelsea Marshall, Pittsfield, VT, 1:41.10

48. Keely Kelleher, Big Sky, MT, 1:42.35

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DNF: Leanne Smith, Conway, NH