

# Mancuso brings home second silver

By Matthew Piper, USSA

WHISTLER, British Columbia – Julia Mancuso (Olympic Valley, CA) charted a courageous line through Thursday afternoon's slalom run to earn her second silver in two events and tie Bode Miller (Franconia, NH) for the most Olympic medals ever by a U.S. skier at three.

"When I realized that I got another medal, it's that moment that you wait for as an athlete," Mancuso said. "It's the moment that you realize that I've been working so hard for this moment, and to know that really, anything's possible. I didn't expect that from myself, I just believed and went for it."

Germany's Maria Riesch won super combined's top honor after downhill gold medalist and first-run leader Lindsey Vonn (Vail CO) hooked her tip around a gate and crashed late in her slalom run.



Julia Mancuso

Mancuso, who also won downhill silver Wednesday and giant slalom gold in Torino, now ranks tied for sixth all time among U.S. women in Winter Olympic medals – still just 25 years old. Yet her age and recent performances belie two years of struggles on the World Cup circuit because of a back injury

and changes in equipment regulations that mandated bigger, heavier skis for the petite Mancuso.

“She’s a big event girl, she always has been,” said U.S. Women’s Head Coach Jim Tracy. “Yeah, she struggled last year, but I think in some respects it was not the worst thing in the world, because it certainly refocused her on what she wanted to do and when she wanted to accomplish those things.”

Third after downhill, Mancuso went hard for the slalom leg, barely maintaining control around the gates and thrilling the Whistler crowd as she snuck into first past Austria’s Kathrin Zettel.

“I don’t know where this slalom was hiding, but she certainly brought it out on the day that she needed to,” Tracy said.

“I was nervous in the start, but I was also really excited,” Mancuso said. “I knew that it was all-or-nothing, so I went out there and I gave it my all. I crossed the finish line after having a mistake and saw that I was in first. It really was just joy and amazement.”

Riesch reversed her eighth-place downhill fortunes with a stylish, smooth slalom that unseated Mancuso, and Vonn fell behind her close friend at the last interval by .18 seconds before hitting a gate and losing her ski. A course worker handed it back, and she made her way down to the finish to deliver a congratulatory hug to Riesch.

“She has her gold medal from yesterday,” Reisch said after winning Germany’s first alpine gold since 1988. “Today, it was a bad day for her, yesterday it was a bad day for me, and that’s how sports is. I think she has another good chance in the super G.”

Case in point, Sweden’s Anja Paerson recovered from a brutal impact off the final jump in Wednesday’s downhill to take super combined bronze.

“I was just fighting hard,” Vonn said. “It happens in slalom. I was hoping that it wasn’t going to happen today, but I gave it my best.”

Vonn said she will continue treatment for a bruised shin, although Tracy said she has the mental strength to push through it and perform well in the remaining three Olympic races.

“I think the pain, for these events, she can put it out of her mind,” Tracy said. “It’ll bother her after the event’s over, but I think she’s so focused that the pain probably isn’t there too much.”

Kaylin Richardson (Edina, MN) was the next highest U.S. finisher in 17th, while Leanne Smith (Conway, NH) finished 21st after tearing her ACL in Cortina just over a year ago.

“We only got one training run, which was sort of a half training run, and I managed to miss three gates,” Richardson said after the downhill. “It was my first time ever on that course, so it ran differently than I thought so going into this race. I knew that I needed to take some risks, but at the same time, I really wanted to make all the gates.”

Next up for the U.S. women: a day of rest, then the super G on Saturday.

“Confidence breeds confidence,” Tracy said. “We’ve got two of them right now that have a lot of confidence going.”

### **2010 Olympics Women’s Super Combined**

Gold – Maria Riesch, Germany, 2:09.14

Silver – Julia Mancuso, Olympic Valley, CA, 2:10.08

Bronze – Anja Paerson, Sweden, 2:10.19

4. Kathrin Zettel, Austria, 2:10.50

5. Tina Maze, Slovenia, 2:10.53

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17. Kaylin Richardson, Edina, MN, 2:13.40

21. Leanne Smith, Conway, NH, 2:13.97

DNF – Lindsey Vonn, Vail, CO