

Holland wins snowboardcross World Cup opener

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Snowboarding

Five-time snowboardcross Winter X Games gold medalist Nate Holland of Squaw Valley started the season off with a win in the opening World Cup in Lech Monday night. Holland led a string of four U.S. athletes into the top 15.

Holland, who went into the final rounds seeded fifth, pulled out his fourth career World Cup win along with taking the overall points leader yellow bib for the first time. Holland, having won the first World Cup of the season, will head into Tuesday's race wearing yellow as the overall World Cup points leader.

"This is the first time I've ever had the yellow bib – I'm the points leader," said a tired Holland after clinching the victory under the lights. "Tonight I finally got the yellow bib and hopefully I can hold onto it longer than one night because we are racing tomorrow."

After posting a successful protest in the quarterfinals, Holland put the pedal to the metal topping both the semi final and final rounds. Holland beat out a tough field in the finals edging out Canada's Tom Velisek for the win.

"In the final heat I was in third place in turn one. Everything just started clicking and I started making passes," said Holland of his winning run. "Half way down I passed into first and at that point I knew those guys were behind me and I just pinned it to the finish line."

With conditions superb, Holland took full advantage of the course filled with long straight sections and good turns building confidence for the remainder of the season.

"I've always been a confident rider and traditionally within my riding I usually start getting my results mid season – towards the end of the season," explained Holland. "This last year and this year I've been able to start pulling some results earlier in the season and I'm happy with that. I have to contribute a lot of that to my fall training."

Shaun Palmer of South Lake Tahoe advanced to the semifinals but did not qualify for the final round, finishing sixth, while Jayson Hale of Sierraville was 11th and Jonathon Cheever of Saugus, Mass., 14th, not moving past the quarterfinals round.

In the women's race, Canada went one-two while U.S. Snowboarding's Callan Chythlook-Sifsof of Alaska finished 12th.

There were six USA riders competing in Lech, with the remainder of the team training at a special early season camp in Telluride, Colo., prior to next week's Visa U.S. Snowboardcross Cup World Cup.

The men and women will be on course again Tuesday for another race in Lech.

Official Results, World Cup, Lech am Arlberg, Austria, Dec. 7, Snowboardcross

Men

1. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA
2. Tom Velisek, Canada
3. Mario Fuchs, Austria
4. Dan Csokonay, Canada
5. David Speiser, Germany

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6. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA

11. Jayson Hale, Sierraville, CA

14. Jonathon Cheever, Saugus, MA

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41. Mick Dierdorff, Steamboat Springs, CO

Women

1. Dominique Maltais, Canada

2. Maelle Ricker, Canada

3. Yuka Fujimori, Japan

4. Deborah Anthoniozz, France

5. Marie Ramberger, Austria

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12. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK