

Mancuso 8th in World Cup super combined

By Ski Racing Magazine

ARE, Sweden – Just six days after polishing off two weeks of World Championship competition in Garmisch-Partekirchen, Germany, the fastest women on snow dug right back into the World Cup season today with the second super combined of the season in Are, Sweden as overall leader Maria Riesch of Germany extended her lead with her fifth victory of the season.

Though it was “just another World Cup,” the intense competitiveness of the World Championships seemed to spill over onto the site of the 2007 title meet as eight fresh worlds medalists filled the top ten spots today.

The run of the day came from recently crowned giant slalom world champ Tina Maze of Slovenia who took to the Gaestrappet slalom course with an intensity none could match. Standing eighth (0.76 seconds back) after the super G leg, Maze ripped to the fastest slalom time of the day in 45.19 seconds then watched as the top seven first-run leaders tried to catch up.

Only first-run runner up Riesch, with a 0.60-second lead on Maze coming out of the slalom start house, was able to beat her as she hung on to 0.40 seconds of her advantage to claim her third career Cup super combined victory. She is also the reigning Olympic champion in the discipline. With today's win, Riesch edged past Vail's Lindsey Vonn (sixth today) and Austrian Elizabeth Goergl (tied for second) in the super combined standings with a 145 to 140 advantage and only one combined race remaining on this season's World Cup calendar. Riesch, a double bronze medalist at her home in Garmisch, was also able to tack on 60 more points to her lead over Vonn in

the overall standings, which she controls 1356 to 1140. Vonn is the reigning three-time overall champ.

Brand new double world champion (downhill, super G), Goergl was able to take her third-place standing after the super G all the way to the last podium spot. It was her third career World Cup podium in the super combined and her 27th overall.

Local favorite Anja Paerson was obviously fighting hard for a home podium but wasn't able to improve on her fourth-place standing after the super G, missing the top three by only two hundredths of a second.

Vonn led the way into the afternoon slalom leg with a 0.16-second lead on Riesch in the morning super G run, but her recent slalom troubles (four consecutive first-run DNFs) continued as her advantage dwindled down to a 1.16-second deficit and she finished sixth. It was the first time Vonn missed the podium in a World Cup super combined that she finished since March of 2008, a string that includes six top-three results and three wins.

Vonn, the winner of this year's only previous World Cup super combined, returned to her regular World Cup training and competition schedule in this week's downhill training runs after pulling out of the World Championships following her silver medal performance in the downhill. She missed the nations team even, the giant slalom and the slalom as she headed to a wellness hotel to continue recovering from a concussion she sustained Feb. 2. She told reporters Friday that she felt fully recovered from the head injury that had her feeling "cloudy" two weeks ago.

Teammate Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley was close behind in eighth place after standing fifth in the super G. Leanne Smith earned her ninth scoring result of the season in 29th.

Marie-Michele Gagnon was the only Canadian to finish, pulling in a 19th-place result to jump way up from standing 36th after

the super G leg.