

U.S. men out of contention in super combined

By U.S. Ski Racing

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany – In the end Aksel Lund Svindal made the Italians – silver medal winner Christof Innerhofer and bronze medalist Peter Fill – look like pretenders, claiming the gold medal of the World Championship super combined by an outstanding 1.01 seconds. But the Italians weren't complaining.

It was the second straight combined gold in World Championship competition for Svindal, having also claimed the top prize in 2009, but it was his first medal of these championships in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany and it was well earned.

The Italians were joyful. Fill tossed his ski poles high in air as he recognized his time and Innerhofer held his slalom skis aloft, celebrating his third medal of these championships, an unlikely circumstance from a man with one World Cup win to his credit and the two Italians quickly surrounded Svindal in the finish, anxious to pose for photographers.

The Americans had a rough go. Tim Jitloff of Reno had made a costly mistake in the downhill and pushed gamely from the second start of the slalom to make up a nine second deficit with predictable results. He put up the third fastest slalom run on the day, but wound up tied for 14th. Ted Ligety had a decent downhill (11th) and was definitely full-out attack in the slalom, but exited about half way down the slalom. And Bode Miller showed he can exit a race course with as much flamboyance as anyone, flying past the second gate on the hill horizontal to the ground, his skis above his head.

With the downhill leg of the race run an hour earlier than the

men's downhill on Saturday – going off at 10am versus 11 – and with a clear night allowing radiant cooling, the Kandahar course was icy and fast. It was a touch smoother than it had been for earlier training runs, but those ragged runs had already had their effect on the combined field. Many skiers had opted out, including Ivica Kostelic, already the World Cup combined champ with three wins in three events. The start list for the combined numbered 41 and that dropped to 34 after the downhill.

The slalom leg, across town, started at 2pm and long shadows crossed sections, but by no stretch, all of the steep Gudiberg hill. By the final racers the slalom hill did show rutting, but it held up well.