

Vonn, Mancuso share podium in super G

By Ski Racing News Service

ARE, Sweden – It couldn't have been any closer on the super G track today. German overall leader Maria Riesch secured her sixth World Cup victory of the season just one-hundredth of a second ahead of friend and chief rival in the overall standings, Lindsey Vonn of Vail. Riesch now leads by 196 points (1,516 to 1,320).

Fellow American Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley, the recently crowned super G world championship silver medalist, was 0.79 seconds back in third place for her third World Cup podium of the season.

"It's a lucky win but it's good to have luck on your side from time to time. It has not always been the case," Riesch, who finished second to Vonn in the overall standings the past two seasons, told Reuters. "I have great hopes now (for the World Cup), especially after this weekend in which I managed to beat Lindsey twice. I think I turned the odds on my side and if I cannot win more points, the goal is now not to lose any."

It was Riesch's first super G win in since 2008.

The World Cup's top duo had all the attention this weekend as the World Cup tour resumed following a two week "break" for the 2011 World Championships in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Riesch, a double bronze medalist at her home championships, got things going again on Friday with the win in the super combined thanks to a great showing in the afternoon slalom leg after Vonn had lead in the morning's super G portion before finishing sixth. Yesterday it was Vonn, with a brand new downhill Worlds silver medal in her pocket, on top of the downhill podium and Riesch in third.

Today, the two friends literally could not have been any tighter as the sunny skies that had graced the area all week were blanketed with overcast conditions as Riesch crossed the finish line in one minute, 13.24 seconds, a half a hair a head of Vonn. All Vonn could do was throw her head back in disbelief. The pair has finished 1-2 five times this season.

“I thought I skied a good race, unfortunately I lost by one hundredth of a second, which is a snap of your finger. That’s life,” said Vonn, who was on the right side of the hundredths in late January when she won a super G over Riesch by five hundredths. “It’s definitely frustrating, especially at this time of the year, with the overall World Cup so tight. One hundredth is twenty points. It would have been great if we could have just tied.”

Vonn, who maintains a 131-point lead over Riesch in the super G standings with three wins and two second-place finishes this season, came down the freshened up track following a TV break in the No. 16 bib to take the lead from Austrian Nicole Hosp (fourth today) by 0.80 seconds. Three racers later, Riesch had lost most of a 0.15-second advantage at the last split timer, but flicked her wrist across the finish line beam just in time to beat Vonn and claim her 14th podium of the season over all five disciplines.

Another three racers later, Mancuso was the last to come close, but didn’t quite have enough to unseat the top duo as she continues to have her best season in three years. Mancuso, Vonn and Riesch have shared three World Cup podiums this season. Mancuso, a four-time World Cup winner, has gone four years without a victory.

Nine races remain on this season’s women’s World Cup schedule, four of those being speed races which Vonn has relied on this season as she has struggled in giant slalom and slalom races.

Led by their top guns on the podium, the U.S. squad had

another strong day as Leanne Smith recorded the second-best result of her World Cup career in 12th and and Laurene Ross just made the points in 29th. Stacey Cook, fifth in yesterday's downhill, finished 33rd.

Britt Janyk led the Canadians in 25th ahead of teammate Marie-Michele Gagnon in 36th.

It was a heartbreaking weekend for local hero Anja Paerson. After leading both downhill training runs on her home snow, the fourth all time winningest woman ski racer just missed the podium in fourth in the super combined and failed to finish the downhill. She was 15 seconds into today's race when she intentionally skied off course, clicked out of her skis and dropped to the ground clutching her right knee. The severity of the injury is not yet known. She was the only competitor not to finish today.