

Vonn wins World Cup downhill; Mammoth's Cook takes 5th

By Ski Racing News Service

ARE, Sweden – Lindsey Vonn of Vail looked like her World Cup downhill-winning self again today, taking her seventh victory of the season following three weeks of dealing with the symptoms of a concussion.

Vonn, who won a world championship silver medal in the downhill two weeks ago, kept a tight line down the 2731-meter Olympia course in tough, flat lit conditions to finish in one minute, 40.93 seconds, 0.13 seconds ahead of Slovenian Tina Maze in second.

“Today was tough, it was pretty dark and you had to be extremely clean to be fast – that’s a difficult combination,” said Vonn.

Overall leader and yesterday’s super combined winner, German Maria Riesch was 0.21 seconds back in third place to carefully stay on top of the standings by 176 points with 1416 points to Vonn’s 1240.

Vonn, the reigning Olympic champion in the discipline, maintains the downhill lead with 520 points over Riesch’s 417. The duo have combined to win the past 15 World Cup downhills. Three World Cup downhills remain on this season’s women’s calendar as Vonn battles from behind for her fourth consecutive overall title.

Vonn’s concussion, suffered in a training run fall on Feb. 2, threw her normal training and competition schedule out the window leading into the Garmisch-Partenkirchen World Championships. In the weeks that followed, Vonn was evaluated daily by doctors as her participation on the slopes was hit

and miss depending on test results. After a sluggish, seventh-place performance in the opening super G, Vonn pulled out of the super combine between runs to continue resting. Days later she finished second in the downhill, then left the championships with the giant slalom and slalom still on the table, heading to a wellness hotel to prepare for the remainder of the World Cup season.

Today's victory takes 26-year-old Vonn's World Cup career total to an even 40, putting her fifth in the all time rankings, just one win behind still active Swede Anja Paerson (DNF today). It was her third win in Are.

Riesch, a double bronze medalist at her home championships in Garmisch, stepped up to her 13th World Cup podium of the season. She has had at least one top-three finish in all five disciplines.

Behind Vonn's victory, the U.S. women had a tremendous day.

Stacey Cook finished fifth after putting down an impressive run (1:41.99) in the No. 3 bib, taking the early lead and holding through the next eight racers until the top-ranked women were ushered in by Maze. It was Cook's second-best World Cup result ever since finishing fourth at Lake Louise in 2006. Cook gave credit for her best result in four years to some western U.S. powder skiing.

"Last week I got to go home and free ski some powder in Mammoth, so I came back with just a really good feeling and really loving skiing," said Cook, who had never been on the track before. "I just had a really positive attitude and tried to keep that freeskiing mentality that I had going in Mammoth here in Sweden."

Recently minted world championship super G silver medalist Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley never quite found the right line and finished 11th, 1.51 seconds off the winning time. Leanne Smith and Laurenne Ross also found the points in 18, and 25th,

respectively.

Today's race was marred by the horrific crash of Swiss racer Nadja Kamer. High on the course, Kamer took a turn too wide and collided with the safety netting on the left side of the course, sending her somersaulting across the course, finally coming to rest in the right side fences. She was taken down in a ski patrol toboggan. The race was delayed for about 15 minutes. According to early reports, Kamer escaped with only bruising on her left wrist and hand and will be fitted with a cast.