

Holmes places, Randall wins 16th ski tourney

U.S. Ski Team

Cross country World Cup sprint powerhouse Kikkan Randall (Anchorage) added another U.S. Championship to her belt Sunday winning the U.S. SuperTour Finals 30k classic technique race in Sun Valley. It marks Randall's 16th U.S. Championship.

A hard, fast track coupled with rays of sun shining down on the course made for a perfect day to end the 2011 U.S. Cross Country Championship series. Under bluebird skies, Randall once again proved why she is one of the best topping a packed field of women competitors.

"We lucked out today. The boys had really tough conditions yesterday," explained Randall. "We're all pretty psyched to wake up this morning and see clear blue skies and get out on the trails and find really nice hard and fast tracks. The wax stayed pretty consistent."

Randall looked strong from start, submerging herself in the lead breakaway group. In that group was the University of Utah's Maria Graefnings, junior phenom CXC Team's Jessie Diggins (Afton, MN), hometown favorite Morgan Arritola (Fairfield, ID), APU's Sadie Bjornsen (Winthrop, WA) and Holly Brooks (Anchorage).

"I was really just trying to focus on my own rhythm and skiing relaxed," said Randall. "I knew with the altitude the fatigue would set in before you knew it."

With the lead group stacked with talent, the tempo was fierce forcing the skiers to slowly drop off the back leaving Randall and Graefnings to dual it out. Graefnings, who has been dominant on the NCAA circuit this season ending it with

winning the NCAA 5k freestyle technique title, stayed close, but did not have enough to best Randall. Finishing with a time of 1:31:27.4, just 9.7 seconds ahead of Graefnings, Randall clinched the U.S. Championship crown and the \$1,200 purse.

“Maria Graefnings was skiing with me, I was kind of hoping she’d take the lead on a couple sections but she was content to follow,” explained Randall of the race. “I just kept skiing my own race and then I started to feel cramps coming on and that concerned me a little bit. But I was able to kind of push through it.”

Joining Randall on the podium was Sweden native Graefnings in second and Diggins in third. Arritola crossed the line in fourth to a cheering crowd, while U.S. SuperTour leader Brooks closed out the day in fifth.

Brooks was crowned U.S. Grand Champion, a title that is awarded to the woman with the most cumulative points in the five race U.S. Championship series.

“It’s really fun to come back after being on the World Cup all year and see all the domestic racers and have some fun here in Sun Valley,” said Randall.

The U.S. SuperTour Finals resume Tuesday with the men’s and women’s prologue race and continue through next Saturday, April 2.

OFFICIAL RESULTS

U.S. SuperTour Finals/U.S. Cross Country Championships

Sun Valley, ID – March 27, 2011

30k Classic Technique

1. Kikkan Randall, Anchorage (APUNSC/U.S. Ski Team), 1:31:27.4
2. Maria Graefnings, Sweden (University of Utah), +9.7

3. Jessie Diggins, Afton, MN (CXC Team), +28.1
4. Morgan Arritola, Fairfield, ID (SVSEF/U.S. Ski Team), +42.7
5. Holly Brooks, Anchorage (APUNSC), +2:10.2
6. Kate Fitzgerald, Palmer, AK (APUNSC), +2:57.8
7. Sadie Bjornsen, Winthrop, WA (APUNSC), +3:42.7
8. Chelsea Holmes, Truckee, CA (Sugar Bowl Academy), +4:54.0
9. Nicole Deyong, Ketchum, ID (SVSEF), +5:43.3
10. Becca Rorabaugh, Fairbanks, AK (APUNSC), +6:39.0