

Mancuso on top of podium in World Cup downhill

By Ski Racing Magazine

LENZERHEIDE, Switzerland – It had been a long four years since Squaw Valley's Julia Mancuso had topped a World Cup podium. She was back with vengeance today as women's competition at the 2011 World Cup Finals kicked off with the downhill and plenty of excitement in Lenzerheide, Switzerland.

Mancuso's impressive win, the fifth of her career, left no doubters as she screamed down the course 0.81 seconds faster than second-place finisher, Swiss Lara Gut. Downhill world champion Austrian Elizabeth Goergl finished third, 1.15 seconds back. Mancuso's last win came in March 2007 with a downhill victory in Tarvisio, Italy.

"It's the first time in four years, it's great to be back winning," said Mancuso. "I watched Lara ski so I knew I had to ski really fast because she nailed it. That's all it was, all or nothing this time, last downhill of the season so it feels good."

Vail's Lindsey Vonn claimed her fourth consecutive downhill globe mathematically two weeks ago in Tarvisio but was finally able to lay a big kiss on her trophy today after finishing fourth. Perhaps the biggest news of the day also followed Vonn as she took back the overall lead from German Maria Riesch (17th today) for the first time since late December. Today's results saw a 50-point swing in the overall standings as Vonn went from 23 points behind to 27 points ahead of her friend Riesch with three races (SG, GS, SL) ahead before the season ends this weekend.

"It was tough conditions out there today with really soft snow and flat light," said Vonn. "It was really easy to make

mistakes and unfortunately I made one on the top of the course in a pretty bad place and lost a lot of speed but I was able to ski the bottom well. Fourth place is still a great result, I'm really happy for Julia for winning, she skied amazingly well."

The win was enough to move Mancuso into third in the season-long downhill standings behind Vonn and Riesch in second.

Mancuso, who had the second fastest time in yesterday's training run, said the turny course fit her style.

"Leaving the start gate I knew I had to push really hard and be fast and I wanted to win," said Mancuso, the penultimate racer down the course. "I knew it would be a good opportunity here for me and those don't come around all the time so I took advantage of it and I'm just really happy.

"I've been working through injuries and working hard for the past four years and I'm finally back on the podium, it feels great," said Mancuso who was also back in the top three of any discipline standings for the first time since 2007. "I switched to Voelkl skis [this season] and everything has been working really well for me so it just gives me a lot of confidence that next year is going to be even better."