

Vonn back in action, U.S. women disappoint

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta -- U.S. Ski Team athlete Julia Ford (Plymouth, N.H.) shed a little light on a tough day for the U.S. women's speed team, as she finished a career-best 21st in the first of two Audi FIS Alpine World Cup downhill in Lake Louise.

Friday also marked the return of Olympic gold medalist Lindsey Vonn (Vail), who finished a conservative 40th in her first World Cup start since a season-ending injury last February. German Maria Hoefl-Riesch took home the victory in a race delayed by an hour due to fog.

Ford's finish was a high-mark on a mostly disappointing day for the U.S. women's speed team. Teammate Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) finished 26th, while the rest of the team finished outside the points.

Brutal cold temperatures down to minus 22 degrees added an extra challenge as the snow was slower and the athletes risked frostbite with any exposed skin.

"It just was the first race. It's tough to come to Lake Louise having not raced not only this season but since last February. So it was a little tough with the nerves," Vonn said. "Now that I have that first race over, I think tomorrow I definitely can risk more and be more confident."