

Snowboarders down to wire to qualify for Sochi

By USSA

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN -- Rookie Taylor Gold (Steamboat Springs, Colo.) punched a ticket to Sochi Friday with his third-place finish at the fourth halfpipe qualifier at the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix.

Defending Olympic Champion Shaun White, who rides for Northstar, took the victory, putting him one podium away from clinching a spot on the U.S. Olympic team for halfpipe snowboarding.

Kelly Clark (West Dover, Vt.) took her second halfpipe victory of the day with Chloe Kim (La Palma) second and Hannah Teter (South Lake Tahoe) third, an identical podium to the third qualifier staged earlier in the day Friday.

The fifth qualifier on Sunday will be the last chance for the halfpipe riders to make their move to score a spot on the Olympic team.

Veteran rider Scotty Lago (Seabrook, N.H.) landed second, which also puts him in a valuable position going into the final qualifier.

After Friday's qualifier only Lago, White, Gret Bretz (Mammoth Lakes) and Danny Davis (Truckee) can mathematically secure a top-three spot in the qualification standings.

Clark clinched her Olympic team spot at the Copper Grand Prix in December, while 13-year-old Kim is not Olympic eligible.

All other U.S. women are currently capable of mathematically securing a top-three spot in the qualification standings.