

Weather hampers women's downhill in Italy

By USSA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy 0- A shortened Cortina downhill became more of a sprint course on Friday, with first-starting Laurene Ross (Bend, Ore.) leading the United States.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was eighth and Lindsey Vonn (Vail) 10, having to wait again for record win number 62 in the Audi FIS Ski World Cup.

Host Italy had its day with Elena Fanchini taking the win by 0.15 over Canada's Larisa Yirkiw. Viktoria Rebensberg of Germany was third.

Ross took the early lead out of the top starting position on a course that was shortened by nearly 20 seconds from Thursday's lone training run due to weather. The start was in the fog with light snow falling during the race. Ross was just three-hundredths off the podium. Three of the top four started in the first five as conditions deteriorated through the running order.

"I was surprised at how foggy it was – all the way to Daytona, the big left footed turn," said Vonn. "I charged but I had a hard time seeing everything. And it was snowing so that slowed it down, especially on the flats. Sometimes it happens that way when the weather changes – some people have sunshine, some have fog. It's not always fair but it's an outdoor sport. Tomorrow's another day I'm looking forward to it."

Ross drew lucky number one and had somewhat better course conditions, but had to run on trust and without the benefit of a course report.

“It was definitely a sprint – any tiny errors added up to a big amount of time,” she said. “I feel happy with my result. I was pretty lucky to draw bib one although going first it’s always tough because you don’t get a course report. You have to test it out. From that new tart I didn’t know how the speed would be or how I would have to adjust my line. You just have to trust.”

Heavy fog during inspection forced organizers to move the start down to the lower super G start. “It took out some of the fun aspects of the Cortina downhill,” added Ross. “But it was good we actually got to race.”

More snow is forecast for Friday night and through Saturday, putting the weekend schedule in jeopardy.