

4 U.S. men in top 15 in downhill

By USSA

KVITFJELL, Norway – In the penultimate Audi FIS Ski World Cup downhill of the season, the men were thirsty for results – looking to tighten the race for the overall downhill globe. Hannes Reichelt of Austria had a nearly perfect run on the Kvitfjell track and took the win, while the Americans stacked four racers in the top 15. Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) was the top American downhiller of the day, finishing in sixth place.

The conditions were strange in Kvitfjell, with fog and high winds rolling through the sunny morning in Norway causing the start to be lowered to the super G start. It's a low-altitude resort – the base is about 600 feet above sea level – and the snow warmed up quickly. The track, slick and fast at the top of the course, quickly degraded as the racers made their way down the hill. But even with the varying conditions and lowered start, racers were still hitting 90 mph at the bottom of the course.

Reichelt nailed the line on the Kvitfjell track and came through the finish 0.30 seconds ahead of the pack. Reichelt was looking for the win ahead of Kjetil Jansrud, attempting to steal the downhill globe from the famed Norwegian downhiller. So far so good for Reichelt, as Jansrud couldn't pull it off at Kvitfjell – a track he grew up skiing on – finishing seventh. Canadian Manuel Osborne-Paradis surprised the crowd and took second place—his only podium and top-10 result since Lake Louise at the beginning of the season. Werner Heel of Italy was third, after holding the lead for 20 races.

Not fazed by the snow, Ganong threw down a blazing fast run –

making up time at the bottom and finishing in sixth place, even after hurting his knee in the training run.

“Yesterday in the training run I was eighth, but in the middle section, I caught an edge and hyperextended my right knee,” said Ganong after the run. “It was really, really sore last night. I woke up this morning and was really sore and was a little worried. But I got some treatment and got some ibuprofen and taping. It still hurt today, but I was able to ski through it.”

As his teammates have been saying for the last couple of weeks, Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) has figured something out in his skiing. With a fast top that would have placed him in the top five, he lost a little on the bottom and finished in 12.

“Personally, I wish [the season] would keep going!” said Sullivan. “I’m just heating up. I’ve had some good results the past three weeks. For some reason this year, I don’t want it to end.”

With a similarly fast top section, Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) also had a solid run, finishing in a three-way tie with Sullivan and Austrian Vincent Kreichmayr. Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) was 15, just a tenth behind Sullivan and Weibrecht – his best result in a World Cup downhill this season.

Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) was the favored American skier after winning Friday’s training run, but the lowered start did not favor the classic downhiller. Nyman got caught up in the soft snow at the bottom to finish in 25. Wiley Maple (Aspen) finished just out of the points in 31 and Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) was 50.