

Anderson dominates on New Zealand slopes

By USSA

QUEENTOWN, New Zealand – The men's snowboard slopestyle final of the Audi quattro Winter Games NZ 2015 saw dramatic changes of fortune in a very tight contest that wasn't decided until the last trick. Chris Corning (Arvada, Colo.) made the very last qualifying spot for the FIS Snowboard World Cup, and shocked the crowd to win the finals at Cardrona Alpine Resort. Jamie Anderson (Meyers) took the win for the women, while Hailey Langland (San Clemente) stepped on the podium in third.

This was only Corning's third FIS World Cup. The 15-year-old nailed the top position in the first heat, which saw the highest-placed qualifiers well down the list. From then, everyone was playing catch-up, laying down impressive tricks under a beautiful blue sky. But Corning ramped up the ante on his last run and reclaimed the top spot from Ciccarelli, scoring an 87.55 with a backside Miller flip, backside 270 to boardslide, a front 180 on, switch front bluntside 270 out, a switch backside bluntside 450 mute out, a frontside 10 mute, a backside 12, backside grab and a cab 12 tail.

Garcia Knight from New Zealand came up with his best run of the day, taking third with only two riders to go. Canada's Max Eberhardt's last run didn't provide the fireworks he needed, leaving only Japanese favourite Yuki Kadono to contest the leaders. He failed to fire in the first two heats, but he stunned the crowds with a spectacular last run, pulling off the highest-scoring trick of the day on the final kicker – a triple 1440 mute gaining him a 9.75 out of 10, the only triple of the day. Kadono ended up a close second behind the Corning, scoring a 85.81.

Corning put part of his win down to spending time at Cardrona before the event, and landing a new move for the first time in competition. "I've been here a while and ridden the course a bit," he said. "It gave me the chance to learn some new tricks like that cab 12 I put down in my run, so it's awesome. I'm super stoked. It was super fun and I guess I was riding well today and it all worked out."

In the women's event, Anderson asserted her dominance from her first run. Second placed qualifier, Canadian Laurie Blouin, scooped the silver medal on her second run although she was driven hard by Langland who finished in the bronze medal position. Langland had started as fifth-placed qualifier, but a very strong first run put her in second behind Anderson, and an even better last run kept her in third in just her first FIS World Cup.

"I'm really stoked to even be out here, with this beautiful weather and the great jumps," Langland said. "I just had a ton of fun which is all that matters and I'm just happy I made it from top to bottom. The course is probably the best course I've ever ridden. I've never liked jumps this much."

With Anderson being more than 10 points ahead of the field, there was no pressure to perform on her last run, but she went all out on her victory lap landing a new trick in competition for the first time and improving her score to 87.88.

"Doing my backside rodeo 5 was also awesome. The course is really fun and even better than during qualifiers since we got to go earlier in the day," said Anderson. "I'm stoked to win and to be back visiting New Zealand, which is one of my favorite countries."