

Ganong on podium in Alberta downhill

By USSA

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta – After a solid three days of training, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) threw down a fast run on Saturday to grab third place at the Lake Louise downhill.

The downhill track at Lake Louise was yet again the creator of a comeback fairytale as Aksel Lund Svindal of Norway claimed victory by the narrowest possible margin, just 0.01 seconds, in his first World Cup speed race since an Achilles injury kept him off tour all of last season. He edged out Italian Peter Fill, who held the lead from his bib 4 start all the way until Svindal came down 16 skiers later.

In the final spot on stage, Ganong rounded out the podium at an unlikely venue for the 27 year old. He was the first U.S. Ski Team athlete on course, and his time held up for third place despite numerous attacks from the top seven skiers.

“I’ve really struggled here at Lake Louise in the past. I really didn’t do well here when I was at the NorAm level, kind of figuring it out. This year the snow is just so perfect that I was able to push hard and ski like I want to ski and be competitive. So I’m really happy with how it worked out,” said Ganong, whose best finish at Lake Louise prior to Saturday was a 10th place. “On a day like today it’s the best day to be a racer – it’s perfect conditions, perfect weather, sunny. It’s a good start to the winter.”

Pre-race favorite Kjetil Jansrud was going for broke on the hill, and his aggressive movements and direct line cost him the tenths that Svindal managed to hold. Jansrud ultimately finished ninth, 0.77 seconds off his teammate, after a rough and ragged run.

“On race day people get really over-amped sometimes. You saw that today, like Jansrud had some mistakes and some of the other favorites had mistakes because they were pushing really hard,” remarked Ganong. “For me it’s all about staying relaxed and skiing within myself and having fun and trusting in my ability.”

Ganong holds onto the American Downhillers’ denim vest this week after Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah) finished tied for 16th with Patrick Kueng and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.), who had to take a rerun after being flagged off course, finished tied for 24 with Bostjan Kline. Vermont native Drew Duffy (Warren, Vt.) made his World Cup debut but lost his outside ski on the bumpy terrain. He slid toward the fences but was able to get up and ski down without injury. Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) finished 38, Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) was 41 and Wiley Maple (Aspen, Colo.) was 49.

“Hopefully next week my teammates are knocking at the door with me. I’d be proud to hand (the vest) off to the next guy or hold onto it for another week,” said Ganong.