

Mancuso not ready to retire

By Associated Press

Julia Mancuso of Squaw Valley went in for a simple hip surgery – if there is such a thing – and 5 1/2 hours later had a hip that was completely overhauled.

And one that now will allow the four-time Olympic medalist to race again, albeit not this season, but certainly pain free next year and almost as good as new by the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea.

Then, and only then, will she consider walking away – on her terms.

“I would never stop my career when I feel like it is being kicked when you’re down,” the 31-year-old said as her teammates trained at the U.S. Ski Team Speed Center in Copper Mountain. “It’s like, ‘OK, now that you’re injured, OK, just retire.’ Like, I would never do that. I want to be giving my best chance I can.”

Mancuso tried everything to get her right hip ready for this season, from injections to having a paralabral cyst removed in April. She went to Chile over the summer to test the hip, only to have the pain return.

Surgery was the only real option. There went her season.

The procedure was more complex than her surgeon expected. Fixed some cartilage damage. Cleaned up some bone spurs. Put more anchors in her labrum because there was a slight tear.

“I just had a lot of stuff repaired,” said Mancuso, who also had surgery on her hip in 2006.

She will be on crutches for eight weeks as she goes through rehab in nearby Vail and won’t return to the snow until

perhaps the spring. Even then, doctors warned her that her hip probably will be about 90 percent of what it was.

“For me, 90 percent feels like a lot,” she said.

If she had to do things over again, Mancuso might have called it a career after winning a bronze medal in the super-combined at the 2014 Sochi Games.

“Then I could go out on top,” she said, laughing. “See ya later.”

Maybe that could happen in South Korea? After all, she has won at least one medal in her past four Olympic appearances, including gold in the giant slalom at the 2006 Winter Games.

“I’m really excited about the next Olympics and really excited about this adventure, having surgery and being able to work and train hard and reach my physical goals and be able to go out and compete,” she said.

Because lately that pain from her hip hasn’t allowed her to really be at her best. She can trace the trouble with her hip back to a wipeout in France when she was a teenager. She did the splits that day, possibly throwing her hip out of alignment.

“A nagging thing for a long time,” she said. “Last summer, I couldn’t hike and do things my friends can do. Just more motivation to take it easy and go slow.”