

Tahoe woman striving for Olympic skicross team



Whitney Gardner at a World Cup event earlier this year.
Photo/Clément Bucco-Lechat

By Scott Powers, Team USA

Whitney Gardner realized quickly she was overmatched when she first competed in the Audi FIS Ski Cross World Cup.

The competition was stronger and more experienced. The jumps intimidated her. The features scared her. The courses were too challenging. She was constantly falling. She just wasn't meeting her own expectations.

Ever since she transitioned into skicross from alpine skiing, Gardner had strove to someday compete on the World Cup tour. But now that she was there, she had to admit she wasn't ready. That was difficult.

"It was hard because it was my dream," said Gardner, who grew up in a family of skiers in South Lake Tahoe. "I never thought I wouldn't, but it was so distant. It was surreal I was able to compete. I didn't know if I would have the opportunity again, so I took it."

The 21-year-old Gardner is concentrating on her upcoming World Cup season, but somewhere always in her mind is reaching the Olympic Winter Games. Skicross has been contested at the past two Winter Games, but the United States has yet to qualify a women's competitor.

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