

Squaw's Ganong going after downhill title

By Megan Harrod, USSA

Growing up minutes from Squaw Valley, Travis Ganong found himself in the Mighty Mites peewee program as a tyke. He devoured the opportunity.

"Cliffs, chutes, pillow-lines, arcin' turns down the Dog Leg! I couldn't get enough," he recalls.

With his sisters showing the way, he got into the race program. He pointed to his sister Megan's time on the U.S. Ski Team and said he wanted to follow her lead.

The U.S. men's alpine team has accomplished almost every major feat on the Audi FIS Ski World Cup – Olympic gold, World Championship gold, slalom and giant slalom titles, Hahnenkamm gold.

That is, except for winning the coveted downhill title. Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah), Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) and the rest of the American downhillers hope to change that in 2017.

At the end of the 2016 season, Nyman was ranked sixth, a rank that matched his previous career best from 2015. However, he also did something no other American downhiller had done before – not Tommy Moe, nor AJ Kitt, nor Truckee's own Daron Rahlves, nor even Bode Miller (Franconia, N.H.).

Nyman grabbed four podiums in four consecutive World Cup races: Jeongseon (third), Chamonix (second), Kvitfjell (third) and St. Moritz (second). Not only does that streak bode well for Nyman at the 2017 World Championships in St. Moritz, but that kind of consistency also suggests good things for his quest to hoist the crystal globe.

“Obviously, to finish the season in the U.S. will be special, but with the way our team is currently performing ... I think there’s going to be a lot to celebrate at the end of the year. For me, my big goal is that downhill title,” said Nyman. “I believe I can do it, and if I’m the first American male to ever win the downhill title, that would be a storybook ending in Aspen.”

With the confirmation of World Cup Finals in Aspen, the Americans have the chance to win crystal globes on home turf.

Let’s take this one step further: Nyman and Ganong have the chance – for the first time ever – to win an American Downhiller title.

To do that, though, they’ll have to fend off the dynamic duo of Norwegian skiers Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud – along with the young Aleksander Aamodt Kilde – ranked second, fourth and 12th, respectively, in the downhill standings in 2016.

Ganong was ranked 11th last season. The Italians – Peter Fill is the reigning downhill champion – and the French will also be in the hunt, along with Nyman’s podium ping-pong comrade, Switzerland’s Beat Feuz.