

# Incline ski racer makes impression in World Cup opener

By USSA

KITTILÄ, Finland – Mikaela Shiffrin (Eagle-Vail, Colo.) overcame Audi FIS Ski World Cup slalom opener nerves, skiing two clean and solid runs en route to her first World Cup victory of the 2017 season. Switzerland's Wendy Holdener grabbed second, 0.67 seconds out, while Slovakia's Petra Vlhova rounded out the podium in third, 0.75 seconds behind Shiffrin.

It was a beautiful, crisp day up in Lapland, with a picturesque sunrise and perfect rock-hard conditions on the race track. Starting lucky No. 7, Shiffrin laid down a smoking first run, finishing 0.72 ahead of 2016 World Cup slalom title holder Frida Hansdotter and Switzerland's Wendy Holdener. The battle between Shiffrin and Hansdotter ended when Hansdotter straddled on the pitch second run and skied out. Shiffrin knifed the bulletproof pitch and maintained her lead all the way to the finish, earning herself another prize Lapland reindeer and a buddy for her 2013 prize reindeer Rudolph. His name? Sven.

The final American starting in Saturday's slalom and a relative newcomer to the World Cup circuit, Lila Lapanja (Incline Village), had solid top splits that would have had her well into qualification for a second run but struggled moving forward coming on to the pitch, causing her to get low and behind. She'll walk away knowing that she has the speed to hang with the top 15.