

Miller could race in January, U.S. ski coach says

By Associated Press

If Bode Miller wants to return to ski racing this season as he approaches the age of 40, he's going to have to show U.S. Ski Team head coach Sasha Rearick that he's still got the necessary speed.

"There's always a chance with Bode – always. But at this point right now we're not expecting a miracle return real quick," Rearick told the *Associated Press* on Friday.

Still, Rearick would not rule out a return for Miller this season, saying the six-time Olympic medalist could "possibly" race in January.

Miller has won 33 World Cup races but he has never won the famed Hahnenkamm downhill in Kitzbuehel, Austria, which is scheduled for Jan. 21.

While he has not raced since severing his right hamstring tendon in February 2015, Miller might be tempted to return in time for Kitzbuehel. That could enable him to qualify for the world championships in St. Moritz, Switzerland, in February.

The U.S. team can start only four skiers in each race at the worlds.

"He's going to have to qualify for world championships," Rearick said. "He would have to show me he's ready to play or qualify straight up by criteria."

The 39-year-old Miller did not show much speed during training at Copper Mountain in Colorado last month – trailing several teammates.

“He was not in the mix in those four-five guys, and we were ahead of the Norwegians there,” Rearick said.

The training in Copper was on a 30-second track of about 800 meters (yards), just a fraction of the distance of a full World Cup downhill or super-G.

“So you can’t go off Copper. You got to show me what’s going on right now,” Rearick said.

Miller has not had any race training since Copper, according to Rearick, but the coach said Miller will come to Europe to train early next month and then be evaluated.

At the 2015 World Championships in Beaver Creek, Colo., Miller was leading the super-G after several intervals despite not having raced all season. Then he crashed.

“That was the perfect end to this career – green light, green light, green light and then crash,” Norwegian great Kjetil Andre Aamodt said, referring to Miller’s unpredictability.

If Miller does return, he’s planning to compete on skis from New York-based brand Bomber, which he helped develop. He has asked a court to void his agreement with previous supplier Head.

Miller ended his nearly 10-year partnership with Head in 2015 and signed an agreement not to wear a different ski brand in World Cup or world championship races for the following two years.

“It’s not been decided as far as we know and we don’t know when the court will decide it,” Head racing director Rainer Salzgeber said. “Anyhow, it’s better when he doesn’t ski. That’s clear. It would be nice for the crowd. But his level of skiing in Copper was not there where we want to see Bode.”

Meanwhile, Salzgeber suggested that Lindsey Vonn – who is still supplied by Head – could return from a broken arm in

Cortina d'Ampezzo in late January.

"She will start skiing hopefully beginning of January," Salzgeber said. "Cortina should be OK."