

Truckee's Bennett 10th in alpine combined

By USSA

WENGEN, Switzerland – Friday's Audi FIS Ski World Cup alpine combined produced a surprise podium, and another top 10 World Cup result for Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley).

With upward of 6 inches of new snow overnight, officials swapped the downhill and slalom events, running the slalom first and the downhill – which was moved to a lower start position – to later in the afternoon.

“Usually downhill (first) I'm more comfortable with. And then you can do the downhill and see where you stand and then go into the slalom,” said Bennett, who finished 10th in the morning slalom. “But with the slalom first, you definitely have to perform to get a better position for the downhill. It's a little bit more pressure to perform in slalom.”

And Friday proved to be more about luck than position as Switzerland's Niels Hintermann came out of the 51st start position to win his career-first World Cup event in only his 12th start on the World Cup circuit. And the surprises didn't stop with Hintermann. France's Maxence Muzaton scored a career-first World Cup podium in second, as did Austria's Frederic Berthold, who finished third. In fact, all three had never posted a top 10 World Cup result in their young careers. Of the three, Muzaton had the previous highest placing World Cup result – 11th in the downhill at Kitzbuehel in 2015.

How did all this craziness unfold? It started with the new snow overnight and a rock-solid slalom track, followed by more snow.

“It snowed about 20cm this morning, so I went to go do some

warm up runs – I haven't skied slalom in a while – so there was a lot of soft snow so you couldn't really get a good feel," said Bennett, who matched his bib in the slalom, finishing 18th. "Then I got into slalom there in the first three gates and I was like 'oh, OK, this is World Cup slalom, wake up.'"

Meanwhile, Hintermann was 23rd in the slalom and started eighth in the downhill. After moving atop the leaderboard, snow started falling again, which significantly slowed the track for the remaining starters, including Bennett.

"It was definitely challenging conditions," Bennet said of his downhill run as heavy snow fell. "It started snowing pretty hard after about 10 guys and it definitely made the race interesting."