

Squaw's Bennett takes 11th in slalom

By USSA

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland – Standing 6-feet-7-inches tall, Bryce Bennett (Squaw Valley) is built more like a power forward than a power slalom skier. But competing in his first World Championships, Bennett hammered through a challenging slalom course to an 11th-place finish in Monday's alpine combined to lead the U.S. at the 2017 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships.

Switzerland's Luca Aerni surprised the best skiers in the world, winning his first major event in front of the roaring home country crowd. Prior to Monday's win, Aerni's best results were a couple Swiss national titles (slalom 2015, alpine combined 2012) and a handful of top 10 World Cup finishes. Austria's Marcel Hirscher, currently the best ski racer in the world, took the silver, followed by Aerni's Swiss teammate Mauro Caviezel taking the bronze.

Bennett, who towers over the slalom gates, finished 18th in the morning downhill, and then put down a solid slalom run to lead four Americans into the top 25, including Brennan Rubie (Salt Lake City) in 15th, Ryan Cochran-Siegle (Starksboro, Vt.) in 19th and Jared Goldberg (Holladay, Utah) on 21st.

"In slalom, I don't know what it's like to be short, so I just go out and do what I do best ... make it work," said Bennett, who also commented on the slalom course conditions. "The course workers are doing a pretty good job. They injected last night, which was a questionable call. It didn't really sink in, so it broke through pretty quick. But for the most part it's alright, doable."

The injected portions of the slalom course caught a number of racers off-guard as the top finishers from the morning

downhill ran into trouble on the first break-over on the slalom track. Aerni, who finished 30th in the downhill and ran first in the slalom, posted the time to beat on a clean track and then watch in disbelief as 29 more racers failed to knock him off the top step of the podium.