

Truckee's Engel matches career best in slalom

By U.S. Ski & Snowboard

Mark Engel of Truckee matched a career-best FIS Ski World Cup slalom result in 24th on a soft, grooved and punchy course under the lights in the capital of Croatia on Thursday night. But most important, he maintained a World Cup start position for the United States.

Austria's Marcel Hirscher came from behind in the second run to snatch victory away from his teammate Michael Matt, who finished second. Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen was third.

For Engel, finishing was not only important from a team standpoint, but from a vindication standpoint too. Last year on the same course he finished third in the first run, only to crash spectacularly near the finish of the second run.

"I felt the pressure to finish here today because our team is going to run out of World Cup spots unless we make up some points," said Engel, who almost repeated last year's incident near the finish of Thursday's first run.

"I'm so happy I made it through," he said after his first run. "I had really tired legs down here and I got a little back seat, but managed to pull it off."

In the second run, Engel attacked the course. Following the flat middle section, he charged the bottom with a smile on his face. "I'm really happy that my best split was down the last pitch, which has troubled me before," he added.