

Snow and Kircher, Schweitzer and Peterson take J2 titles

March 9, 2010 - The J2 National Championships wrapped up at Sugarloaf USA, Maine Tuesday (March 9) with a double whammy set of downhills and three-event traditional combineds for both genders with Scott Snow picking up his second gold medal of the event with an easy DH win while his competition buddy Andrew Kircher captured the combined for his second gold.

First year J2 Jordon Schweitzer corralled the women's downhill title after being surprised in the FIS downhill run-up to the title race by a fellow member of the class of '94 and Foreste Peterson wound up a busy week of work with the combined crown and her third medal.

Snow, of Team Independence, was already in possession of the super G crown from earlier in the championships. That seemed to spike his confidence as he positively spanked the men's downhill field, sliding away with a .98 second margin over Sandy Vietze. Bronson Wright was third, Colin Kamphius made a huge run to get fourth from the 32nd start and Bryce Ellis claimed fifth.



"I wasn't sure, but I was hoping it would happen," said Snow, coached by his dad within the "blue collar" race team they created. "I knew I was good at downhill. I'm strong and a big guy. After yesterday I was pretty confident, but (that win in the FIS downhill Monday) that can also make people hungry."

Especially when you win by 1.29 seconds. Those kind of wins can tend to get some dander up. Snow said he was particularly concerned about Andrew Kircher, Vietze and Wright. "There are a lot of fast guys out there. You can't take anything for granted."

In the past week Snow has come to really like Sugarloaf's Narrow Gauge race hill. "It's a great track," he said. "It was a little soft yesterday, but it hardened up overnight. It was a little bumpy from the past two days, but we're use to the bumps and soft snow."

Mount Bachelor's Jordon Schweitzer hadn't really been prepared to win the J2 Downhill. Coming in as a first year J2, she figured she'd be happy with a top 10. After the training run she bumped that expectation up to shoot for a podium result, but then things changed again. "Yesterday in the FIS race when I got third I thought I was the first 'first year,' but then I found out the girl who was in second (Katharine Irwin) was also a first year. So today I really wanted to beat her," Schweitzer said.

She pulled that off, edging Irwin by four hundredths for the title. Anna Kikut was the first 'second year' in third with Sydney Staples fourth and combined winner Foreste Peterson fifth.

Peterson said having the schedule flip-flopped, with the gate races running before the speed events probably helped her gain some momentum. "It was an adjustment for sure, they changed the whole schedule around," she said. Last week, after a 20inch snowfall, she said,

"It was really soft snow, which I'm use to because I'm from the west. We came in expecting Eastern boilerplate so that was nice. I had a pretty decent mistake (in the slalom) but was able to pull it around and finish second. In the GS I went all out and was on top. Then, going into speed and I haven't really raced much speed this year, I was sixth in super G and 5th in downhill which I'm really pleased with.

Under the J2 National format super G isn't included in the combined tally and Peterson was able to win handily. "I'm really happy I got the combined,," the Sugarbowl skier said. "Going into J2 Nationals, that was what I was shooting for, so it feels good to achieve that goal. "

Anna Kikut got the combined silver medal, Anne Strong was third, Sydney Staples fourth and Irwin fifth.

Andrew Kircher, representing Rowmark Academy, added the combined title to the slalom gold he took earlier.

"Between Matt, Scott, and I this was a close and exciting race and it was so fun to duke it out between my good friends," Kircher said. "I am extremely pleased with my results

and I will leave Sugarloaf satisfied. I knew I could end up among the top finishers, I just had to ski to my potential. I did not raise my expectations too high and just told myself to go out and have fun and ski."

He said he knew he could race but wasn't that sure he could walk away with titles. "Hey, let's do what we think we can do. I was not expecting to do as well as I did. I knew I had the ability and it ended up I got it done in the biggest race of the year."

He said the slalom, in the soft snow right after the storm, leveled the playing field. "I just popped into the ruts and let it go. I knew I had a chance, if everything came together. I skied to my ability, nothing out of the comfort zone."

Behind Kircher in the combined were Thomas Woolson in second, Mathew Strand third, Tanner Farrow in fourth and Kegan Zorens fifth.

The western guys made a mockery of the Regions Cup scoring 130 place points (from top 10 finishes) compared to 85 for the East and a dismal 36 from Rocky Central. Although the women's numbers were much closer (West 99, East 86, R/C 82) the totals had the West up 229-171 over the hosting East with Rocky Central at 118.

Photo of Scott Snow by Doug Williams

Photo of women's dh podium by Doug Williams

Cover photo of GS winner Matt Strand by Doug Williams