

Idaho boarders iced

Woman from Canada,
man from Michigan win
Snowboardcross titles

BY JESSE ZENTZ
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Idaho natives Graham Watanabe and Pat and Nate Holland had the lion's share of support from a sparse crowd at the U.S. Snowboardcross Championships on Sunday at Tamarack Resort, but it wasn't enough to claim a championship.

Amid heavy snow that made roads treacherous and contributed to some adverse racing conditions at the third and final stop for the U.S. Snowboard Grand Prix, Canadian Maelle Ricker and Michigan's Nick Baumgartner won the women's and men's races in snowboarding's equivalent of motocross.

The resort reported 7 inches of snowfall late Sunday.

"There was lots of fresh snow," Ricker said. "You really had to work everything for speed. There was even one spot where you were going to stop unless you had a good line."

Ricker picked a great line and sped away from her competitors in the final third of the championship run. Alaskan Callan Chythlook-Sifsof placed second and in doing so won her first U.S. title.

Sixteen women began the day in four heats of four racers with the top two advancing to the semifinals. The top two competitors from each semifinal race advanced to the championship.

Watanabe, a Sun Valley native and 2006 Olympian, placed fifth in the men's race after winning the title last year.

Sandpoint native Pat Holland was 16th. Brother and 2006 Olympian Nate didn't qualify for the finals after breaking a binding early in the round of 32.

Baumgartner edged Austria's Markus Schairer for the race victory. He also clinched the U.S. title.

"It was slow today, but I just had to get the right mix on my board," he said. "When it started snowing, we didn't do anything to the board



Joe Jaszewski / Idaho Statesman

U.S. Snowboardcross Championships competitors raced down the mountain four at a time Sunday at the U.S. Snowboard Grand Prix finals at Tamarack Resort.

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BOARDERS

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and it was running fast. The win is just amazing."

Watanabe was in position to earn one of two qualifying positions late in his semifinal heat, but wrecked and finished third. He later won the consolation championship.

"It's super important to come out and attack hard after a frustrating loss in the semis, but it's a little bittersweet," he said. "It's nice to win that race, but it's still fifth place."

The simple presence of three snowboardcross competitors with Idaho roots in a Grand Prix event was enough for family and friends who made the trip to Tamarack, which is about 100 miles north of Boise.

"It's super. It's the shortest drive we've had to one of their races," said Pat and Nate's father Don Holland, who once played middle linebacker for the University of Kentucky and made the 7-hour trip south from Sandpoint for Sunday's race.

Don and his wife, Rebecca, were joined by their eldest son, Eric, and his family from Missoula, Mont. About 10 other friends of the family cheered alongside them in the driving snow.

"This snow favors the Holland boys," Rebecca said. "This is North Idaho weather. They grew up racing in this kind of stuff at Schweitzer."

Pat and Nate currently train in Squaw Valley, Calif.

"It's great to come home to Idaho," Pat said. "I got more support here than I've had at any other

race. My cheering section was pretty solid."

Watanabe was equally pleased with the home-course advantage, even though it didn't result in a victory.

"It's hard enough to get a crowd sometimes, and when you've got people there specifically cheering for you, it's extra special," he

said.

To offer story ideas or comments,

contact reporter Jesse Zentz at jzentz@idahostatesman.com or 377-6430.

Tamarack U.S. snowboarding

Snowboard boardercross competitors raced down the mountain four at a time during the finals of the U.S. Snowboard Grand Prix at Tamarack Resort on Sunday afternoon. From a field of 32 men and 16 women, the top two from each heat moved on until the final heat, where winners were crowned. Names for the boarders pictured below were not available.

British Columbia snowboard team member Nickie Rodgers waves the Canadian flag with her fellow countrywoman, Samantha Rahn of the Sunshine Snowboard Team, at her side during the finals of the boardercross event at Tamarack Resort on Sunday afternoon. Canadian Maelle Ricker won the women's race.





On TV

The 2007 U.S. Snowboard Grand Prix held at Tamarack Resort will air at 3 p.m. Sunday on Versus, Channel 608 on DirecTV and 151 on Dish Network. The U.S. Snowboard Cross Championships will air at 4 p.m. Sunday on Versus.

The halfpipe and snowboardcross events will also be shown at noon March 10 on NBC, Channel 7.

PHOTOS BY JOE JASZEWSKI
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