

World Cup Downhill Took Its Toll

BY HAL STOKES
LAKE PLACID — I didn't see Leonardo David fall.

I was much further up the course when the 18-year-old Italian ski racer fell just before the finish line of the 3,028-meter-long World Cup downhill course at Whiteface Mountain on Saturday.

It wasn't until later that I saw the fall on one of several television monitors that were spread throughout the press center in the base lodge. The TV screens were playing the fall back for the journalists who missed it. If you watched the race the next day on ABC TV, you saw the same thing.

The young Italian fell at the bottom of the course and skidded across the finish line. He appeared to be alright; he got up and skied over to the coaches' area. Then he collapsed.

He was whisked away by helicopter to Burlington Medical Center. The press reports gave sketchy details. He'd hurt his head. He was in critical condition. He was nonresponsive when brought to the hospital. A neurosurgeon had been called in.

The last report I have was a statement from his doctor, Howard I. Schmidek. They had performed surgery and found a large internal hemorrhage; a lot of pressure on the brain. They removed the blood clot and sedated him with barbiturates to induce an artificial coma, to keep him immobilized. "I can say that the operation was perfectly successful," said the physician.

But I didn't see the fall. Nor did I see Peter Wirmsberger of Austria blaze

across the finish line in a time of 1:42.88 to win. Similarly, I missed seeing Karl Anderson, the best U.S. skier of the day, cross the finish line slightly less than two seconds off Wirmsberger's mark for a 14th place finish.

My spot on the course was more than a mile away from the finish at a place called "Niagara," the steepest section of all.

At Niagara, the racers shot straight down a steep 70 percent pitch at some of the fastest speeds they attained on the course. "They don't turn here, they just point straight down and cook," one course official told me.

Over to the side, three young men were using a radar gun to clock the racers. It was like the hand-held versions that police agencies use to catch autos.

Somebody said, "Here he comes!" A racer came into view: skintight one-piece suit, helmet, tucked down tight, feet wide apart for stability, hurtling like some vision from outer space, propelled by some invisible force.

And he was gone out of sight.

The guy with the radar gun said, "Seventy-three." The funny thing about it was the silence. Unlike what I'd seen on TV, where they catch the turns and the audio of the skis as they carve on the snow, the straight run was silent except for the rush of the wind around the skiers' bodies. Their skis, flat and smooth, made no sound at all on the snow.

About 60 seconds later, another skier came into view. Same tuck, same speed,

same silence. Only this time, there was another sound added to the whoosh of the wind. It was a loud "Huhh" caused by air literally being forced out of his lungs as he reached a transition point from the steep pitch to a relatively flat section.

"Sometimes it can almost knock the wind out of them," the course official said.

"Seventy-five," said the fellow with the radar gun. At 75 miles an hour, I began to understand the kinds of forces working on these skiers.

Up above Niagara lies about one fourth of the course. Before the skiers tuck down Niagara, they make two turns, first a sharp left at Dynamite Corner and then a sharp right at Wilmington Turn. I walked up to see that part of the course.

At Dynamite Corner, an Italian racer got thrown off balance and couldn't make the turn. He careened up onto one ski and went off the course, breaking right through the safety nets that have been installed to keep the racers from ending up in the woods. We all heard him crash into the trees. There was a scramble of four or five ski patrolmen, who by the way, line the course at almost every point.

Word came that the skier was apparently alright. Later he skied down. Other skiers careened by. When the Americans came down, the spectators cheered. They cheered the others, too, but not as loudly.

When the cheers trailed off, there was again only the sound of the skier, the ugly near-silence of the wind rushing by him.

That sound had the same quality, but was not as loud, as the noise of the helicopters that took the television cameras down from the mountain after the race ended.



MOVING FAST — For Sepp Ferstl, speed was the key as he won the U.S. Nationals. Then last weekend, he placed 13 in downhill competition in the World Cup skiing event. (Mike McGlynn photo.)

sports

Pioneers Finish Tied For First Place

The Potsdam Pioneers finished the regular season tied for first place.

Playoff action began on Friday when the Pioneers faced Prescott in the first of the best-of-seven series and won 10-3. About 13 seconds into the game, Prescott scored and did not score again until 9:28 left in the third period.

In a hard-hitting game, the Pioneers again showed their talent.

Scoring for the Pioneers were: Mike McGinn, hat trick; Tom Taylor, two goals; Glenn Thomaris, two goals; Rick Magnusson, two goals; Geoff Brown, one goal, one assist; Jack Duncan, three assists; Steve Wilkins, Tom Cosco, Bill Coakley, two assists each; and Alf Maki and Mark Hewitson, one assist each.

On Sunday, the Pioneers again played outstanding hockey and handily defeated the Prescott team 5-1.

The next game in the play-offs will be at 8:30 p.m. Thursday at Pine Street Arena, where the Pioneers will go for their third win over Prescott.

The Pittsburgh Pirates stole 213 bases in 1978 to lead the National League for the 15th time in that department.

Skiing Conditions Good In Spring

Spring Skiing

If you stayed around Potsdam this past weekend because you thought the skiing was not all that good, I would have to say you made a mistake.

While it was not perfect conditions for spring, there was nevertheless some very good spring skiing. There were nice build-up corn snow moguls which made it nice and slow so that the novice and intermediate skiers could try the expert slopes. While there are a few bare spots

The World's Longest Ski Lift

I have pointed out a number of times in my ski articles that the longest ski lift in the world is the Killington Gondola at Killington, Vt. It is 3½ miles long and rises about 3,000 feet in vertical. This is no longer true. While Killington will still have the longest lift in the United States, the new glacier gondola in La Plagne, France, covers a distance of four miles and rises 6,600 feet, which also creates the ski area with the greatest lift-served vertical that I know of on earth. Killington addicts will have to amend their claim to say that they have the longest ski lift in the United States or this hemisphere and let it go at that.

Attention Old Alpine Skiers: Free Skiing

I understand that the Mt. Mansfield Corporation which operates the ski area known as Stowe is offering free lift tickets to anyone that is over the age of 70. Sepp Rusch, Chairman of the Board of the Mt. Mansfield Corporation, still skis every day on what is considered to be a tough mountain. He expects to have lots of takers at the new offer and have the formation of interesting senior citizen's events. The deal is the best yet for senior citizens. A number of other areas have only given persons over 65 a half price ticket.

SKI TRAIL NOTES

JERRY LEEK

here and there, the bases overall are still in fine shape. At Stowe and Smuggler's Notch, for example, there are no bare spots and an excellent base. It is only on those areas that are exposed to the sun or have a more southern exposure that the bare spots have appeared.

Much the same is true at Whiteface and Tupper where there is plenty of skiing left in spite of the fact that it has not snowed significantly for over a month. So if the base does not get eroded away with too much rain, one good snowfall would put everything back into business again.

Whiteface World Cup Draws Gov. Carey

There were about 5,000 spectators for the downhill series of the World Cup held at Whiteface Mountain this past weekend. There were minor traffic jams, but the police kept everything pretty well organized. The traffic was somewhat similar to that during the foliage season, but it does give us the forecast of the problems that are to come. Governor Carey was among the 5,000 persons who watched the downhill races of the World Cup. The Governor's presence did not result in good news for the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee (LPOOC), which is faced with cost overruns which are so characteristic of staging the Olympics. Governor Carey indicated to one reporter that he felt the state had done its part and that no more state money should be used to support the event. This fact apparently was already known by the LPOOC, but it was the first time that the Governor, has made his position clear on the case of overruns.

Potsdam Swimmers

Come In Second

A second place performance by the final relay team of Greg Jones, Bob Byron, Bob Ryan, and Mike Spencer enabled Potsdam State to come from behind to nip host Geneseo for second place in last weekend's SUNYAC swimming and diving championships.

The Bears collected a total of 381 points in the three-day event, one more than Geneseo, but far behind Cortland's championship total of 467.

Although the three schools swam neck and neck throughout the meet, a 94-point performance by the Red Dragon diving squad spelled the difference.

Potsdam's Mike Spencer emerged as the Bears' only conference champion, capturing his fourth consecutive 100 butterfly crown, while earning the prestigious James Fulton award, awarded by the coaches to the senior swimmer who best displays meritorious achievement both as an athlete and student.

Spencer, a past All-American and qualifier for this year's nationals may be the only SUNYAC swimmer ever to repeat as conference champion four straight years.

Another senior, national qualifier Chris Miller, finished third in one- and three-meter diving for Potsdam who also received second and third place finishes in 200- and 100-yard freestyle from junior Greg Jones.

Recreation Corner

Public Skating

Mon.	7:15-8:15
Tues.	2-3
Wed.	7:15-8:15
Thur.	2-3
Fri.	7:15-8:15
Sun.	12-3:30

50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children.

Open Hockey

Mon.	12:45-1:45
Wed.	12:45-1:45
Fri.	12:45-1:45

\$1.00 per person.

Jr. Basketball

Mon.	6:30-8
Lawrence Avenue Gym	4th-8th graders
Wed.	6:30-8
Lawrence Avenue Gym	4th-8th graders

Community Swim

Thur.	7:30-9:00
Merritt Hall Pool	

Adult Basketball

Sun.	2-4
Merritt Hall Pool	

March 6

6:30 Ted's Tracks vs. Boiler Room
7:30 D'Jango's vs. Bissett's

March 12

8:30 M.B.F.'s vs. Terry's Collision
6:30 Playoffs 3rd place vs. 6th place, 8 4th place vs. 5th place

March 13

6:30 Playoffs 1st place vs. lowest ranking team
8 2nd place vs. 2nd lowest ranking team

March 14

6:30 Playoffs 1st place vs. lowest ranking team
8 2nd place vs. 2nd lowest ranking team

March 15

6:30 3rd game if necessary
8 3rd game if necessary

Adult Hockey

March 7
9:45 Playoffs 2nd place vs. 3rd place
11 Playoffs 1st place vs. 4th place

March 11

9:45 Finals
Broomball
March 11
8:30 Norwood vs. Parishville
9:45 Potsdam vs. Canton

March 11

6:00 Playoffs Prescott vs. Pioneers
Outdoor Rinks
Castle Drive, located across from
Walnut Street
Pine Street, located behind Arena
Cross Country Skiing
Trails at Postwood Park

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