

Snowsport England Aosta Valley Grand Prix Series
Race 1 – Norfolk Ski Centre
Sunday 2nd May, 2010



*How sweet it is to sit beneath a fond father's smile,
And the caress of a mother to soothe and beguile.
Let others delight amid new pleasures to roam,
But give me, oh, give me, the pleasures of home.
Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
There is no place like home, oh, there is no place like home.*

And for Norfolk racers Michael Molloy and Sophie Skipper home soil proved especially enjoyable as they swept to impressive victories in the first race of the Snowsport England's Grand Prix Series for summer 2010.

Following the wonderful news of Aosta Valley's sponsorship agreement for the Grand Prix Series and the All England Championships for the next 2 years, Norfolk's magnificent artificial ski complex – the finest in the UK - was the perfect location from which to launch the 2010 series. And whilst the weather appeared to refuse to acknowledge the fact that May had arrived even those gunmetal grey skies overhead and a bitterly cold wind that raced across the start area couldn't cool the action happening on the hill.

In the men's race Cardiff stable mates Andrew Watson & Andrew Davies, Hemel's Gerard Flahive and co-Norfolk racers Stuart Riches and Shaun Blyth all found themselves within 0.3 seconds after run 1 and looking to overturn Molloy's slender first half advantage in run 2. Indeed as each racer attacked John Riedy's 2nd run course Molloy kept his nerve at the top of the hill before blasting out of the start gate and magnificently dissecting Riedy's 18 gate challenge to not only hang onto his slender lead but to build a buffer into the final result. Behind Molloy, Watson's 2nd run proved good enough to claim the runners up spot in the overall rankings with first year junior Shaun Blyth claiming a very impressive 3rd overall.

Placed 2nd after run 1 in the ladies race Sophie Skipper's fabulous afternoon run proved decisive as 1st run leader Alice Hales and 3rd placed Caroline Powell perished whilst chasing Skipper's challenging mark. The Telford junior 1 duo of Alexandra Bullock and Charlotte Shrimpton eventually proved Skipper's main challengers and whilst both were the only other ladies under the 16 second mark in the afternoon run, neither could quite steal the day from the Norfolk based junior, placing 2nd & 3rd overall respectively.

In the categories Beverley Anderson, Emily Goddard, Claire Brown, Georgia Hallet and Francesca Lee joined Skipper as category winners in the ladies race whilst Robert Hales, Stuart Riches, Shaun Blyth, Ashley Breese and Nathan Breese joined Molloy in claiming category victories in the male field.

Race 2 sees the series move north from Norfolk's lowlands to the weather carved hills of Lancashire as Pendle plays host to the nation's finest young racers. If that hill provides half the excitement that the Norfolk one did then it'll be an event not to be missed. Who will add their names alongside Michael Molloy and Sophie Skipper as winners in 2010?

Sunday May 30th is the date and whilst there may be no place like home, there equally are few challenges quite like Pendle Hill. If it isn't yet in your diary then add it.

