

By the sea, it's a Telford 1-2-3

Snowsport England Aosta Valley Grand Prix Series

Round 4 - NESA GP, Sunderland

18th July, 2010

I guess that as a course setter there can be few slopes in Britain that offer the potential to truly test racers more than the multi tiered contours of dendix that make up the main hill at Sunderland's ski centre.

Indeed in combining a bit of local knowledge with inventive and demanding gate placements the Grand Prix courses set at Sunderland have a long tradition of moving racers forwards, backwards and generally out of their comfort zone. Genuinely testing courses that demand the racers blend brains with brawn and talent, courses that consistently produce overall winners of the highest calibre.

Round Four of the 2010 Snowsport England Grand Prix Series sponsored by Aosta Valley was no different. Amid the very greyest of skies and a blustery North Sea wind Craig Ruddock's 16 gate challenge proved to be every bit as testing as course inspection suggested. With turns required on the underside of each of the slope's four tier drops and a final flourish requiring quick feet and even faster thinking it was no surprise to see a fair percentage of the field fail to make it to 2nd run course inspection.



Of those who did complete Ruddock's first run belter no-one dealt with the challenge better than senior racer David Hatcher, who in carving out an enormous lead of 0.6s left the male field in no doubt that their afternoon run was all about chasing 2nd place. Indeed with Charlotte Gould compiling a similar advantage over her compatriots the rest of the ladies field faced a somewhat similar afternoon challenge. Barring an unlikely mistake, fall or dnf we had almost certainly found our race winners before lunch time.

Clearly athletes of the calibre of Daniel Curtis, Andrew Davies, Charlotte Shrimpton and Alex Bullock would set out down Pierre Mahon's 17 gate maze of blindingly fast foot movement looking to overturn the leaders but in truth their main focus was to retain the podium positions they'd established during the morning event.



In the ladies race the Team Telford trio of Bullock, Shrimpton and Gould metaphorically threw everything they had at each other in search of a weakness but in all finishing within 0.02s of each other all they actually managed to achieve was to create an impressive amount of daylight between themselves and the rest of the field and a status quo amongst each other.

And whilst the 2nd run of the male race was a less closely fought affair the final result followed a similar vein as Davies and Curtis extended their lead but were unable to challenge or even cut into Hatcher's lead.

In the categories Vivien Hanson & Claude Farren claimed the honours for the masters whilst Emily Goddard matched David Hatcher's win in the seniors. In the Junior categories Harry Rymell joined Daniel Curtis, Charlotte Gould and Charlotte Shrimpton as victors, with Chris Yates, Declan Huppach, Emma Peters and Francesca Lee claiming victories in the children's categories.

The day however very much belonged to Hatcher, Gould and the Telford Club that in filling the overall podium in the ladies event represented quite an achievement for a club based on 70 odd metres of dendix.



Next Sunday the series reverts back under the roof and snow blowers as the Hemel Ski Centre plays host to the final event of the 2010 series. With many categories and the overall series still up for grabs there is no doubt that the fight will go on right until the final racer crosses the line. Miss it at your peril.