

SKI SOLUTIONS



Fresh faces & Familiar Winners

Blue skies overhead, farmers' fields green with new growth, a city skyline in the distance and anticipation in the start gate that inevitably arrives with a new season. Summer racing had returned. Indeed with Ski Solutions joining Aosta Valley, Atomic & Ski Bartlett as series sponsors there was much to look forward to as Norfolk Ski Club played host to the opening Snowsport England Grand Prix of 2011.

Would the cream of 2010 continue to rise to the top? Was there enough development a little lower down the ranks to rattle last year's champions? Or was there a new face out there that would join the battle? And whilst the opening race of the season wouldn't definitively answer all of these questions the first race of 2011 would certainly provide us with a good idea.

And with the ladies first run squeezing six of dry slope racing's best athletes into little more than three tenths of a second it became immediately clear that a battle royale awaited not only for the post lunch second run but for the season ahead. Indeed with only one thousandth of a second splitting front runners Alice Hales and Charlotte Gould through Sally Bartlett's 16 turn challenge there was much to look forward to as they prepared to negotiate Phil Brown's brutal 17 gate 2nd run course.

Gould's slightly slower first run gave her the opportunity to go immediately before her opponent and she used this to her advantage by nailing a near inch perfect run whilst Hales watched from the start gate knowing that there was absolutely no room for error. And whilst the Cardiff racer looked capable of challenging Gould's time the error she simply couldn't afford unfortunately arrived and the battle was over. Hales exited the course and Gould entered the winner's enclosure.

Elsewhere Hannah Bozier cemented her fine first run with an equally impressive 2nd run to claim a deserved runners-up spot whilst fellow Aldershot athlete Ellen Hathaway jumped into 3rd place following a mistake from Alexandra Bullock.

In the male race the tussle at the top end had a similar feel as the other Hales sibling, Tom, fought out a mighty scrap with 2011's zero pointed racer Andrew Watson. Separated by 0.05 seconds after run 1, Hales's powerful and impressive 2nd run asked huge questions of his Cardiff team mate. Watson responded superbly however and in matching Hales's imposing effort ensured that his slender morning advantage was preserved. The third spot onto the podium went to David Hatcher, who in posting the first sub 14 second afternoon run - & only 0.04 off the times of Watson & Hales - posed a number of questions as the Cardiff duo prepared to race.

In the categories Rob Hales & Vivien Hansen scooped the honours in the master's categories, whilst Jemima Barnes joined Watson in taking the senior honours.

Charlotte Gould was joined by Andrew Davies in collecting 1st place amongst Jun 2 racers whilst Hannah Bozier was joined by an impressive James Sieber as winners in Jun 1.

The Telford duo of Emma Peters and Jordan Fellows claimed the top spot in Chi 2 category whilst Caitlin Lewington and Declan Huppach ended the weekend as victors in Chi 1.

The real winner however was the sport of artificial slope racing. In Norfolk Ski Centre the sport has a flagship venue which provides our racers with the opportunity to excel. Add in intelligent, testing courses, a pool of committed racers and some fine natural talent and the mix can be very exciting.

Round 2 of the SSE GP series takes place at Silksworth's imposing hill in Sunderland on Sun June 5th. If it's half as good as this race then it'll one not to miss.