

Ferienregion Lenzerheide

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Press Release

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Swiss Lara Gut fastest in first downhill training run.

holidayregion Lenzerheide

Swiss speed specialist Lara Gut clocked the fastest time in the first practice time held this morning on the treacherous Beltrametti run where the last World Cup competitions of the season will take place this week until Sunday.

Gut, 2nd here in the last downhill of the 2011 season, clocked a best time of 1.35,49 minutes at the end of the steep course of a length of 2,257 meters and a vertical drop of 696 meters. She beat by nearly a full second Austria's Anna Fenninger while former two time World Champion Elisabeth Goergl was 3rd at 1,02 seconds.

USA's Julia Mancuso, the winner here at the 2011 Finals, had a rather fast 'inspection' run to end in 13th position 2,82 seconds adrift.

Slovenia's Tina Maze, who still has a chance to capture the downhill globe on Wednesday in absence of USA's Lindsey Vonn, was a far 22nd at 12,10 seconds after standing up in the final part of her run. Apparently the overall World Cup leader didn't want to use her energy today a day only after celebrating a super tenth World Cup win in Ofterschwang's slalom.

The 29-year-old Slovenian, who equaled Hermann Maier record of 22 podium finishes last weekend in Bavaria, needs to enter the top-15 on Wednesday to pass the 340 points scored by Vonn in downhill this season prior her accident at Schladming.

The fight for Maze to capture as many crystal globes as possible during her stay in Lenzerheide basically is the most interesting fact about the women's competitions here. In Super-G, she has a lead of 55 points on Mancuso and in slalom she is seven points ahead of USA's Mikaela Shiffrin, the reigning slalom World Champion after her victory in Ofterschwang last Sunday.

Fenninger, the recent winner in Super-G and giant slalom at Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Ofterschwang, is also battling for a spot on the podium in the overall standings. She is now 3rd with a strong advance of 149 points on Mancuso after the last competitions in Bavaria. Another training run is supposed to take place for the women on Tuesday, when the men will also be testing the slope. The situation is much more interesting on their side as Norway's Aksel Lund Svindal and Marcel Hirscher are still battling for the big crystal globe after last's weekend of racing at Kranjska Gora, in Slovenia. Only 149 points separate them with four

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races left here in Lenzerheide, which should be enough in principle for Marcel to successfully defend his overall title from last year.

The slalom World Champion reached the podium in 19 or the 21 competitions he has started in this winter – quite a phenomenal percentage considering the risks of failure existing in the technical specialties where the top of the ski move so close to the gates. Even the great Ingemar Stenmark was not as efficient in his best years.

«Marcel has been amazing, he fully deserves the big globe again,» said Svindal after the last giant slalom at Kranjska Gora that he finished in 6th position. «I only have a very tiny chance in case he skis out during the weekend.»

In fact, Svindal has good memories from the demanding Swiss slope on which he won three races in a row six years ago to beat by a few points only Austria's Benjamin Raich in the general classification. If he keeps his level from Kvifjell where he scored a total of 180 points finishing 2nd and 1st in downhill and Super-G, the Norwegian would pass Hirscher in case the Austrian is not skiing fast enough in Thursday's Super-G. Only the top-15 of each race can score points during those Finals. Last year, his surprising 3rd place in Schladming's Super-G was decisive to help him beating Switzerland's Beat Feuz in the overall standings.

USA's Ted Ligety, who clinched a fourth giant slalom globe in Slovenia along his fifth season victory – six in total with his superb triumph at Schladming 2013 – has a solid chance to keep his 3rd place in the overall standings. Ted has an advance of 74 points on Germany's Felix Neureuther.

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