

Ferienregion Lenzerheide

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Report

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Mikaela Shiffrin seals perfect season with slalom globe at Lenzerheide

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Mikaela Shiffrin proclaimed her position as the world's number one slalom specialist of the season winning the season's final race in the discipline on Saturday to add a World Cup title to her world championship gold from Schladming.

The 18-year-old American pipped Tina Maze to the slalom crystal globe with a blistering performance on the final section of the second run. Both women sobbed in the finish area - Shiffrin with joy and Maze with the frustration of finishing 3rd and missing out on the slalom title to go with her overall, giant slalom and Super-G cups.

Shiffrin had been 1.17 seconds behind Maze after the first leg but beat the best overall skier of the season by 35/100 of a second with her final combined time of one minute 55.60 seconds. Worn out after her exceptional season, Maze finished 15/100 behind runner-up Bernadette Schild of Austria, the sister of former World Champion Marlies Schild, who took the first podium of her career.

Mikaela Shiffrin, who celebrated her fifth slalom victory this season including her triumph at the FIS Worlds in Schladming, finished the slalom season on 688 points, 33 more than Maze, who took her overall total to 2,314, enjoying her 23rd World Cup podium of the season – one more than Austria's skiing legend Hermann Maier during his excellent 1999/2000 season.

Another Austrian, Kathrin Zettel, came in 4th at 1.44 seconds, a few tenths ahead of Switzerland's Wendy Holdener, 2nd at Ofterschwang last weekend. Laurie Mougel from France was a happy 6th – enjoying her second top-10 finish this winter. Germany's Maria Hoefl-Riesch was a distant 7th and Slovakia's Veronika Velez Zuzulova 9th – good enough to secure her 3rd place in the slalom standings. An emotional day for Mikaela.

"It was another emotional day for me. I was so nervous, not only for me but also for Tina," said Shiffrin, who exchanged tweets of support with the Slovenian before the race. "I'm not saying that I was hoping for her to win but I was so thrilled about everything she did this season that had I lost, it would still have been priceless to finish behind a skier like Tina," added the teenager from Vail, Colorado afterwards. "I actually want to thank Tina Maze, she really pushed me hard today. Fortunately, I felt enough relaxed in the afternoon to charge the course with huge determination," also commented Shiffrin, one of the youngest slalom World Cup champions in the young history of the event.

«After the first run I went directly to our athlete tent and just tried to sit quietly and figure out what I needed to do to make it better. That's something that I've always done is just analyze what I could do better and make it better. It's hard to do that between runs in a race, but my mom helped, my coaches helped, my dad helped, everybody. They all just said the same thing, 'You have to let it go. You cannot hold back. There is nothing to lose.' So I tried to do that», she also told the press.

Mikaela inspired by Tina.

«I didn't know I could make up all that time in one run but I think that there's some luck—it wasn't just me out there. My whole team were there cheering me on and giving me strength to get to the finish line as fast as I could. I think that half of this globe belongs to someone else. I want to thank Tina Maze. She has really helped inspire me. It felt good that second run but I was freaking out.»

«She's my greatest idol this season and I respect her so much. Some part of me wanted her to win just to prove once again that she's the greatest skier in the world this season, but I wanted to win because

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it was my goal and I don't want to give up my goal. It happened that I won today and I'm really grateful for that.»

«Winning the slalom title was my goal from the beginning of this year. The World Championships title was amazing, but it wasn't a goal that I had set. I almost forgot World Championships were happening this year until they happened and that was just a cherry on top of the cake. This was what I was really shooting for all season, to be consistently one of the top slalom skiers as my mode Marlies Schild. So this means a lot to me.»

Mikaela Shiffrin was also excited at the idea to attend a great show earlier next week with David Letterman. «Yeah, Letterman! I'm so excited about that. It's going to be really cool,» she explained. «Hopefully I don't trip when I'm going on stage. If you knew me for longer than a day you would know that I spill things and I break things and I trip a lot. You would not think I'd be good at slalom. So we'll see how that goes.»

Maze will ski her 40th and final race of the season in Sunday's giant slalom on the same Lenzerheide course, hoping to end the winter on a last victory. "This was not the way we had planned for this to finish," said the Slovenian, who missed out on the downhill trophy by one point after Wednesday's final race was cancelled. "I was expecting much more but I made a big mistake prior the second run and there was no way to make up for it drinking a extra coffee prior the start. I felt dizzy afterwards."

«I'm frustrated right now but once the dust settles I'll realise what I've done. You must be aware that Mikaela is much more of a slalom specialist than I am and that she fully deserved to win this globe. There's no way this is going to spoil my happiness.»

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