

Ryding and Flahive Dominate Indoors

Snowsport England Aosta Valley Grand Prix Series Round 5 - ERSA GP, Hemel 25th July, 2010

So seven days after Sunderland played host to the penultimate round of the 2010 Snowsport England Grand Prix Series sponsored by Aosta Valley the somewhat plush and sparkling new Hemel Snow Centre welcomed racers to the fifth and final event.

With a sizeable start list only moderately effected by the fact that this was the first weekend of the main Summer holiday fortnight it was evident that many racers still had high hopes of ensuring that it was their name that would end up on top of the overall or category standings. Indeed with the balance of the 2010 series offering real opportunities for both outdoor & indoor racers to compete at the top end of the standings it was good to see a sizeable number of dendix based racers crossing over and getting a bit of snow on their boot buckles.

As with this Summer's Chill Factore event however the ladies race was again completely dominated by Joanna Ryding. With her racing activities no longer encompassing dendix she probably never have harboured any serious hopes of recapturing her overall series crown but the margin of this and her previous summer victory continue to confirm her as the female athlete to beat in British summer ski racing. In Bethany Widdup and Jemima Barnes, Ryding found her fiercest rivals but in truth these two athletes were at least as focussed in ensuring that Yasmin Cooper didn't improve further on a highly impressive 4th place overall as they ever were on overturning Ryding's advantage.

In the male event Gerard Flahive's overall victory, whilst being nowhere near as comfortable as Ryding's, was no less impressive. In shading senior racers James Greenwood & James Knock on both John Riedy's morning and Benn Hall's afternoon courses Flahive looked very much the part on his home hill. And whilst the top twelve placed racers all managed to get within one second of Flahive's overall winning time the fact that the Hemel racer posted the fastest times on both courses merely served to reaffirm Flahive's control of both his skis and the event.



In the categories Luke Seymore's superb second run elevated the SASA racer onto the top step of the Chi 2 male podium and whilst a top 20 overall position wasn't as eye-catching as Chi 1 female victor Yasmin Cooper it was no less of an impressive achievement. In Chi 1 boys Joshua Penning-Lambert claimed the honours, as did Emma Peters in the female Chi 2 category. Elsewhere Beth Widdup and Samuel Fairbairn earned wins in the Junior 1 category as did Alice Hales and Flahive in Junior 2. In the seniors James Greenwood and Jo Ryding proved too good for their compatriots as did Rob Hales and Lucy Newman in the masters.

The real winner again though was the Grand Prix series itself. In employing a smart combination of relatively young former racers and experienced old hands the five race series has continually posed the competitors with tough but rewarding challenges. The balanced blend of indoor & outdoor racing kept all parties involved right up until the final racers completed the final Hemel run and with a fantastic array of emotions – smiles, tears, effort and cheers – it appeared that the racers also appreciated the opportunities and challenges that the series offered.

After a short summer recess Norfolk's mighty impressive facility plays host to the 2010 All England Championships over the first weekend in September. As one of - if not - the key calendar event the only certainty will be that, like the GP series, the event winners will be from the very top drawer. Make sure you don't miss it.