

Practice sessions point to a thrilling showdown between Feuz and Paris in the final trial of the Downhill World Cup

The Italian Dominik Paris has set the best time of the day and laid down a marker for the big favourite, the Swiss Beat Feuz

Nicole Schmidhofer and Ramona Siebenhofer are fighting it out in the women's category, despite Siebenhofer's mishap

The fight for the Crystal Globes in the speed events will take place this Wednesday and Thursday in Andorra

Andorra la Vella, 12 March 2019. The second day of official practice in the Downhill category for the 2019 Alpine Ski World Cup Finals in Andorra has been characterised by an increased level of confidence on the part of the competitors. The skiers have achieved higher speeds on the Àliga slope in El Tarter (Grandvalira) and are ready to give their all in the grand final on Wednesday.

Tuesday's practice sessions will be followed by **five days of competition** in the World Cup Finals at the Soldeu and El Tarter sectors in Grandvalira. The first trials are scheduled for the speed events, with the Downhill competition taking place on Wednesday and the Super-G competition taking place on Thursday. In both events, the battle for the Crystal Globe remains open in both the men's and women's categories, which means **the trials in Andorra will play a decisive role in determining the winners of the speed events. Thrills are guaranteed!**

Ahead of tomorrow's action, the technical teams are waiting for the forecasts and hoping the weather allows the trials to go ahead as normal. The general director of Grandvalira-Ensisa, David Hidalgo, has assured that the balance of the two days of training is excellent, as the track has shown unbeatable conditions, so "we are ready to have a good race tomorrow".

The battle between Feuz and Paris

In the men's category, the battle is between the Swiss **Beat Feuz**, who is attempting to retain the Downhill World Champion title he won last year, and the Italian **Dominik Paris**, who was runner-up in the Super-G category in 2015 and third in the Downhill category in 2016 and 2017. On Tuesday, he demonstrated his potential by setting the fastest time during the practice sessions. Feuz has been extremely consistent throughout the season, although Paris's performances have begun to stand out in the most recent practice sessions. The men are neck-and-neck heading into the final.



“I’m feeling good, and the battle with Beat will be very interesting. I’ll have to be at my very best to achieve a good time”, Paris said. During the last practice session the Italian set a time of 1:25:79, beating the previous lowest practice time of 1:28:36 set on Monday by Kjetil Jansrud. The fastest man of the day was the Canadian Benjamin Thomsen, who recorded a top speed of 128 km/h despite eventually finishing in 18th place.

Beat Feuz, who set the seventh fastest time, has expressed his contentment with the new Finals venue and is very excited ahead of Wednesday’s race.

Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, currently in fifth place, is convinced that “it will be a very tight final”. “Although the weather forecast for tomorrow isn’t great, I’m not worried, provided the snow conditions remain as good as they were today”, he added.

In the **Super-G, the fight for first place is wide open**, as any of the six leading competitors could end up in first place and take home the Crystal Globe. The table is led by Dominik Paris, followed by the Austrian Vincent Kriechmayr, the Norwegians Aleksander Aamodt Kilde and Kjetil Jansrud (winner of the Super-G category in the last two years), the Austrian Matthias Mayer and the Swiss Mauro Caviezel. After the second Downhill practice session on Tuesday, Kriechmayr stated that **“Soldeu is one of the prettiest places I’ve ever seen outside of Austria”** and praised the good condition of the Àliga slope, which he considered ideal for the Super-G event on Thursday.

Two Austrians fighting for the Crystal Globe in the women’s Downhill

In the women’s Downhill category, two women are fighting it out for the Crystal Globe: **Nicole Schmidhofer and Ramona Siebenhofer. They are also two of the year’s biggest surprises**, as they both recorded the first victories of their career only this winter. Third place is currently held by the Slovakian Ilka Štuhec; however, as she was injured during the last Downhill event at Crans-Montana in Switzerland, she will be unable to compete at the finals in Andorra. The Swiss Lara Gut-Behrami will also miss the finals after she fell during Monday’s practice session on the Àliga slope and injured her back and right foot.

Ramona Siebenhofer was unable to complete her practice session on Tuesday: she reported having a problem with her fastening, which caused her to lose stability after a particularly high jump and forced her off the slope. **Siebenhofer** expressed her sadness at being unable to complete the slope for a second time: **“It’s a pity, because I like the slope and it brought me luck a few years ago. But it’s better that the incident happened today and not tomorrow”**. **Nicole Schmidhofer** finished in seventh place after making several mistakes on the first section of the slope. However, she confirmed that the slope was in very good condition, and trusted that she would **“achieve a good result tomorrow, in line with the rest of the season”**.

Fourth-placed **Stephanie Venier**, who set Tuesday’s fastest time of 1:31.48, reaching a top speed of 118 km/h, stated that her aim is to fight for second place, following the withdrawal of the Slovakian Ilka Štuhec in third place. **“I like Andorra, the slope is in great condition and the team hospitality is spectacular, one of the best we’ve had at the World Cup”**, Venier declared.



Sadly, the Norwegian skier **Ragnhild Mowinckel ruptured her cruciate ligament and two menisci in the fall she suffered on Tuesday**, and has had to withdraw from this year's finals in Andorra. Although Mowinckel was only in 22nd position in the Downhill event, she was in with a chance of winning the Crystal Globe in the Super-G. Thrills are also assured in the Super-G event on Thursday, with three skiers in a battle for first place on the podium: the Slalom winner Mikaela Shiffrin, the Liechtensteiner Tina Weirather and the Austrian Nicole Schmidhofer.

Team Event and technical trials

World Cup Finals week will continue on Friday with the **Alpine Team Event**, a team-based parallel slalom competition that will take place on the bottom section of the Àliga slope in El Tarter - and in which an Andorran team will be competing. At the weekend, the action moves to the **Avet slope in Soldeu**, which will host the Slalom and Giant Slalom events. Over the course of two days, thrills are guaranteed thanks to the presence of this season's two dominant skiers: the Austrian Marcel Hirscher and the American Mikaela Shiffrin. They are both already outright World Champions as well as winners of the Crystal Globe in the Slalom and Giant Slalom events, with the exception of the women's Giant Slalom, where the Slovakian Petra Vlhová could still beat Shiffrin to the title.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 13/3/2019

10:30 a.m. - Slope: Àliga (El Tarter)
Men's DH

12:00 noon - Slope: Àliga (El Tarter)
Women's DH

12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. - Next to Abarset (El Tarter):
Event village featuring the leading brands from the skiing world.

5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. - Abarset (El Tarter):
Après-ski party.

Download photos here: <http://bit.ly/Entrenaments2WCF>

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