

## Gunnarsson, Honkonen come up with strong performances at Eldora

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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NEDERLAND -- Henrik Gunnarsson has yet to take his first class at the University of Colorado, and Jessica Honkonen is still learning how to ski on American snow.

Both of them looked quite comfortable on Wednesday, though, in helping Colorado jump to second place in the Spencer James Nelson Memorial Invitational at Eldora Mountain Resort.

The Buffs shaved 43 points off the lead Denver built on Tuesday in the giant slalom. Through Wednesday's slalom races, DU leads with 423.5 points, with CU second at 417. New Mexico is third at 401. The meet will wrap up on Saturday and Sunday at Howelsen Hill in Steamboat Springs with Nordic races.

"It was a little expected, because slalom has been our better event lately," CU head coach Richard Rokos said of Wednesday's performance. "I think everybody stepped forward. Especially the guys, they redeemed themselves a little bit."

The men's team had a rough day in Tuesday's giant slalom, with nobody in the top 15, but junior Fletcher McDonald led the way Wednesday with a second-place finish in the slalom. Gunnarsson wasn't far behind, in fourth, and Andreas Haug was 11th.

The women, who had four top-12 finishers in the giant slalom, placed three in the top 10 of the slalom. Honkonen was third, Thea Grosvold seventh and Brooke Wales 10th. All three are freshmen.

Gunnarsson just recently arrived on campus and will begin attending classes this semester. A native of Sweden, he said he's enjoying his time with the Buffs so far and hasn't had much of an adjustment to being on the team.

"I've been skiing pretty much back in Sweden, so I know how it works," he said. "The only new thing is the studying (for school); that's going to be a challenge at the beginning."

"This part is the easy part."

Honkonen, 23, is a freshman from Finland who has been skiing on the Finnish national team, as well as for the Santa Claus Ski Team in her home country. It wasn't until late November that she made her racing debut on American snow.

"The snow is a little different; otherwise skiing is the same," she said. "(The snow) is super dry, so it is a little more aggressive. It's just a different feeling and it takes time to get used to it."

In her first-ever college event, she followed Tuesday's eighth-place finish with Wednesday's strong performance.

"It was really a lot of fun," she said. "It's much more fun than individual races because the atmosphere is different, so I really enjoyed it."

McDonald, who is from Copper Mountain, got on to the podium (top three) for the first time in his college

career.

"First run, I just took advantage of an early start position and second run I just tried to ski in the groove and stay on my feet, finish for the team and try to do well for myself," he said. "I'm happy with it."

Like the rest of his teammates, McDonald is hoping the quality results will show up in the giant slalom soon.

"Everybody is skiing super fast GS in training," he said. "It's just that everybody has to get their confidence up. Get a couple of guys in there and it should turn right around for us."

Wales seems to have figured out both disciplines. She was second in a giant slalom qualifier on Monday, second again on Tuesday and then could not have been happier with her slalom performance.

"Slalom has always been an event that I've had to work a lot harder at than GS, so I'm really happy with a top-10 finish today," she said.

It's a rebuilding year for the women's team, but it didn't look like it this week.

"We didn't have much expectations, because, like for me it was the first college race, so it's hard to say where we are, but I think it turned out good," Honkonen said.

While the Buffs would have loved to walk away from Wednesday's races in the lead, Rokos said it was a good week for the alpine team.

"It's our home meet," he Richard Rokos said. "We are in second place; hopefully Nordics will finish the job for us. This is one of the toughest venues we are running this season. Having it behind us and ending it in good standing, I think it gives confidence to everybody on the team."

Notable

New Mexico's Joonas Rasanen won the men's slalom, while Anna Goodman of Westminster College (a non-NCAA team) won the women's slalom. ... New Mexico's Sean Horner, a graduate of Boulder High School, was seventh in the men's slalom. ... The alpine team doesn't have much of a break before a three-day meet Friday-Sunday at Winter Park.

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CU Invitational/

Spencer James Nelson Memorial

Team Scores (Through 4 events) -- 1. Denver 423 1/2; 3. Colorado 417; 3. New Mexico 401; 4. Alaska Anchorage 311; 5. Montana State 300 1/2; 6. Utah 288; 7. Westminster College 259, 8. Colorado Mountain College 20.

Women's Slalom (20 collegiate finishers) -- 1. Anna Goodman, WMC, 1:54.88; 2. Ana Kopal, UU, 1:58.32; 3. Jessica Honkonen, CU, 1:58.65; 4. Mary Rachel Hostetter, UNM, 2:00.46; 5. Devin Delaney, DU,

2:00.61; 6. Kayla Fry, UAA, 2:00.82; 7. Thea Grosvold, CU, 2:02.56; 8. Kristiina Rove, UU, 2:02.92; 9. Courtney Altringer, UNM, 2:03.80; 10. Brooke Wales, CU, 2:04.38; 11. Anna Berecz, UAA, 2:04.63; 12. Emily Danza, MSU, 2:05.18; 13. Terra Moran, MSU, 2:06.08; 14. Kelly McBroom, MSU, 2:07.93; 15. Marissa Riopelle, MSU, 2:08.05; 16. \*Jacqueline Lebel, MSU, 2:09.55; 17. Ida Bjerka, UAA, 2:10.95; 18. Vanessa Berther, UAA, 2:16.50; 19. Tianda Carroll, DU, 2:23.20; 20. \*Bridget French, DU, 2:29.97. Did Not Start (1st Run) Lindsay Cone, DU.

Did Not Finish (1st Run): Stephanie Irwin, MSU; Maria Elena Rizzieri, DU; Kate Williams, UNM; A.C. Brusletto, UNM; Tonje Sekse, WMC; Natalie Knowles, DU; \*Tenaya Driller, MSU; Christina Rennie, CMC; Celia Ferguson, CMC.

Disqualified (1st Run): Clare Wise, CU (G52); Khyla Burrows, CU (G37); Jamie DuPratt, UU (G52). Did Not Finish (2nd Run): Kristine Haugen, DU; \*Teagen Palmer, DU; Shane McLean, CU.

Men's Slalom (24 collegiate finishers) -- 1. Joonas Rasanen, UNM, 1:46.07; 2. Fletcher McDonald, CU, 1:46.24; 3. Espen Lysdahl, DU, 1:46.58; 4. Henrik Gunnarson, CU, 1:47.14; 5. Trevor Philp, DU, 1:47.23; 6. Max Marno, DU, 1:47.53; 7. Sean Horner, UNM, 1:48.40; 8. Nikolai Narvestad, WMC, 1:48.43; 9. Juko-Pekka Penttinen, UNM, 1:48.44; 10. Sam Monsen, MSU, 1:48.48; 11. Andreas Haug, CU, 1:49.33; 12. Cam Brewington, UAA, 1:49.75; 13. David Senoner, WMC, 1:51.04; 14. Michael Mackie, MSU, 1:51.28; 15. James Schindler, UAA, 1:52.00; 16. Simon Ruud, WMC, 1:54.38; 17. Michael Radford, MSU, 1:55.90; 18. Cameron Smith, CU, 1:58.81; 19. Kasper Hietanen, CU, 1:59.45; 20. Eian Sandvik, UU, 2:03.77; 21. Ryan McConnell, MSU, 2:06.21; 22. Charlie Reynolds, DU, 2:06.39; 23. Kitt Flowers, DU, 2:23.22; 24. Max Lamb, CU, 2:25.52.

Did Not Finish (1st Run): Armin Trinendl, UNM; Chris Acosta, UNM; Andreas Adde, UAA; Even Winqvist, WMC; \*Taylor Shiffrin, DU; Niko Harmanen, UAA; Chris Kollenborg, UAA; Mark Miller, UNM; Andy Trow, UU; Tomotej Hribar, UU; \*Chriss Salbu, UNM; \*Michael Bansmer, UNM; David Herzog, WMC; David Owsley, MSU; Jeremy Elliott, UU; Will Cutler, CMC. Disqualified (1st Run): \*Grant Jampolsky, DU (G55); Benoit Jagot, WMC (G54). Did Not Finish (2nd Run): Cedrik Gagnon, UAA; Ryan Wilson, UU.

Disqualified (2nd Run): Luke Laidlaw, DU.