

Thrills, Spills and Skills

Snowsport England Aosta Valley Grand Prix Series

Round 2 - NWSF GP, Pendle

30th May, 2010

Sabden Hill, historically the home of the Pendle witches but now at least equally as famous for the feats and achievements of the ski team that have shared the famous hill for the past forty odd years. And with fantastic views and scenery, rain & cloud permitting, that spans the Ribble Valley and beyond it isn't just the skiing that takes your breath away.

With round 2 of the 2010 Snowsport England Grand Prix Series sponsored by Aosta Valley arriving on a clear but blustery late spring, the views - albeit stunning - had to play second fiddle to the thrills, spills and skills on show on Pendle's famous rolling green dendix carpet.



The ladies race featured a two way tussle at the halfway stage as Telford racer Charlotte Gould's sterling first effort opened up a gap of 0.1 seconds to 2nd placed Sarah Lambden.

Fourth placed Emily Goddard's solid second run, expertly negotiating Carl Ryding's forest of wind resisting short, tight turns suggested that her rivals would have to up their game in order to resist their more experienced rival. With Stephanie Davies unable to maintain her challenge on run 2, Lambden attacked and after initially suggesting she was capable of at least matching Goddard's time perished on Pendle's 3rd roller leaving Gould as the sole competitor between Goddard and GP victory. Could Charlotte go where she'd never been before and snatch her first ever GP triumph?

Well if there was any doubt in anyone's mind it certainly wasn't in the head of the diminutive Telford racer. Right from her exiting of the start gate Gould looked a class above her rivals and blitzed Ryding's challenge without a hint of an error and promptly claimed a first GP victory. Make no mistake, this was a classy performance fully deserving the victory.

The men's race was a far less clean cut affair however with Hemel's Gerard Flahive proving very much to be the comeback kid. In overturning a massive near half second deficit after the first run Flahive not only claimed the win but also generated an impressive amount of daylight behind himself and runner up Andrew Watson. Having played Russian roulette against the blustery wind in the run 1 start gate Flahive caught a most brutal burst on Pendle's second roller and with his speed wiped out he completed much of run 1 in damage limitation mode. In applying the old mantle of whilst you can't win a race on run one you can certainly lose it Flahive's race experience and maturity kept him in a race that many others would have given up on.



So in run 2, where conditions favoured him much more than first run leader Andrew Watson and 2nd placed Sam Stephens, Flahive literally made hay whilst the sun shone laying down a fabulous sub 14 second run that none of his rivals – 4th placed William Deakin aside - could get anywhere near to. Watson's wind restricted second run proved good enough to claim the runners up spot with Cardiff team mate Sam Stephens following suit to claim 3rd overall.

In the categories Andrew Hjort (masters), Timothy Nichol (seniors), James Grant (jun 1), Thomas Grant (chi 2) and Brandon Matthews (chi 1) joined Flahive on the top step of the male podium. In the ladies categories Beverley Anderson (masters), Emily Goddard (seniors), Stephanie Davies (jun 1), Georgia Hallett (chi 2) and Francesca Lee (chi 1) matched Charlotte Gould (jun 2) in victory.

The series now moves a few miles south and for parents at least a few degrees warmer as on Sunday June 20th the indoor facility at Chill Factor in Manchester plays host to round 3. Again, if the racing is anywhere near as good and exciting as the Pendle round was then it's an event not to be missed.

