

U.S. Women start off the season strong

August 16, 2010 – Sarah Hendrickson earned the second Continental Cup victory of her career, and Abby Hughes recorded a pair of top-five finishes as the Visa U.S. Women's Ski Jumping Team began the 2010-11 season over the weekend with summer competitions in Bischofsgrun, Germany.

Germany's Jenna Mohr won Saturday's opener by a point over Hughes; the two recorded identical jumps of 67.0 meters and 66.5 meters on the HS 74 hill but Mohr eked out the win on style points. Hendrickson finished third, just three tenths behind Hughes as the Americans crowded the podium. Alissa Johnson rebounded from a rough first jump to climb into the top 15, finishing 13th, while Avery Ardovino finished 23rd in her first competition in more than a year while recovering from a knee injury.

Sunday, it was Hendrickson's turn to shine as the 16-year-old led from start to finish to claim her first Continental Cup victory since February 2009 in Zakopane, Poland. Jumping with a strong tailwind, which necessitated a lower start gate on the hill to scrub some speed, Hendrickson posted jumps of 65.5 and 65.0 meters to beat Japan's Sara Takanashi by half a point. Hughes finished fifth, Johnson 8th and Ardovino 26th.

Hendrickson's win snapped at least a six-jump victory string by German jumpers on their home hill in Bischofsgrun. Hendrickson noted she had not seen jumpers from Romania at a CC competition until last weekend, further evidence that the sport is spreading beyond the traditional jumping nations. She also pointed out the increased depth in the weekend field, as evidenced by Ulrike Graessler's drop down the results sheet in Saturday's competition in her home country.

"She had an OK first jump putting her in fourth place, but her second jump she went short and moved down to 21st place. It just goes to show that you have to have two good jumps to win," Hendrickson said of last season's second-place overall finisher in the Continental Cup standings. "It's awesome to see that our level of competition is getting higher by the year."

Hughes, meanwhile, was pleased with her strong start after an offseason of intense training.

"I have spent hours upon hours this spring working in the gym and on my technique so that my muscles know what to do so I don't have to try and think so hard," she said. "Our team is feeling strong coming into this summer."

The women's Continental Cup jumping season continues Aug. 20-21 with a pair of competitions in Oberwiesenthal, Germany. Earlier this summer, the International Ski Federation voted to create a women's ski jumping World Cup circuit starting with the 2011-12 season.

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