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Willy Cook, Idaho Mt. Express

SHAUN PALMER & CALLAN CHYTHLOOK-SIFSOF SECURE

Saturday, 15 March 2008

SUN VALLEY, Idaho – Though 20 years of age separate the two, only a few inches stood between South Lake Tahoe's Shaun Palmer and Girdwood, Alaska's Callan Chythlook-Sifsof as they stood atop the podium together as season champions at today's snowboard cross finals of the Jeep King of the Mountain competition at the 48Straight sports, music and entertainment event at Sun Valley, Idaho.

Palmer, the extreme sports legend who had already captured wins at the first two races of the season in Telluride, Colo., and Squaw Valley, Calif., had a chance to complete the season sweep but finished just behind his teammate and longtime rival, Squaw Valley's Nate Holland. While Holland earned the individual event title, second place was good enough to secure the overall crown for Palmer, marking yet another milestone in a season that includes two, second place World Cup finishes and an appointment to the "A" squad of the U.S. Snowboard team.

"This has been a great season, and after I got the first two wins I wanted to complete the sweep," said Palmer, who competed in his first snowboard competition in 1988, approximately one year before Chythlook-Sifsof was born. "Hats off to Nate in earning the victory, as he deserved to win today. Now it's all about the 2010 Olympics and trying to secure one of those few spots. This finish sure doesn't hurt."

The final run of the day offered a glimpse of the Americans' dominance in men's snowboarding. Palmer, with five snowboarding World Championships and countless X Games medals under his belt, faced off against Holland, who just completed an illustrious three-peat gold medal at the X Games. Joining them was Nate's younger brother, Pat Holland, already making a name for himself on the circuit, as well as Iron River, Mich.'s Nick Baumgartner, whose victory earlier this month at the Visa U.S.

Snowboarding Cup in Lake Placid, NY, marked his first career World Cup title. The younger Holland finished in third, with Baumgartner capturing fourth. The field was so deep that hometown favorite Graham Watanabe of Hailey, a former Jeep King of the Mountain Champion who recently won his second career World Cup title and Seth Wescott of Farmington, Maine, an Olympic gold medalist, found themselves in fifth and sixth place, respectively.

"It was really tight out there all day, and with the new snow that arrived during the race, you really had to stay in your tracks," said Holland. "It seemed to go from slow motion to a roller coaster ride in that championship run, and I was lucky enough to catch a draft and it all worked out. I'm stoked to get the win, and it was great to have my brother Pat finish on the podium alongside me."

The women's competition was captivating from start to finish. In the very first run of the day, Stratton Mountain, Vt.'s Lindsey Jacobellis, the X Games gold medalist and Olympic silver medalist with four titles in World Cup competition this season, jumped out to a huge lead over her competitors and seemed destined to coast into the finals. Unexpectedly, the defending Jeep King of the Mountain champion took a tumble, opening up the opportunity for South Lake Tahoe's Dena Waller and Stateline, N.Y.'s Lynn Neil to advance. Chythlook-Sifsof, the 19-year-old who is already a member of the U.S. Snowboarding team, found herself matched up against teammate Marni Yamada of Seattle, Wash., along with Americans Lynn Ott of Bend, Ore., and Joanie Anderson of South Lake Tahoe, a 2007 X Games gold medalist. In the championship heat, Chythlook-Sifsof started behind the pack but quickly caught up and made her push, reaching the finish line with little room to spare and landing her the biggest win in a brief yet impressive three-year career. Rounding out the top four were Neil, Anderson and Waller, respectively.

"This is my first win ever at this level of competition, and I'm just so happy to be here," said Chythlook-Sifsof. "I didn't know what to expect out there today, but from the very beginning my goal was to win. Lindsey always presents such huge competition to the entire field, and I honestly had no idea I had won the overall championship until I crossed the finish line. The Olympics is my next goal, and having competed on the World Cup circuit and winning this event today, it shows me that I can hold my own with anyone."

The only snag of the weekend for Chythlook-Sifsof involves her prize earnings. In addition to a generous winner's check, the Alaskan, with no driver's license to her name, earned the keys to a new Jeep Liberty. The part-time commercial fisherman plans to remedy that situation by taking driver's education and applying for a license as soon as she returns to Girdwood.

Next up is the men's and women's ski cross finals, as the world's top-ranked racer, Tomas Kraus, attempts to bring home the crown against a contingent of Americans

including Casey Puckett, Errol Kerr and Daron Rahlves. Also in the hunt are three Canadians ranked in the top five – Stanley Hayer, Davey Barr and Chris Del Bosco.

Coverage of the action from Sun Valley will be televised to a national broadcast audience on March 29 and 30 on CBS Sports and on nationally syndicated television beginning March 28. Check local listings for specific airdates and times. Photos and videos from the competition can be found at www.jeepsportsmedia.com, under the Media Distribution link.

Billed as the "Loudest Show on Snow," 48STRAIGHT emerged from the consolidation of the Jeep® King of the Mountain Series, one of the most renowned professional race programs over the past 15 years and Ketchum-based The Ski Tour, an event that in its inaugural year redefined the merging of high-level racing with high demand musical offerings. The result is a jam-packed weekend of on-snow and off-snow social, educational and recreational activities ranging from ski and snowboard cross racing and halfpipe competitions to over a dozen live concerts, street parties, art exhibits, stage productions and environmental expos.

FINAL STANDINGS – JEEP KING OF THE MOUNTAIN MARCH 14, 2008 – SUN VALLEY, IDAHO

Overall Men's Champion – Shaun Palmer

Overall Women's Champion – Callan Chythlook-Sifsof

Sun Valley Men's Standings

1. Nate Holland, Squaw Valley, CA
2. Shaun Palmer, South Lake Tahoe, CA
3. Pat Holland, Tahoe City, CA
4. Nick Baumgartner, Iron River, MI
5. Graham Watanabe, Park City, UT
6. Seth Wescott, Farmington, ME
7. Taan Robrahn, Sun Valley, ID
8. Jonathan Cheever, Park City, UT

Sun Valley Women's Standings

1. Callan Chythlook-Sifsof, Girdwood, AK
2. Lynn Neil, Stateline, N.Y.
3. Joanie Anderson, South Lake Tahoe, CA
4. Dena Waller, South Lake Tahoe, CA
5. Lynn Ott, Bend, OR
6. Marni Yamada, Seattle, WA
7. Lindsey Jacobellis, Stratton Mountain, VT