

# What's next for the US women's speed team?

Yes there are others besides Shiffrin and Vonn

OK, it's Shiffrin time in Aspen.

Giant slalom on Saturday and slalom on Sunday.

Go, Mikaela, go.

One year ago, Madame Shiffrin saved the day for the U.S. Ski Team with a second-place GS finish, her best result in the discipline at the time, here at the Raptor test events.

It was otherwise a grim weekend for the women's team, and, hopefully, not a portent of the 2015 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships.

A lot has changed in a year. Lindsey Vonn — knock wood — is healthy and will test the knee next weekend up in her backyard, Lake Louise, Alberta, with two downhill and a super-G.

Miss Shiffrin is a year older, doubtless gray-haired at 19. Yeah, it's only one year, but it's been 365 days that included another slalom globe, an Olympic medal and the first GS win of her career.

So, U.S. women's skiing's got that going for it, which is nice. (Gunga galunga... gunga, gunga-lagunga. Carl Spackler applies not only to golf, but World Cup skiing.)

The question is "How much has really changed in a year?"

The thought last season was that without

Vonn, there was still Julia Mancuso, Leanne Smith, Stacey Cook and Alice McKennis, who had podium finishes during the 2012-13 season and that they would be able to step up in 2013-14. Of course, Mancuso did punch in for bronze at the Olympic super-combined because she is freaky good at stepping up to the big events.

But the non-Vonn (injured) and Shiffrin (superb) portion of the women's team, hailed as the best speed team in the world by its coaches and marketing crew, laid an egg.

Nary a podium on the World Cup in 2013-14 in speed.

So what now as speed begins next weekend at Lake Lind-

sey with an eye toward Worlds here in February?

## VONN AND THE SPOTLIGHT

Lindsey's return is going to help. While I'm not a huge fan of Lindsey-mania — is Tiger here? Is she dating Tim Tebow? (A very popular rumor in 2011.) — there is something to be said for Vonn's sucking the air out of a room.

The Vonn obsession is a terrible thing when, say, Lara Gut is asked, as she was last year at Raptor, "Does your win mean any less because Lindsey wasn't racing?" To her credit, Gut was polite in her response.



**Chris Freud**  
On Skiing

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# Ted Ligety will skip events in Lake Louise due to wrist

US Ski Team remains hopeful Ligety will be well enough for Birds of Prey

Associated Press

DENVER — Olympic champion Ted Ligety will skip the World Cup races in Lake Louise, Alberta, this weekend with his left wrist still on the mend.

The 30-year-old Ligety had surgery on his wrist after a training mishap in Vail,

Colorado, last weekend.

The U.S. Ski Team remains hopeful that Ligety can return to competition in early December when the circuit switches to Beaver Creek, Colorado. The World Cup stop at Birds of Prey includes downhill, super-G and giant slalom races. U.S. men's coach Sasha Rearick said that Ligety is "making good decisions to get himself ready for Beaver Creek. We're going to have high quality training for him to get up to speed so he can prep for and focus on Birds of Prey." Ligety is a two-time Olympic champion.

## ON SKIING

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(Mine would have been, "Go to the top of PHQ and jump," with some expletives.)

But there is a benefit for the U.S. Team's younger skiers like Smith, Cook and McKennis. With all eyes on Vonn, no one expects anything from those three as well as Mancuso. (The lack of respect accorded Julia still amazes me. Four Olympic medals and five shiny objects from Worlds really demand otherwise.)

When the women head up to Canada, out to Europe and back here in February, the media will be in Jan Brady-mode, "Marcia, er Lindsey, Lindsey, Lindsey," and the pressure will be off.

## DARKHORSE?

While I wouldn't be surprised if Cook

or Smith pop a top 10 or two as they go — nothing Mancuso does should surprise anyone — watch for McKennis. Of the younger generation of the women's speed team, the Glenwood Springs skier is the one who has won.

She hit the top step of the podium in St. Anton, Austria, in January 2013. Before her win and after, McKennis has broken her legs — her left in 2011 and right in 2013. The right one was particularly gruesome. According to our sister paper The Glenwood Post-Independent, "McKennis' right tibial plateau, ... by a conservative estimate was broken in 30 pieces." Ouch.

She wisely took most of last year off, despite Olympic temptation. McKennis is 25, healthy and back on snow. She has been targeting the 2015 Worlds as a goal. This could turn into a "feel good" story really fast.

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