

## World Pro Ski Tour: Colorado Pro Open at Eldora



PHOTO BY DAVE GIBSON

### Eldora hosts Colorado Pro Open

An elite field of ski racers converged at Eldora Mountain Resort for a highly competitive and entertaining contest. The head-to-head dual-format made for exciting photo finishes last Saturday. See story page 2.

## The beauty of where we live



PHOTO BY SARA SANDSTROM-KOBI

**Sara Sandstrom-Kobi**  
Nederland

Last week I left Nederland Middle Senior High School after a basketball game and was greeted with a sky full of pink, purple and blue hues. I stopped and told my kids my look up at the beautiful sight. I am sure they tire of me saying that, but this time they were just as impressed as I was. My daughter said, "It looks like someone painted the sky." Her description was spot on. It really did look like someone had painted the sky.

In my rush to get home, get the kids fed and in bed so I can put a few more hours of work in, I almost ignored the painted sky. Instead we all paused, despite the cold, and took

### The painted sky

The sky with its purple, pink and blue hues greets Peak to Peak residents with its beauty.

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### - Quote of the Week -

*"Know what you want to do, hold the thought firmly, and do every day what should be done, and every sunset will see you that much nearer to your goal."*  
~Elbert Hubbard



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PHOTOS BY DAVE GIBSON

### A great day for ski racing

Above, left; Mark Sassi and former U.S. Ski Team member Pam Fletcher provided the commentary for CBS Sports Network. Above, right; Robert Cone guns for his fourth consecutive WPST title in the finals.

### Dave Gibson Nederland

In 1964 America won its very first Olympic men's ski medals when Billy Kidd of Steamboat Springs, CO, took silver and Jimmie Heuga bronze in the slalom at Innsbruck, Austria. Kidd would go on to win a gold medal for the overall (downhill and slalom) at Val Gardena, Italy, in 1970. That same year, former Colorado Buffaloes ski coach,

U.S. Ski Team coach, and ABC sports commentator Bob Beattie founded the World Pro Ski Tour (WPST). Its storied history includes Kidd joining the tour and extending his successful career. Legendary duels in 1973 between Jean-Claude Killy and "Spider" Sabich were viewed by millions. Those over fifty years of age might recall the final race of the series when Killy won the crown after a spectacular Sabich crash. Remembered fondly by many,

"Spider" Sabich was tragically shot and killed at his Aspen home in 1976 by his singer/actress girlfriend Claudine Longet who was sentenced to 30 days following a sensationalistic trial. Skiing under the Coors Light banner, fraternal twins Phil and Steve Mahre, gold and silver medalists respectively at Sarajevo, competed in the WPST with Phil winning the slalom in 1989. A skiers' strike in 1992 along with the non-renewal of a TV contract led to its demise in 1998.

Recently, with a number of sponsors and CBS Sports onboard, the World Pro Ski Tour has been resurrected. Three of the six stops on its schedule are in Colorado. Racers like Ted Ligety share similar pedigrees of competitors from the past. Tour member Ligety won three gold medals during the 2013 Alpine World Championships and five

World Cup overall giant slalom titles. In 2014, at the Sochi Winter Olympics, he took home a gold medal which was the first-ever Olympic men's giant slalom medal for the United States.

Due to snow and high winds, Friday night's qualifying runs at Eldora's Pro Open were postponed until the next day, Saturday, January 18, 2020. After the brackets were established, racers squared off at 12:30 p.m. for the dual-format single-elimination super-slalom. In each skier's pairing, they would ski head-to-head with their opponent, once on the red course and once on the blue course. The racer with the best combined time moved on to the next round. The 64 heats in the round of 32 took only little over an hour to complete as entrants tore

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PHOTOS BY DAVE GIBSON

**Top tier competitors from near and far**

Above, left; Miha Kuemer of Slovenia rips down the mountain on the super-slalom course in the quarter finals. Above, right; A racer sets his edges in anticipation of the next gate.

Continued from page 2

down the mountain in less than twenty seconds per run. Seventy-six year old goodwill ambassador and 1970 WPST World Championship winner Billy Kidd was on hand for inspiration and to wish the sweet sixteen racers good luck. In an impressive showing on their home mountain, one quarter of the skiers remaining were CU Buffs.

With all of the racers eliminated but four moving into the semifinals, Alex Leever of Vail (3-time NCAA champion) met Michael Ankeny (2015 overall and slalom NorAm champion and 2nd place finisher at the 2019 Waterville WPST). Nolan Kasper (3-time Olympic team member with five top-ten finishes in World Cup slalom) faced off against Robert Cone (NCAA champion and winner of three WPST events). The amount of time that the

winner of the first run gained was applied to a head start for the second run. The racer who crossed the finish line first would be the winner. Determined by a mere blink of an eye, Robert Cone and Michael Ankeny advanced to the final. Ankeny narrowly edged Cone by seven one-thousands of a second in the first run. With Cone gunning for his fourth consecutive WPST win and the 2020 overall title, he would be hard to beat. It was Ankeny who crossed ahead of Cone, securing his first WPST title by 0.267 seconds and \$10,000 in prize money. A champagne-soaked Ankeny said after his thrilling upset victory, "I was always a bridesmaid and never a bride. I really felt the energy of the crowd and the other athletes today, and it was something I was able to harness and use to take the win."



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