

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Race fans out in force

Women's World Cup has international feel

[Charles Agar](#)

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What would happen if the Super Bowl were held in Sweden? The crowd at the Women's World Cup giant slalom on Aspen Mountain Saturday was a good indicator.

A small, eclectic group of Europeans made the pilgrimage to Aspen to see their nations' best compete. And while the overall turnout was no comparison to the massive attendance at European venues, about 500 people came out to hoot, holler and cowbell skiers down the mountain.

"The crowd here is amazing," said Resi Stiegler, an American racer who placed 20th in the GS Saturday. "It's nice to be home and see a crowd like this."

Stiegler gets along well with the hype and attention in Europe, she said, and turnout in the U.S is "getting better."

"Aspen put on a great race," she added. She congratulated the hardworking crews that put the course together in time.

Marilyn Biner and Elias Furrer of Switzerland joined their friend Marcus Walter of Sweden for the trek from Europe to watch the races. Their faces painted with their respective national flags, they wore white jumpsuits stenciled with flags and dangling with streamers. Their cowbells were too heavy to bring with them, Biner said, but the three made up for it with loud cheering for both the Swiss and the Swedes.

Marilyn Biner, Marcus Walter and Elias Turner of Switzerland cheer for Swiss racer Anna Ottosson. (Paul Conrad/The Aspen Times)



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Eva Lemley of Aspen shows her support for the American Ski Team. (Paul Conrad/The Aspen Times)

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"It's more than I was thinking," Biner said of Saturday's crowd. While the crowds are bigger in Europe, she was surprised at the turnout.

"It's a huge thing in Europe. Like football here," said Katie Morlind of Old Snowmass.

She and her kids, Nils and Maggie, were decked out in face-paint and blue and yellow top hats to cheer for Sweden on Saturday. Katie's husband Johan, a Swedish native, was working security for the event. The family just returned from a year in Sweden and were excited about the World Cup crowd in Aspen Saturday, but they said it was nothing like European crowds.

"I'm a freaky American," said Tom Mullins, a ski coach from Monarch, Colo. "I love this sport."

Mullins brought his team to Aspen for the weekend to make some early-season turns on Aspen Mountain and watch some world-caliber racing.

Mullins explained the lack of enthusiasm in the U.S. as a result of differing mentalities between Americans and Europeans regarding sport.

Gordon Acton traveled from Ontario, Canada to watch his daughter Brigitte compete Saturday (she came in 21st place). He is a former Canadian racer and his wife Diane skied for Canada in the 1972 Olympics in Japan.

"Ski racing in Europe is just huge," he said. And an event like Saturday's Giant Slalom would be mobbed with tens of thousands of fans, he said. "It's like a festival."

"We have a whole marketing challenge to get fan support in the US and Canada. We have to really look at what the NFL does and what NASCAR does and learn from them to understand how to build support one by one," he said.

Federation Internationale de Ski officials don't understand North American markets, he said. Acton believes it is the way television presents sports and suggested adding helmet cameras or finding other ways to capture audience interest.

The races continue at 10 a.m. today on Aspen Mountain.

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