

BY **MARCUS RIETEMA**

PEYRAGUDES 2LUXE CUP

The 2009 IGSA World Cup Series got underway July 15-18 in Peyragudes, France with the Peyragudes 2Luxe Cup. It kicked off a three-week stint of consecutive World Cup races on the European continent.

Mischo Erban spent the winter in southern California so he could escape the Canadian snow and skate every day. The improvement in his skills on technical courses was immediately obvious. Other top contenders like Martin Siegrist, Erik Lundberg, Jonathan Martinez and Jackson Shapiera also seemed to have raised their level of skating over the off-season in an effort to take the World Cup Series crown away from 2008 Champion Scott "Scoot" Smith.

Traveling to Europe for the first time was the California duo of James Kelly and Louis Piloni. Both skaters brought speed and a stand-up style with them that immediately raised the sport's level to new heights. On the opening day of practice, both of them appeared to be really fast.

Qualifying was a dogfight, with Mischo coming out on top, followed in order by Piloni,



Per Piloni — Louis Piloni looks back at Adam Yates and Corey Leeson. Photo: Bob Ozman



Mischo Erban was the #1 qualifier but finished 4th. Photo: Marcus Rietema

Kelly, Siegrist and Martinez. Canadian Patrick Switzer was also making his first trip to Europe and immediately made his presence felt when he qualified sixth. Scoot wound up in seventh.

In the race Piloni was really solid, winning all of his heat races leading up to the four-man final. Erban and Siegrist also had solid runs through the prelims to make the final. Erik Lundberg was the surprise fourth finalist, coming from the 15th position after missing the entire practice day.

Two of the biggest upsets of the day occurred in the quarterfinals. Number six qualifier Switzer crashed and was eliminated, and Scoot crashed out in the final corner of his heat while running in third place. He wound up 14th in the final standings. Switzer was credited with 13th.

In the final, Piloni simply ran away with it. Erban crashed out while running second, losing all hope for the win. Lundberg and Siegrist battled all the way down the 3.2 km (2-mile) course. Lundberg eventually prevailed to earn second, and Siegrist was third.



Siegrist, Piloni and Lundberg were stoked to make the podium. Photo: Marcus Rietema

Peyragudes 2Luxe Cup Results

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Louis Piloni | United States |
| 2. Erik Lundberg | Sweden |
| 3. Martin Siegrist | Switzerland |
| 4. Mischo Erban | Canada |
| 5. Jonathan Martinez | France |
| 6. James Kelly | United States |
| 7. Sebastian Hertler | Germany |
| 8. Jackson Shapiera | Australia |

THE GRAVEYARD CALL

Following the first IGSA World Cup of the year in Peyragudes, the skaters traveled across France for round number two July 24-26, 2009 in Argonay. The Argonay track was narrow and technical and threw all sorts of challenges at the competitors. It immediately became a favorite with many of them. Due to the narrow racing surface, the decision was made to run in a one-on-one, two-man format.

Louis Pilloni picked up right where he left off in Peyragudes to qualify number one. His teammate James Kelly was second, followed by

Martin Siegrist in third, Christoph Batt in fourth and Mischo Erban in fifth. Patrick Switzer and Scoot Smith were sixth and seventh, respectively.

Sunday's race was amazing. The combination of the best downhill skaters in the world in one-on-one heats on a track many were calling the world's best was a dream come true.

Scoot Smith nearly crashed out in the final about 25 meters (75 feet) from the finish line but was able to gather it back together to win. He had to win it the hard way, racing head to head and beating Adam Yates, Yvon Labarthe, James Kelly, Patrick Switzer and finally Mischo Erban in the final. It was the first win of the 2009 season for the reigning IGSA World Champion.

Erban had to overcome adversity to even make it into the race after he crashed during the warmup session and severely bent one of the hangers on his prototype trucks. With no spares available and only minutes to spare before the start of the race, Mischo had no choice other than to crudely bend the axle back and hope it was reasonably straight. After the race he revealed that his board was pulling to the right throughout the entire race and that he felt very fortunate to finish second.



Patrick Switzer throws a standup speed check. Photo: Marcus Rietema



Nicolas Robert surprised many to finish 3rd. Photo: Bob Ozman



James Kelly skated hard to finish 5th. Photo: Seb DuBois



Scoot beats Mischo to the line for the win. Photo: Bob Ozman

The Graveyard Call results

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Scott Smith | Canada |
| 2. Mischo Erban | Canada |
| 3. Nicolas Robert | Switzerland |
| 4. Patrick Switzer | Canada |
| 5. James Kelly | United States |
| 6. Louis Pilloni | United States |
| 7. Christoph Batt | Switzerland |
| 8. Boris Schinke | Germany |

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PADOVA GRAND PRIX

The IGSA World Cup Series traveled to Italy for the first time July 31-August 2, 2009 for the Padova Grand Prix in Teolo.

Qualifying number one was three-time World Champion Martin Siegrist. Louis Pilloni turned in another solid qualifying performance to start second, followed by slalom ace Ramón Königshausen in third, Mischo Erban in fourth and Patrick Switzer in fifth.

Race day was filled with crashes on nearly every run as the skaters were pushing the limit and doing all they could to find more speed. As the heats went on, it was a race of attrition, leaving only those who were able to stay out front and ride clean or those who were able to get back underway quickly after crashing.

In semifinal #1 it were Siegrist, Scoot Smith, Switzer and Erban. Siegrist took the early lead, followed by Erban, Smith and Switzer. Heading into the fast left and right hairpin, Erban crashed, moving Smith to second and Switzer third. A few corners later Scoot slid wide and tagged the bales. This allowed Switzer to move into second. Siegrist and Switzer finished first and second to move into the final.

Semifinal #2 included Erik Lundberg, Königshausen, Pilloni and Stefan Ruefli. All four riders pushed really hard off the line. As they came into the fast left-right hairpin, Lundberg, Königshausen and Pilloni were all in a tight pack; Ruefli was trailing slightly behind. The combination of regular- and goofy-footers,



*Martin Siegrist totally focused on the win.
Photo: Bob Ozman*

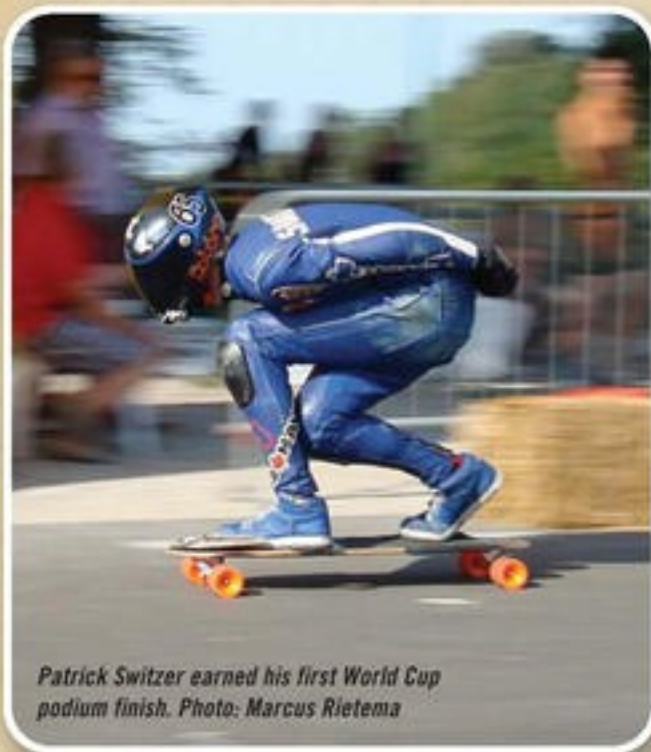


Erik Lundberg made it to the final for the second time this season. Photo: Bob Ozman

one of the few clean runs of the day. Siegrist went to the front and never looked back until the finish. Switzer rode cleanly into second, while Ruefli and Lundberg had a good battle all the way, with Ruefli coming out on top to earn the final podium spot. ■



*Switzer, Siegrist and Ruefli celebrate on the podium.
Photo: Marcus Rietema*



Patrick Switzer earned his first World Cup podium finish. Photo: Marcus Rietema

different braking techniques, the narrow track and aggressive riding were a recipe for disaster.

Lundberg, Königshausen and Pilloni all piled into the bales together. Ruefli went sailing by and rode unchallenged into the final. There was a mad scramble in his wake, as the other three knew they were all racing for second and a spot in the final. Pilloni made it out front first with Lundberg in hot pursuit. Lundberg got a good run coming off the last hairpin and used the extra speed to draft by Pilloni down the final straightaway and into the coveted second place.

The final was set with Siegrist, Switzer, Ruefli and Lundberg. Amazingly, the final was

Padova Grand Prix

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|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Martin Siegrist | Switzerland |
| 2. Patrick Switzer | Canada |
| 3. Stefan Ruefli | Switzerland |
| 4. Erik Lundberg | Sweden |
| 5. Scoot Smith | Canada |
| 6. Louis Pilloni | United States |
| 7. Ramón Königshausen | Switzerland |
| 8. Mischo Erban | Canada |