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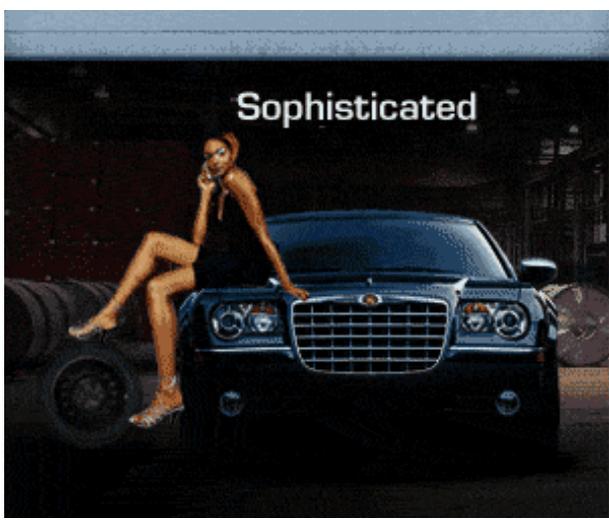
Calgary slider solves difficult track to retain title

By CP

ALTENBERG, Germany -- Jeff Pain made it a skeleton sweep for Canada.

The Calgary athlete retained his overall World Cup men's skeleton title yesterday by racing to his third gold medal of the season.

"It feels pretty good to do it twice in a row," said Pain. "It was a really good race for me on a track that's kicked my butt in the past, so it felt great to have two good runs."



Pain's success came a day after Mellisa Hollingsworth-Richards of Eckville, Alta., won the women's overall World Cup title and it's just two weeks before the Turin Olympics.

"I don't know if Canada winning both the men's and the women's titles makes a statement going into the Olympics, other than that we're still around," said Pain. "We've had a strong team with this crew of people for a while now -- hopefully it means we have the momentum going in."

The 35-year-old Pain raced to an Altenberg track record in yesterday's gold-medal performance, whipping down in 57.49 seconds in the World Cup circuit's final race of the season. His two-run combined time was 1:55.08.

Germany's Sebastian Haupt took the silver medal, while Austria's Markus Penz raced to bronze in 1:55.85. Pain, whose victory was his fourth World Cup medal this season, won the overall title with 580 points, well ahead of Switzerland's Gregor Staehli at 425.

Hollingsworth-Richards, who made the podium in each of her seven World Cup races this winter, including two victories, edged out Swiss rival Maya Pedersen by 10 points to claim the women's crown Thursday.

"It's always been like that between us and the Swiss team," said Pain. "(Staehli) is such a great slider, and so is Maya, that it can be anybody winning on any given day."

Calgary's Paul Boehm and Duff Gibson finished sixth and 14th respectively in the overall standings. Boehm continuing to build on what's been a breakout season, finishing fifth yesterday with a two-run time of 1:56.10.

Pain and Hollingsworth lead a strong Canadian team in Turin that includes Boehm and Gibson and Lindsay Alcock of Calgary.

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