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## **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LAAX OPEN WINNERS 2023: Zoi Sadowski Synnott (NZL), Marcus Kleveland (NOR), Ono Mitsuki (JPN) and Ruka Hirano (JPN) rake in snowboard titles in LAAX**

Olympic champion Zoi Sadowski Synnott (NZL) and World champion Marcus Kleveland (NOR) take home the LAAX OPEN Slopestyle titles, while Japanese Junior Olympic champions Ono Mitsuki (JPN) and Ruka Hirano (JPN) are the 2023 Halfpipe champions. The winning quartet has one common denominator - the first LAAX OPEN victory for all four!

### **Slopestyle - freestyle at its best**

The slopestyle final, which was postponed on Saturday due to adverse weather conditions, was going down on Sunday. Norwegian Marcus Kleveland is over the moon about his first LAAX OPEN title: "I have been in Laax for so many years. I've been third before, but to be on top of the podium here today feels incredible and I'm super happy. I liked the course, and I think we all had fun riding today and it was a good show." As in the preliminaries, he unpacked his signature trick *Nose Butter Back 14 Indy* in today's final, leaving his fellow competitors to check their empty sleeves. Dusty Henricksen (USA) and Sven Thorgren (SWE) completed the podium in 2nd and 3rd place.

In the women's competition, New Zealander Zoi Sadowski Synnott dominated and secured the World Cup victory in LAAX ahead of Mia Brookes (GBR) and Anna Gasser (AUT). Beaming, she said, "I am so stoked, I can't really believe it. I had a challenging start of the week but put down a run I am super hyped on. I am so stoked to win the Laax Open, which I have never done before." The sensation of the week was sixteen-year-old Mia Brookes, who celebrated her birthday during the LAAX OPEN and gave herself the best present: making it straight into the top three at her very first Slopestyle World Cup with lots of style and a strong rail game: "Sharing the podium with my heroes feels pretty sick and special. I am super happy!" Perfectly understandable as, after all, the young Brit, who has been training in Laax for years, is now side by side with two Olympic gold medalists in the winner's picture.



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## Halfpipe - flying high

Thousands of fans lined the halfpipe on Saturday evening full of anticipation to see the world's best Halfpipe riders. The floodlit halfpipe night final is the absolute highlight of the LAAX OPEN; everyone was ready, but the weather didn't play ball. In consultation with the riders, the eagerly awaited event had to be cancelled due to obstructive wind and fog weather conditions. Nevertheless, the audience got bang for their buck as the pipe specialists showcased the most likely biggest method and frontside airs ever seen in an improvised pipe session.

The results of the semi-finals were counted as final World Cup results. Due to their strong performances in the semi-finals, Japanese riders Ono Mitsuki and Ruka Hirano took their first LAAX OPEN titles, for Ono it is the first World Cup win of her career. Scotty James (AUS) and Yuto Totsuka (JPN) came in second and third in the men's competition, while Wu Shaotong (2nd /CHN) and Maddie Mastro (3rd /USA) completed the women's podium. Two-time LAAX OPEN winner (2019 + 2020) Scotty James said, "It is a winter sport, and it is what I signed up for. I signed up for the cold, I signed up for the wind, the snow and everything in between." In this respect, there was no exciting Laax duel for 1st and 2nd place between Scotty James and Yuto Totsuka as in 2019, 2020 and 2021, but it was nonetheless a pleasure to watch them all.

Mention must also be made of exceptional Australian talent Valentino Guseli. The FIS Big Air discipline winner in 2022/23 makes himself at home in LAAX over the winter, taking advantage of the many training opportunities on offer. The fruits of this loom were on display at the LAAX OPEN 2023 where Guseli was the only rider to reach the finals in both competitions, finishing with a very good 4th (halfpipe) and 5th (slopestyle) place.

Results can be found on [laax.com/open](https://laax.com/open) and in the [LAAX APP](#).

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