

GEORGETOWN'S BAIRD FINISHES 6TH AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

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Jasmine Baird reached the bottom of the hill and knew she had turned in a strong run. More than half of the field had already run the slopestyle course at the FIS Freeski and Snowboard World Championships in Park City, Utah. And though there were TV monitors at the top of the hill, Baird did not pay any attention to them, preferring to focus on her own qualifying run rather than what the other competitors doing.

When her score finally was displayed, a personal-best 82.50, her trainer told her she was in second place.

"Are you for real?" the Georgetown snowboarder asked.

It had been just two weeks since Baird won her first World Cup medal, so she could know she could compete with top riders,

but the field for worlds was stacked with six of the top seven finishers from the Olympics competing.

With 12 competitors remaining, Baird would now have to wait to see if she could hold on to one of the eight spots in the final.

The next two riders bumped her back to fourth place, but then rider after rider failed to match her score. Canadian teammate Laurie Blouin, the Olympic silver medallist, didn't top Baird's score. By the time the Olympic bronze medallist, Finland's Enni Rukajarvi, dropped in for her run, Baird's spot in the final was secure. Rukajarvi finished a distant 13 points back.

Only the final two riders, including Olympic champ Jamie Anderson, would surpass Baird's qualifying score, putting her in sixth place.

"My coaches said I had a pretty strong rail section, so I got a few points there,"

the 19-year-old said.

Baird said the well-built jumps and her strong performance in Italy at the World Cup gave her confidence.

Unfortunately, the weather would not co-operate. Poor weather had already cancelled the women's big air competition earlier in the week, and it struck again, wiping out the slopestyle final. As a result, the qualifying results became the final standings with Baird taking sixth.

"I was almost in tears. I did what I came here to do," Baird said. "I wanted to compete if the weather was better, but I'm still really happy with my finish. I finished higher than the other two girls on the national team, and they landed their runs, so I was able to show the national team coaches I can ride at that level."

Her sixth-place finish was the second best by a Canadian in any discipline,



Mike Stastook

Georgetown's Jasmine Baird finished sixth in the snowboard slopestyle competition at the FIS Freeski and Snowboard World Championships in Park City, Utah.

skiing or snowboard, at worlds, behind only Mark McMorris' silver medal in the men's snowboard slopestyle.

And it earned Baird another chance to show she

can compete with the best. Her finish earned her an alternate spot for the Burton US Open in Vail, Colo. Feb. 25-March 2. Baird said there's a 90 per cent chance she'll get to ride and she is

looking forward to the challenge.

"This will be the biggest slopestyle course I've ever been on," she said. "It has huge features and huge rails."



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