

## Kronplatz 2026 – First Austrian Victory on the “Erta” Course

It took only a few years for the youngest member of the Club 5 Ski Classics to establish itself as one of the most spectacular and demanding giant slalom races on the women’s World Cup tour. And it is surely no coincidence that since 2017, only established specialists have managed to excel on the challenging “Erta” slope overlooking the beautiful village of San Vigilio, part of the renowned Skirama Kronplatz area.

A quick look at the winners’ list is enough to fully understand the joy and pride of Austria’s Julia Scheib, who celebrated her fourth win of the season in Italy, following in the footsteps of stars such as Federica Brignone (2017), Viktoria Rebensburg (2018), Mikaela Shiffrin (2019, 2023), Tessa Worley (2021), Sara Hector (2022), Lara Gut-Behrami (2024) and Alice Robinson (2025).

Scheib, who brilliantly opened the season with a dominant victory in Sölden, arrived in South Tyrol highly motivated after several disappointing results on the Erta slope in previous years — she had never finished better than ninth in San Vigilio. Following her victories in Sölden, Mont-Tremblant and Semmering, the Austrian travelled with confidence and strong determination, ready to give her best once again.

Third after the first run, Scheib raised her level significantly in the afternoon, clearly distancing herself from rivals who had been faster in the morning. Camille Rast, fresh from victory in Kranjska Gora, finished second, 0.37 seconds behind, while reigning Olympic champion Sara Hector — fastest in the first run — completed the podium in third, 0.46 seconds adrift. USA star Mikaela Shiffrin placed a strong fourth, just 0.40 seconds shy of the podium.

The charming 27-year-old from Styria was particularly pleased with her performance, becoming the first Austrian woman ever to win the Kronplatz giant slalom. She has a special appreciation for the demanding Erta slope, which she first tackled in January 2018 during her World Cup debut. Although she qualified for the second run on that occasion, she failed to finish — but only a week later she confirmed her talent by winning gold at the FIS Junior World Championships in Davos, Switzerland.

“It means a lot to me to win this difficult competition — it’s certainly the most demanding slope on the circuit, especially this year with the higher start,” Scheib explained. “The course conditions were perfect, and I was able to take great risks in the second run. I’m enjoying an amazing season so far; I never expected to achieve so many great results this winter. It’s an important step toward the GS World Cup globe, but for now I’m focusing on the next races and the upcoming Olympics.”

The crowd experienced an especially emotional moment with the return to competition of defending overall World Cup champion Federica Brignone, nine months after her horrific crash during the Italian National Championships in early April. The Italian star, who suffered double fractures of her left tibia and fibula along with ligament damage, made a sensational comeback on the Erta slope, finishing an impressive sixth, just 1.23 seconds behind the winner — after less than two weeks of technical training since returning to snow in November.

“This was one of the most emotional race days of my career,” the 35-year-old admitted. “I was extremely nervous at the start and even had trouble breathing this morning. I didn’t expect anything special today — this race was meant to test my chances for the Olympics in Cortina. I’m really surprised and deeply moved by the support from the crowd.”

Poland’s Maryna Gasienica-Daniel equalled her best-ever World Cup result with a solid fifth place, matching her performance from Semmering last December. Other favourites, however,

struggled on the demanding Erta course. Alice Robinson, a two-time winner this season who suffered a heavy crash earlier this month in Zauchensee, had to settle for 13th place, several seconds off the podium.

Lara Colturi, weakened by a lingering flu, finished further back in 20th position. While excelling in slalom, the Albanian star has yet to rediscover her best form in giant slalom this season.

Italy's legendary Deborah Compagnoni, winner of six Olympic and World Championship gold medals during her illustrious career in the 1990s, took part in the award ceremony alongside organizing committee chairman Danny Kastlunger. He expressed great satisfaction with the event, which once again attracted a large crowd and numerous distinguished guests in the VIP areas overlooking the finish.

"Everything went extremely well today," Kastlunger said. "This was our tenth race since 2017 and possibly our best, thanks to the higher start hut and excellent course conditions. Our volunteers did an outstanding job, and Federica Brignone's comeback generated huge interest throughout Italy and the ski community. Our goal is not only to stage a thrilling race, but also to create a memorable event for visitors and teams in San Vigilio and nearby Brunico, where thousands attended the bib draw on Monday evening."

Busy weeks now lie ahead for the local organizers, as many teams plan training camps on the Erta slope in preparation for the 2026 Winter Olympics in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

The next World Cup race in San Vigilio is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 19**.