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Vik cruises to Nordic combined gold



Vik-tory in the rain.

Norway's Bjarte Engen Vik, taking advantage of the comfortable lead he built in Friday's ski jumping competition, cruised to the gold medal in the Nordic combined event Saturday.

Vik, currently on top of the World Cup rankings, went into the 15-kilometer cross country race with a 36-second advantage and never relinquished the lead on the rain-soaked Snow Harp cross country course in Hakuba.

The 26-year-old bronze medal winner in Lillehammer four years ago crossed the finish line in 41 minutes, 21.1 seconds and punched the air with joy in his victory.

Finland's Samppa Lajunen overtook four competitors in the final 60 meters to win the silver, finishing 27.5 seconds behind Vik.

Russia's Valerij Stoljarov lost a home stretch sprint duel to Lajunen and had to settle for the bronze 0.7 second behind.

Two-time world champion Kenji Ogiwara of Japan moved up from ninth to finish a distant fourth. Tsugiharuru Ogiwara, Kenji's twin brother, dropped from third to sixth.

Vik was never challenged during the race. Even though he only managed with the 16th fastest time of the day, the Norwegian easily completed his one-man journey over the hilly Snow Harp.

On Friday, Vik combined a jump of 89.5 meters with the longest leap of the day, 94.5 meters, to put himself in position to claim his first gold medal in a major international event. (Kyodo News)

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