

## Aksel Lund Svindal

In January 2016, Svindal had been leading World Cup competition after making a remarkable comeback from injury earlier this season. He was among several professional skiers who fell badly in the same swing on the steep and difficult race course at Kitzbühel. Two other skiers had to be picked up by helicopter and rushed to hospital.

Svindal had also taken a fall on Friday, and admitted to being stiff with a muscle strain, but he gamely raced again, with a much more shocking conclusion.

Even though he initially walked off the course, he clearly was in pain, was taken down the mountain on a snowmobile and later flown to hospital in Innsbruck. "It wasn't exactly fun to watch this happen," Claus Ryste, sports chief for the Norwegian men's ski team, told Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK). "He's at the hospital now. There they can take an MRI of his right knee."

At one stage, looked like he might walk away with this year's overall World Cup. Instead the Norwegian skier was left struggling to walk off the slopes after a high-speed crash on Kitzbühel's notorious downhill at the weekend, rupturing the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in his right knee to rule him out for the rest of the season.

Immediately after the crash, Svindal tried to make light of the setback. Writing on Instagram, he said: "Walk it off!! Well, doesn't really work that way. But it was worth a try..."





The Streif in Kitzbuehel is unforgiving in both training and racing.

During Saturday's downhill on the impressive Streif in Kitzbuehel, three athletes were injured. Aksel, Hannes ReicheltThe 11-time World Cup winner and World Champion suffered a severe bone bruise on his left leg and is expected to be back in 2-3 weeks. Georg Streitberger, 35 year-old skier from Saalbach suffered a season-ending torn ACL and underwent surgery immediately.

During the two training days, two Austrian athletes suffered injuries, Florian Scheiber, the 28 year-old racer from Tyrol suffered a season-ending torn ACL and meniscus. He underwent surgery in Hochrum. Max Franz, the 26 year-old racer from Weißbriach - Kärnten suffered a season-ending ligament injury to his left knee in addition to injuring his left hand. He also underwent surgery.

For Aksel rehab training feels brutal at first. "You're used to being an athlete, and all of a sudden it feels more like being a patient. But then you start appreciating small steps and improvement, and then is actually not that bad."

"In downhill racing (and a lot of other sports) there will always be an element of risk. Something we all know about and that we're used to. Part of your job as an athlete is to be willing to accept this risk and push the limit so that you can go faster. To be able to win races you need to be good at overcoming your negative thoughts and be able to take enough risk. I'm not necessarily a big risk seeker. So I need to convince my self that it's worth taking the risk. Taking risk when the possible outcome is winning the race, that's a much better risk/reward ratio than when you're not in a position to win. So when the price is

bigger, I have an easier time convincing myself that it's worth pushing hard."

"So now it's back to rehab training. Do I have the motivation to go through another rehab in just over a year? I do! With skiing as the ultimate goal of course. But there's also a lot of other things. I want to drop the crutches as fast as I can. I wanna walk on a beach, and ride my bike somewhere cool. I wanna lift weights and do heavy workouts. To get there as fast as possible it's all the same method. Good rehab training is the answer to all these!"

His rehab is progressing well with lots of support and lots of hard work. He is using exercise machines that keep his knee in a controlled position with no twisting.

He is also using the Bosu ball a lot to help with his balance and strengthening the ACL.



During his rehab, Aksel has missed the skiing and travelling around with the rest of the athletes, but he has been flying in a F-16 with the Royal Norwegian Air Force, relaxing in Florida on the beach, fishing and boating and visiting friends, something he thought commitments meant he struggled to do.

