Italy is gold medal in slalom with Alex Vinatzer Silver for Ritchie (USA), bronze to the Belgian Maes

The Italian flag is on the top step of the podium of the slalom at the Fis Alpine Junior World Ski Championships in Val di Fassa. The gold medal went to the great favourite, Alex Vinatzer, who was the protagonist of two impeccable heats and redeemed the double off-track of the team event and the giant slalom.

Vinatzer managed the pressure as well as possible. Not only he won, but he did it with great authority, with a 1"38 lead over the American Benjamin Ritchie and a 1"46 lead over the Belgian Sam Maes, at the second bronze medal in two days after the one he won on Monday.

Vinatzer, already a protagonist in the World Cup, was the most eagerly awaited of the medal contenders, already second in Davos last year. The 19- years old Italian skier has already built up the victory in the first heat, started with bib number 4 and able to cross the finish line 1"13 ahead of the American Benjamin Ritchie and 1"25 from the Norwegian son of art Atle Lie McGrath, second and third after the first run, followed by the Belgian Sam Maes in fourth place.

Maes, destroyed the dream of the Austrian Joshua Sturm, who gained 15 positions, finishing fourth at 1"77, with the Norwegian Andreas Strand (28th at the end of the first heat) surprisingly fifth at 1"88. Then it was the turn of the American Benjamin Ritchie to sit in the corner leader, with a margin of 8 cents over Maes.

At that point, the large crowd that came to watch the slalom was waiting for the round of their favourite, Vinatzer. The Italian was able to skillfully interpret the race and even increased his lead over the second and third positions, with Ritchie silver at 1"38 and Maes bronze at 1"46.

"Being junior world champion is beautiful - commented Vinatzer - In the first heat I was able to take advantage of the good bib number, while the second run was more difficult. I tried to have a solid strategy, what I needed to manage the advantage accumulated in the first run. After this victory I just want to think about improving, with the aim, for next season, to enter permanently among the top 10 in slalom. The team event and the giant slalom didn't go as expected. I was able to focus on my race and achieve a success that is worth a lot to me: we competed in Italy and I wanted to win".

"My silver medal attitude begun with the Team Event - said the American Ritchie -, where I had the best time of run overall. That result pumped up the whole Usa Team. It was a fantastic Fis Alpine Junior World Ski Championships for me, in a great location".

"Twice on the podium in two days, it's fantastic - explained the Belgian Maes - With the bronze medal in giant slalom I shrugged off all the pressure. I just thought about skiing to the best of my ability to get the best possible result and it went well".