

UCI World Mountain Bike Championships Championnats du Monde du l'UCI- MTB

Åre, SWE - 11-19.9.1999

Report/Rapport: *Men/Hommes Team Relay* - 15.9.1999 - 13 :00

Spain Wins Inaugural Team Relay World Championship



The 1999 UCI Mountain Bike World Championships presented the first competition of the week on Wednesday, as a brand-new discipline – *Team Relay* - debuted with an exciting win by *Spain's* national team. With 19 four-person teams racing against each other on the cross-country course, the action was fast and exciting as the mixed-sex teams raced for the weekend's first rainbow jerseys.

The team relay in Åre was a four-lap competition, with each member of a national team racing for 9.6-km and approximately 30 minutes. After each member finished his or her lap, they would pass off an elastic armband over a wooden barrier, to the next rider on their team. Teams consisted of one elite male, one junior male, one U-23 (under 23) male and one elite woman cross-country racer.

Spain's team, consisting of **Roberto Lezaun**, **Marga Fullana**, **Carlos Coloma** and anchorman **Jose Antonio Hermida**, worked their way up from a 5th-place position after lap one, to third and eventually first place by race's end. "*We raced each leg as if it were a time trial,*" said Hermida. "*It was truly a team effort.*"

Also in the running for medals were three other national teams; *France*, *Canada* and the *United States of America*. Going into the fourth and final lap, all four teams had riders within four minutes of each other – but two of those riders were men and two were women. It made for a very close – and exciting – final lap.

Team USA was first out of the transition area on the final bell lap, as world cup round winner **Alison Dunlap** left the start/finish 35 seconds ahead of current world cup champion **Alison Sydor**. In third was Spain's Hermida at 2:42, while 1998 U-23 World Champion **Miguel Martinez** chased at 3:26. *Denmark* and *Austria* were also within 30 seconds of Martinez, but with four of the world's best racers heading out for their final lap, it was clear who would be vying for the three medals.



As Hermida and Martinez passed the two women, they formed their own battle for the gold medal. *"The last lap was so exciting,"* said Hermida. *"I started with one minute behind and everybody knows Miguel Martinez. He's so explosive."*

"But I was confident in my ability, and said to myself 'nobody comes close to me [today]'."

Martinez chased gamely in the final lap, but after crashing and temporarily losing his armband, conceded the win to Spain. Meanwhile, the secondary women's race between Dunlap and Sydor yielded a third place finish for Sydor, as she passed her American rival on the final climb of the race.

"I think it was a fantastic way to begin the Worlds," said three-time World and World Cup Champion Sydor. *"It really showed the depth of the winning nations' teams."*

Thanks to Ari Cheren for this report



Flash Quotes:

Spanish Team :

- 1st rider - Roberto Lezaun
- 2nd rider - Margarita Fullana Riera
- 3rd rider - Carlos Coloma
- 4th rider - Jose Antonio Hermida

Manager: **Mikel Mendizabel**

"We thought we had a good chance of winning. Margarita Fullana has great form right now, Roberto Lezaun was third in the European championships, Antonio Hermida is one of the best Under 23 riders in the world, and Carlos Coloma was in second place on the last lap of the European championships." (it is not known what happened to Coloma after that).

"The race went really well for us. The whole team was very good. I was so excited, I know that Miguel Martinez is very strong, but at the beginning of the race when Roberto Lezaun arrived in 5th place I knew we would win."

Jose Antonio Hermida (riding the anchor leg)

"The last lap was so exciting. I started with one minute behind and everybody knows Miguel Martinez. He is so explosive. But I was confident in my ability, with my power and condition. When I got into the lead I said to myself 'nobody comes close to me'. I just went as fast as I possibly could."



<i>place</i>	<i>team</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t+</i>
1	SPAIN	ESP	2:03:14	0
2	FRANCE	FRA	2:03:35	20
3	CANADA	CAN	2:05:52	2:37
4	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	USA	2:06:25	3:10
5	GERMANY	GER	2:07:22	4:08
6	RUSSIA	RUS	2:09:36	6:21
7	SWEDEN	SWE	2:09:48	6:34
8	AUSTRALIA	AUS	2:10:44	7:29
9	ITALY	ITA	2:12:32	9:17
10	SWITZERLAND	SUI	2:13:59	10:45
11	AUSTRIA	AUT	2:14:02	10:47
12	CZECH REPUBLIC	CZE	2:15:17	12:02
13	NETHERLAND	NED	2:16:02	12:48
14	DENMARK	DEN	2:20:00	16:45
15	GREAT BRITAIN	GBR	2:22:10	18:56
16	REP. OF SOUTH AFRICA	RSA	2:22:54	19:39
17	IRELAND	IRL	2:24:46	21:31
18	NORWAY	NOR	0	0