

MTB world championships - Mont Sainte Anne, Canada

September 1-5, 2010

Swiss team storms to first gold

By Sue George , cyclingnews.com

Germany, Czech Republic step on team relay podium

After winning the team relay at the European Championships earlier this season, Switzerland added another gold medal to its collection by riding to victory at the team relay at the 2010 UCI Mountain Bike World Championships in Mont-Sainte-Anne, Quebec, Canada, on Wednesday morning. Germany earned the silver medal ahead of the Czech Republic with bronze.

Swiss elite rider Ralph Naef anchored the Swiss team, putting in a powerful final lap to catch all the riders in front of him.

"We're really happy that we could reach our goal, which was to be first," said Naef. "Of course, it's always takes a lot of luck. We are often one of the favorites, but you can't count on winning."

Switzerland started hard with its under 23 rider Thomas Litscher and junior Roger Walderer taking the first two turns. France and Germany took turns leading the chase with Manuel Fumic and Fabien Canal taking the first lap for their respective teams.

Building into lap two, Switzerland dropped back to fourth and Czech powered its way forward through the field with strong pulls from Windham World Cup winner Jaroslav Kulhavy and Ondrej Cink after the nation chose to start with its fastest riders.

Italy also made an appearance in the top five mid-race.

Lap three was the lap that a majority of the nations chose to race their female riders. Katerina Nash led the charge for Czech and despite an early lap crash, she powered the team toward the front while Switzerland's Katrin Leumann, France's elite man Cedric Ravanel and Germany's Sabine Spitz battled just five seconds in arrears.

The United States made it up to fifth and looked poised for a strong final lap from Katie Compton, but the latter crashed and seemed to have a tough time of it during her turn on the circuit.

With one to go, France led Germany, Czech, Switzerland and Canada. The Swiss, who'd saved their elite man for last, watched Naef rocket out of the exchange and start chasing the riders in front of him.

"For me, the goal was to catch all the riders. It was a good track to see where the others were," said Naef. "I wanted to ride perfect. There are many rocks on the course and anyone could flat on the last course."

Naef succeeded in catching everyone and anchored his team en route to gold. Germany finished second with under 23 rider Marcel Fleschhut finishing things off 18 seconds later and Czech's junior Tomas Paprstka cemented his team's third spot 41 seconds after the winner.

Spitz was delighted with her team's silver medal and joked that she'd never had any luck in the event and that she'd told the team before the start that it would be her last one. Then she explained the real reason she has hung in there to participate in so many team relays. "The relay is important for me to get information for the main event, the cross country coming up." The silver was her first team relay medal at worlds. "It's a big day for us."

Nash elaborated on her Czech team's strategy. "We had a strong team on paper and decided to build a team in that order. I think it worked out well for us - we saved our junior for last. All of our guys are super fast."

While the Swiss riders acknowledged that they had prepared together in advance for the event, the Czechs said the race was the first time there were together. "Our teams always change, especially because the juniors always change."

The hosts team, Canada, finished eighth while the United States was ninth.

USA Cycling's Mark Gullickson talked to *Cyclingnews* after the race about the US team's strategy. "We sent our faster guys off first with Todd (Wells), who unfortunately didn't get a front row start, and the race went into singletrack really quickly." In fact, the riders barely had their feet in the pedals before they did an effective U-turn into the singletrack with no passing. The team relay start differed from that planned for the cross country.

"Things just didn't work out today. In the past, when we've run slowest to fastest, it hasn't worked out. I think one of our fastest guys needs to go out first to keep us in contention. Wells got behind after not starting on the first row and we lost time, and I think Katie might have gone down, too."

#	Rider Name (Country) Team	Result
1	Switzerland	1:06:00
	Thomas Litscher (MU)	0:15:37
	Roger Walder (MJ)	0:16:19
	Katrin Leumann (WE)	0:18:33
	Ralph Naef (ME)	0:15:31
2	Germany	1:06:18
	Manuel Fumic (ME)	0:15:29
	Julian Schelb (MJ)	0:16:27
	Sabine Spitz (WE)	0:17:58
	Marcel Fleschhut (MU)	0:16:24
3	Czech Republic	1:06:41
	Jaroslav Kulhavy (ME)	0:15:34
	Ondrej Cink (MU)	0:15:57
	Katerina Nash (WE)	0:18:34
	Tomas Paprstka (MJ)	0:16:36
4	France	1:07:02
	Fabien Canal (MU)	0:15:57
	Julien Trarieux (MJ)	0:17:08
	Cédric Ravanel (ME)	0:15:34
	Cécile Ravanel (WE)	0:18:23
5	Italy	1:07:55
	Marco Aurelio Fontana (ME)	0:15:28
	Maximilian Vieider (MJ)	0:17:28
	Eva Lechner (WE)	0:18:37
	Gerhard Kerschbaumer (MU)	0:16:22
6	Russian Federation	1:08:16
	Irina Kalentieva (WE)	0:18:49
	Sergey Nikolaev (MU)	0:16:36
	Anton Stepanov (MJ)	0:17:08
	Evgeniy Pechenin (ME)	0:15:43
7	Netherlands	1:08:43
	Marco Minnaard (MU)	0:16:53
	Rudi Van Houts (ME)	0:16:12
	Laura Turpijn (WE)	0:19:28
	Michiel Van Der Heijden (MJ)	0:16:10
8	Canada	1:09:53
	Max Plaxton (ME)	0:16:05
	Francis Morin (MU)	0:17:25
	Antoine Caron (MJ)	0:16:59
	Mical Dyck (WE)	0:19:24
9	United States Of America	1:10:42
	Todd Wells (ME)	0:16:04
	Robbie Squire (MU)	0:16:58
	Seth Kemp (MJ)	0:17:57
	Katherine Compton (WE)	0:19:43
10	Spain	1:10:58
	Jose Maria Sanchez Ruiz (MU)	0:17:57
	Antonio Santos Ridaao (MJ)	0:18:16
	Anna Villar Argente (WE)	0:19:49
	José Antonio Hermida Ramos (ME)	0:14:56

11	South Africa	1:12:09
	Burry Stander (ME)	0:15:41
	Yolande Speedy (WE)	0:22:14
	Philip Buys (MU)	0:16:57
	James Reid (MJ)	0:17:17
12	Australia	1:13:22
	Lachlan Norris (ME)	0:16:50
	Trenton Day (MJ)	0:17:56
	Rowena Fry (WE)	0:20:52
	Cameron Ivory (MJ)	0:17:44
13	Austria	1:13:48
	Christoph Soukup (ME)	0:19:30
	Gregor Raggl (MJ)	0:18:02
	Maria Osl (WE)	0:20:08
	Alexander Gehbauer (MU)	0:16:08
14	Japan	1:14:12
	Kyosuke Takei (ME)	0:17:27
	Yu Takenouchi (MU)	0:17:00
	Rie Katayama (WE)	0:19:54
	Idomu Yamamoto (MJ)	0:19:51
15	Slovakia	1:14:16
	Michal Lami (ME)	0:16:48
	Frantisek Lami (MJ)	0:17:54
	Janka Stevkova (WE)	0:20:33
	Jozef Bebcak (MJ)	0:19:01
16	New-Zealand	1:14:30
	Michael Northcott (ME)	0:17:48
	Brad Hudson (MJ)	0:17:46
	Nicola Leary (WE)	0:20:51
	Carl Jones (MU)	0:18:05
17	Israel	1:14:32
	Rotem Ishai (ME)	0:17:32
	Shaked Frank (MJ)	0:20:00
	Noga Korem (WU)	0:20:36
	Shlomi Haimy (MU)	0:16:24
DNF	Sweden 9	
	Magnus Darvell (ME)	0:15:58
	Tomas Kristoffersson (MJ)	0:17:31
	Alexandra Engen (WU)	
	Mattias Wengelin (MU)	
DNS	Brazil	
	Sherman Paiva (MU)	
	Roberta Kelly Stopa (WE)	
	Luiz Cocuzzi (MJ)	
	Ricardo Pscheidt (ME)	