

Sierra Nevada- ESP- 8-9.8.98- DH#6

Sunn-Un Riders Make Their Move

Sunn-Un, the mighty racing team which luxuriates in its logo and uniform sitting atop the podium of many a downhill race, celebrated two more wins, this time in the mountains of southern Spain. Significantly, with only two rounds remaining in the 1998 World Cup, **Anne-Caroline Chausson** (FRA, *Sunn-Un*) and **Nicolas Vouilloz** (FRA, *Sunn-Un*) moved into their respective series leads.

The fast, dry course was dubbed "*the equalizer*." A mixture of rocks and dust, its groove was, like the riders' descent, a fine line down the desert mountain. The course continued to degrade over the weekend as hundreds of pro riders took as many practice runs as possible - each time looking for the perfect line on this improbably technical track. By Sunday's qualifying and final runs, the track had braking bumps so deep that shocks had to be stiffened up to prevent losing a wheel in the soft, dusty holes. With only one good line down its rocky face, the track demanded high speeds but made little room for interpretation... and none for mistakes. Pure technique determined Sunday's top finishers as riders spent approximately five minutes at high speed in total concentration.

Women started racing at 1pm. The top 25 qualifiers hoped for late season points and a shot at the podium. In a rare result, a perfect duplication in the top five between semi-final and final run results occurred. Chausson qualified fastest, followed by **Leigh Donovan** (USA, *Mongoose*), **Marla Streb** (USA, *Yeti*), **Mercedes Gonzales** (ESP, *GT*) and **Nolvonn LeCaer** (FRA, *GT*). As the final event unfolded, each woman of the top five simply bested the previous run, and so the podium was determined.

Chausson is gunning for her first world cup title after three seasons as runner-up. **Missy Giove** (USA, *Volvo-Cannondale*) flatted out in the semi-final, and it is looks increasingly likely that the French phenom will achieve the one title which has so far eluded her.

"I'm very happy to win here. The world cup is important to me, but I'd like to win both the WC and World Championship," commented Chausson, with her matter-of-fact immodesty. Another familiar theme came up with the quote: "*Now I am tired and need to be quiet for the rest of the season to win the Worlds.*" History has shown that Chausson attains her best results after complaining of fatigue. With quotes like these, she could be in for a brilliant late season. Today she was efficient, beating Donovan by less than one second. Chausson commented that: "*It was a difficult race and very fast. To win you must let off the brake and go. It's difficult to achieve a large margin on a course like this. Now I must do well in Kaprun and get a top five in Japan to maybe win the World Cup.*"

Second placed Donovan was pleased with her result, especially since the World Cup is no longer her goal. "*I rode well, so I'm happy. I'm out of the world cup points race, so the US championships are my priority.*"

With another 50 points for her win, Chausson has a perfect record - four wins - for the season since discarding her Nevegal result. Although Giove is second, she is still 55 points behind Chausson - a nearly impossible gap to bridge.

Men's racing took on a decidedly different tone here, with France and Spain taking the six fastest qualifying spots. After a brief lead by early starter **Myles Rockwell** (USA, *Volvo-Cannondale*), mid-fielder, **Scott Sharples** (AUS, *Trek Volkswagen*) held the top spot for the next 25 runs. Then with nine rides to go, Spaniard **Pau Misser** (*Yeti*) took over the lead to huge cheers.

Only one of these men bested Misser's time: second-fastest qualifier Vouilloz. World Cup number-one, **David Vazquez** (ESP, Volvo-Cannondale) had qualified third fastest and was the local favorite, but he cracked under the pressure, while his compatriot and teammate **Oscar Saiz** was slowed by mechanical problems. A good, but not great day for the Spaniards. Top qualifier **Cédric Gracia** (FRA, Sunn-Un) also showed a lack of the consistency that makes his teammate Vouilloz the world's best downhill.

With his win here today, Vouilloz was proclaimed to be the most prolific winner in world cup downhill history. There was a touch of mere formality about this proclamation, because everybody has known for years that Vouilloz is clearly the best. After being doused with champagne by fellow podium finishers, Vouilloz was awarded the orange leader's jersey. He explained his success both today and this season in general.

"All the track was one line, so I rode very well," he said. "No mistakes, and I was confident. I'm happy to win. My first priority is the World Cup and World Championships, so after bad races in Les Gets and in the U.S. I got some motivation. But the worlds are my top priority."

For Misser, second place couldn't have come at a better time. *"This is my best finish ever, and to win it here at home is very special,"* he said.

In the overall standings, Vouilloz is now 11 points clear of Vazquez, before the two low scores are thrown out, so the men's race is still a close one. Cédric Gracia (FRA, Sunn-Un) lies third overall, 44 points back.

By Ari Cheren

<i>place</i>	<i>bib</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>	<i>name/nom</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>team</i>	<i>t1</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>t'+</i>
1	1	FRA197710	CHAUSSON Anne- caroline	FRA	SUNN	3:14.93	5:04.64	
2	6	USA197112	DONOVAN Leigh	USA	MONGOOSE	3:16.54	5:05.58	0.93
3	9	USA196506	STREB Marla	USA	YETI	3:19.92	5:12.13	7.48
4	10	ESP196307	GONZALEZ Mercedes	ESP	TEAM GT	3:20.90	5:13.30	8.66
5	7	FRA197802	LE CAER Nolvenn	FRA	TEAM GT	3:22.94	5:15.63	10.98
6	3	USA196307	SONIER Kim	USA	VOLVO CANNONDALE	3:24.06	5:16.23	11.59
7	11	USA196805	BRUTSAERT Elke	USA	SCHWINN/TOYOTA	3:22.16	5:16.34	11.7
8	15	SUI197703	SANER Marielle	SUI	HOT CHILI	3:26.85	5:20.59	15.95
9	16	USA196904	SHER Lisa	USA	ROTEC-WHITE BROS	3:26.80	5:22.64	18
10	12	ITA196607	BONAZZI Giovanna	ITA	SINTESI VERLICCHI	3:29.12	5:22.98	18.34
11	20	SUI197004	KASPER Brigitta	SUI	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	3:30.34	5:23.28	18.64
12	54	GER198012	RÜBEL Johanna	GER	VW/NUTZ/GT	3:28.78	5:23.32	18.68
13	13	GBR197608	MORTIMER Helen	GBR	SINTESI VERLICCHI	3:26.51	5:24.66	20.01
14	8	FIN197303	REPO Katja	FIN	SINTESI VERLICCHI	3:28.55	5:24.76	20.12
15	21	AUS197509	MILLER Katrina	AUS	JAMIS/MANITOU/AR	3:32.53	5:28.99	24.34
16	2	USA197201	GIOVE Missy	USA	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	3:20.85	5:30.66	26.01
17	17	GBR197904	MOSELEY Tracy	GBR	VOLVO CANNONDALE	3:32.27	5:31.09	26.44
18	26	USA197611	LLANES Tara	USA	MT DEW/SPECIALIZ	3:34.04	5:31.30	26.66
19	48	ESP197604	GARCIA Maria Elena	ESP	SPECIALICE	3:39.18	5:39.76	35.12
20	19	SUI197908	STIEGER Sarah	SUI	FIAT ROTWILD	3:46.38	5:42.27	37.63
21	41	GBR197701	REES JONES Anja	GBR	VOLVO CANNONDALE	3:39.19	5:45.83	41.19
22	36	GBR196906	WILTSHIRE Petra	GBR	GIANT DH	3:44.92	5:49.03	44.38
23	28	GER196812	KOBES Britta	GER	WHEELER EUROPE	3:50.03	5:49.98	45.34
24	5	SUI198007	JORGENSEN Sari	SUI	YETI	4:37.85	7:36.04	2:31.40
18		GER196610	STIEFL Regina	GER	FIAT-ROTWILD		DNF	