

## Peat At Last!

It's rare that a race course upstages the racers in downhill mountain biking, but this was the case here at Snoqualmie Pass on a picture-perfect Sunday when the outrageous *Briton*, **Steve Peat** (GT) and cool-headed **Anne-Caroline Chausson** (FRA, Sunn-Un) triumphed in a battle against an unruly series of bumps and turns in the Pacific Northwest.



Snoqualmie Pass may not be on the longest or steepest mountainside in the world, but it hosted one of the most thrilling downhill spectacles thus far this season and raised the bar for this growing sport's talented riders.

After cold rains in the days before the event, a drier Sunday left a fast line carved by bicycle tyres on the dark soil. Riders took their campaign for world cup points to two runs in front of 4,000 spectators.

### MEN:

This was the result that Steve Peat had been promising the world for more than two years. The big Yorkshireman had run fast practice times all weekend and the ultra technical track was to his liking. He took the rocky section at the top in his stride and then calmly attacked the Black Forest, which contains the daunting "*Junior Wall*". This rapid-fire series of obstacles produced a flurry of finesse moves from Peat on the frighteningly steep, loose single track. He quietly

leapt over the six-foot sheer, rocky drop of the Junior Wall, and with several hundred spectators lining the course cheering him loudly he hurtled onwards to the precipitous chute section, with only the faintest disturbance of the soil beneath his tyres.



So steep and treacherous was the chute that fans actually came out to watch Saturday's practice. What few pros that could actually ride fast through here had their speed measured by the volume of the cheers, and Peat received some of the loudest. After flitting cleanly through the trees and power-peddalling the flat sections below, Peat went on to capture his best finish yet. After placing second on two of the toughest courses of all: Panticosa '96 and Mont-St-Anne last season, this fearless rider finally got what he had been waiting for.

"It's rad," he said after his victory - his time of 3:55 had stood solid while **Nicolas Vouilloz** (FRA, Sunn-Un), **Cédric**

**Gracia** (FRA, Sunn-Un) and top-qualifier **Shaums March** (USA, Zzyzx/Ellsworth) completed their runs. With the win in the bag, Peat breathed a big sigh of relief and said: "*It's been a long time coming but today I nailed it and I'm stoked to win... I like this course a lot and have been good in training all week. I knew I could do it today so I went for it, and it happened.*"

While most of the top qualifiers could have been named straight off the top of the UCI Rankings list, one Shaums March (ranked 59th in the world) surprised everybody by gaining the fastest qualification time with a ride that literally wowed the crowd in the trees. Peat himself would have been impressed by the way March

hared down the Junior Wall. Unfortunately, come the final run, two crashes destroyed his rear wheel and March was forced to, er, walk stridently to the finish.

Vouilloz - round one's winner - has been slowed down since injuring his hand in Big Bear training but today he was still fast enough for second place on a course where, as the world's top technical rider, he would dearly loved to have won. *"I knew that to win I'd have to ride very well with no mistakes,"* he said. "Now I'm happy to go home and recover."

**David Vazquez** (ESP, Volvo-Cannondale) and Gracia were 3rd and 4th, respectively. Vazquez, last round's winner, beat out Gracia, round two's winner, by 3.4 seconds. One-tenth of a second later was round three's winner **Christian Taillefer** (FRA, Peugeot Palaiseau) who announced that he had dreamt he would take fifth here today.

In an unprecedented turn of statistics, all of the top five men today have won a world cup round this season. If that is not a measure of the course's quality, then what is?

## WOMEN:

In the women's race, Chausson was in a league of her own. She won the semi-final by 26 seconds over second fastest **Marla Streb** (USA, Yeti), then in the final she eclipsed her semis time by 16 seconds and was nearly 28 seconds faster than second place finisher **Mercedes Gonzalez** (ESP, GT).

*"I knew I could do well here today,"* she said, explaining her strategy. *"I was up top at the start and heard the time of Missy, so I told myself not to go too fast and I thought I could win. I went easy in the technical part and pedalled a bit harder than in qualifying."*

Chausson winning on the World Cup circuit has become an increasingly familiar sight. The World Champion is now back at her best after a (literally) rocky season start where she injured her back in a crash on the dolomite at Nevegal. The indefatigable Frenchwoman has now won four of the five rounds thus far this season and holds the orange World Cup leader's jersey. After next round, riders will start to discard their lowest scores in the process of selecting their five best results from the eight race series. In the discard period, Chausson, the five-times World Champion, will go even closer to winning her first World Cup trophy.

Chausson was not the only happy woman here today. For second place finisher Gonzalez, today's result was a victory unto itself: the Spanish GT rider has been stung by bad luck this season and a strong result was just what she needed. *"I had a little luck going my way. I rode a little bit on the edge, a little out of control and when I hit pedaling sections I rode my heart out,"* said the ever gracious Gonzalez.

**Missy Giove** (USA, Volvo-Cannondale), whose will to win has a tendency to approximate to the severity of her injury, dislocated her ankle in practice. She went on to take third place.

## Race Notes

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- **Leigh Donovan** (USA, Mongoose) broke a finger in practice and sat out the race
  - The accident prone **Helen Mortimer** (GBR, Sintesi Verlicchi) crashed during practice and was knocked unconscious. Reportedly she will be out of action for at least 3 weeks.
  - **Mike King** (USA, GT) crashed in practice and dislocated his shoulder. Reportedly he will be out for several weeks.

## DH#5- Women/Femmes



**Anne-Caroline Chausson**

<i>Pos</i>	<i>bib</i>	<i>name/nom</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>WCPTS</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>	<i>time</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>CHAUSSON</b>	<b>FRA</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>FRA19771008</b>	<b>: 4:23.63</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>GONZALEZ</b>	<b>ESP</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>ESP19630711</b>	<b>: 4:51.42</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>GIOVE</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>USA19720120</b>	<b>: 4:52.05</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>LE CAER</b>	<b>FRA</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>FRA19780223</b>	<b>: 4:56.08</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>SONIER</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>USA19630731</b>	<b>: 4:56.76</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>JONNIER</b>	<b>FRA</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>FRA19810819</b>	<b>: 4:59.33</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>STREB</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>USA19650624</b>	<b>: 5:01.12</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>BONAZZI</b>	<b>ITA</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>ITA19660724</b>	<b>: 5:01.26</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>REPO</b>	<b>FIN</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>FIN19730304</b>	<b>: 5:01.31</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>STIEFL</b>	<b>GER</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>GER19661011</b>	<b>: 5:06.02</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>MILLER</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>AUS19750915</b>	<b>: 5:06.90</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>SHER</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>USA19690419</b>	<b>: 5:09.38</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>JORGENSEN</b>	<b>SUI</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>SUI19800725</b>	<b>: 5:10.97</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>BRUNGER</b>	<b>GBR</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>GBR19700608</b>	<b>: 5:11.78</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>STIEGER</b>	<b>SUI</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>SUI19790825</b>	<b>: 5:14.96</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>MOSELEY</b>	<b>GBR</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>GBR19790412</b>	<b>: 5:19.41</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>BLAS</b>	<b>ESP</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>ESP19790704</b>	<b>: 5:23.52</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>MUXLOW</b>	<b>AUS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>AUS19730502</b>	<b>: 5:24.58</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>SCHMITZ</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>USA19720727</b>	<b>: 5:36.64</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>VAN MERBEECK</b>	<b>GBR</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>GBR19711206</b>	<b>: 5:37.64</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>HAAS</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>USA19760810</b>	<b>: 5:38.24</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>BLANCHER</b>	<b>CAN</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>CAN19751029</b>	<b>: 5:50.03</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>LAWYER</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>USA19750401</b>	<b>: 5:50.56</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>BRUTSAERT</b>	<b>USA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>USA19680508</b>	<b>: 5:54.85</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>SANER</b>	<b>SUI</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>SUI19770322</b>	<b>: 6:04.58</b>