

## Stellenbosch- RSA- 4-5.4.98- DH#1- Dazzled by the Sunn

Last year's top mountain bike racing team, **Sunn** (FRA), started the 1998 downhill season in the best possible way: taking wins in both the men's and women's races in the season starter at Stellenbosch.

**Nicolas Vouilloz** and **Anne-Caroline Chausson**, both of whom virtually own the rights to the World Champions title - possessing five and six respectively - asserted themselves over their rivals with impressive victories on a tacky course.

While some observers thought it natural that French riders should triumph in a region famous for its wine produce, others pointed to changes in the course design since last year as the main reason. What had been a relatively nondescript straight-line track most suited to powerful riders, had been altered to an intricate course with switchbacks, drops, berms and plenty of physical challenge in addition.

For the riders and teams, it was an unusual event. After dry, sunny conditions in the preceding week, a downpour on Saturday night made a dramatic change.



What had been five centimetres of dust on the course became slippery mud for the crucial semi-final round on Sunday morning.

Teams scrambled for new tyres to suit the conditions as riders produced semi-final times up to one minute slower than in qualifying the previous evening.

Volvo-Cannondale team manager, Charlie Livermore, explained that his team had been caught out by the rain. *"We ran our regular tyres (Sunday) morning, then changed to a softer compound for the afternoon final."* The softer rubber seemed to be the answer, because his riders **David Vasquez** (ESP) and **Oscar Saiz** (ESP) took second and third places respectively in the men's race.

Vouilloz had a bad start - by his high standards - reporting that he had taken a long time to find his rhythm. After a couple of mistakes he got the feel of the ground beneath him and flowed down the course to a clear win.

**Brian Lopes** (USA, *Mongoose*) had one of the better results of his career, taking sixth place, two ahead of his compatriot, **Eric Carter** (USA, *GT*), while heart

transplant hero, **Dave Cullinan** (USA, *KHS*) stormed into 10th spot.

Time gaps in the women's race were similar to those separating the men. World Champion Chausson was just under four seconds clear of 1995 world champion, **Leigh Donovan** (USA, *Mongoose*). Chausson reported feeling very confident before the final - she had comfortably won the semi-final - and the slippery ground conditions suited her riding style, which like Vouilloz utilises technical brilliance more than raw power.

Third place was taken by **Elke Brutsaert** (USA, *Toyota-Schwinn*), last year's winner. **Marla Streb** (USA, *Yeti*), who broke her ankle here last year in the semi-final before riding to third place in the final, took fifth.

### Statistics

- **Course Length:** 3300m
- **Drop:** 480m
- **Wide Track:** 28%
- **Single Track:** 72%
- **Fast Sections:** 58%
- **Slow Sections:** 42%
- **Ground Conditions:** wet and muddy becoming damp and tacky
- **Weather:** overcast becoming warm and fine
- **Crowd Size:** weekend total 11,000

<i>Pos</i>	<i>bib</i>	<i>Name/nom</i>		<i>Nat</i>	<i>UCICODE</i>	<i>Time</i>
1	10	VOUILLOZ	NICOLAS	FRA	FRA19760208	: 4:05.17
2	9	VAZQUEZ	DAVID	ESP	ESP19790210	: 4:08.39
3	24	SAIZ	OSCAR	ESP	ESP19730828	: 4:09.27
4	20	KOCH	GUILLAUME	FRA	FRA19730605	: 4:10.77
5	41	AMOUR	KARIM	FRA	FRA19750118	: 4:11.04
6	38	LOPES	BRIAN	USA	USA19710908	11:10.0
7	18	ENGSTRÖM	JOHAN	SWE	SWE19770802	: 4:11.14
8	40	CARTER	ERIC	USA	USA19700306	: 4:11.30
9	3	MISSE	TOMAS	ESP	ESP19740930	: 4:11.53
10	49	CULLINAN	DAVE	USA	USA19691029	: 4:11.85
11	17	KLAUSMANN	MARCUS	GER	GER19770808	: 4:12.03
12	13	SHARPLES	SCOTT	AUS	AUS19671023	: 4:13.09
13	2	BENEKE	JÜRGEN	GER	GER19720223	: 4:13.11
14	15	GRACIA	CÉDRIC	FRA	FRA19780329	: 4:14.30
15	12	MISSE	PAU	ESP	ESP19760807	: 4:14.35
16	6	WARNER	ROBERT	GBR	GBR19700916	: 4:14.45
17	32	KING	MIKE	USA	USA19690630	: 4:14.54
18	28	GARDELLA	MAXIME	FRA	FRA19780220	: 4:14.71
19	5	TOMAC	JOHN	USA	USA19671103	: 4:16.86
20	69	MIGLIORINI	STEFANO	ITA	ITA19690708	: 4:18.10
21	46	STEFFEN	ANDREAS	SUI	SUI19750923	: 4:18.30
22	75	MCCARROLL	SEAN	AUS	AUS19771105	: 4:18.38
23	21	POUSSIN	FLORENT	FRA	FRA19770306	: 4:19.00
24	23	ZANCHI	BRUNO	ITA	ITA19731110	: 4:19.11
25	25	BÜELER	ANDY	SUI	SUI19780609	: 4:19.82
26	1	HERIN	CORRADO	ITA	ITA19660604	: 4:20.25
27	16	BALAUD	ALEXANDRE	FRA	FRA19750227	: 4:20.34
28	110	MINNAAR	GREG	RSA	RSA19811113	: 4:21.51
29	7	BONANOMI	GIANLUCA	ITA	ITA19680219	: 4:21.68
30	39	OULEGO	IVAN	ESP	ESP19760604	: 4:22.13
31	4	DE BEVER	BAS	NED	NED19680416	: 4:22.19
32	47	ODRISCOLL	CHRIS	USA	USA19730308	: 4:22.68
33	76	PASCAL	MICKAEL	FRA	FRA19791011	: 4:23.05
34	96	GEALL	STEVE	GBR	GBR19700506	: 4:23.40
35	37	PONTING	TIM	GBR	GBR19721010	: 4:24.20
36	139	DAVIS	MARK	GBR	GBR19740326	: 4:26.09
37	102	KRUIPER	MICHEL	NED	NED19730920	: 4:27.03
38	129	TSCHUGG	GUIDO	GER	GER19760514	: 4:27.24
39	11	RONNING	MICHAEL	AUS	AUS19750623	: 4:27.32

40	90	JADUTA	TARAS	BEL	BEL19731213	: 4:27.61
41	133	BONET	RAMON	ESP	ESP19740301	: 4:28.68
42	44	LONGDON	WILL	GBR	GBR19741123	: 4:30.09
43	117	BEAUMONT	SCOTT	GBR	GBR19780602	: 4:30.25
44	126	TAKKENKAMP	RICK	NED	NED19780213	: 4:31.11
45	104	JELINEK	ANDREAS	AUT	AUT19691212	: 4:33.20
46	130	YANAGIHARA	YASUHIRO	JPN	JPN19720720	: 4:33.61
47	105	SANTANA	JACOBO	ESP	ESP19720217	: 4:34.56
48	101	VAN DE HATERD	WILFRED	NED	NED19720125	: 4:35.87
49	103	MILLER	GREG	RSA	RSA19760326	: 4:40.88
50	107	HUTCHINGS	CARL	RSA	RSA19680821	: 4:41.78
51	62	TSUKAMOTO	TAKASHI	JPN	JPN19701123	: 4:42.02
52	78	RUMBELOW	ROBIN	RSA	RSA19761214	: 4:47.06
53	70	AMHERD	STEFAN	SUI	SUI19730605	: 4:47.16
54	121	STIEFL	PETER	GER	GER19611229	: 4:49.28
55	156	WELSH	JASON	RSA	RSA19820320	: 4:49.60
56	116	LOURENS	DIRK	RSA	RSA19780226	: 4:49.90
57	114	FASSBENDER	WOLFGANG	GER	GER19700228	: 4:50.14
58	92	RUMBELOW	TYRONNE	RSA	RSA19750724	: 4:52.76
59	149	SEAWARD	CRAIG	RSA	RSA19701221	: 4:53.27
60	140	STONEBRIDGE	NIGEL	GBR	GBR19660630	: 4:54.22
61	137	SMALE	ANDREW	RSA	RSA19770613	: 4:55.66
62	118	MEYER	KIRK	RSA	RSA19711004	: 4:55.80
63	150	WALTON	PAUL	RSA	RSA19761019	: 4:56.16
64	128	SMIT	CHRIS	RSA	RSA19710819	: 4:58.26
65	151	VICTOR	DYLAN	RSA	RSA19791208	: 5:02.85
66	138	BARNARD	GARY	RSA	RSA19760517	: 5:03.41
67	146	SMITH	MATTHEW	RSA	RSA19761205	: 5:11.09
68	155	PATON	ANTHONY	RSA	RSA19670716	: 5:15.56
69	22	JOSEPH	MICHEL	SUI	SUI19761109	: 7:59.29
0	14	PALMER	SHAUN	USA	USA19681114	DSQ