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World Cup Downhill's Exciting Finish

Downhill's 2001 season in the **Tissot-UCI World Cup** came to a close on a brilliant sunny afternoon in *Quebec*, when 20-year-old **Greg Minnaar** (*RSA, Global Racing Team*) upset five-time champion **Nicolas Vouilloz** (*FRA, Vouilloz Racing Team*) for the men's world cup title. **Anne-Caroline Chausson** (*FRA, Volvo-Cannondale*) won the women's title decisively over #2 **Missy Giove** (*USA, Global Racing Team*), while two others - **Chris Kovarik** (*AUS, Intense Cycles*) and **Sabrina Jonnier** (*FRA, RSP Import Intense*) - made their debut as world cup winners.

Conditions on Mont Sainte-Anne's modified 3km course were perfect Saturday, as sunny blue skies brought out huge crowds and international media for the season's final round of racing just north of Quebec City. After the morning's qualifying round of racing, the world's top pros were ready for one last race to the finish, one last chance at overall world cup points.



Christopher Kovarik, AUS

The men's race was destined to be an exciting battle to the end, as young **Greg Minnaar** (*RSA, Global Racing Team*) came into this final round just 28 points behind five-time champion **Nicolas Vouilloz** (*FRA, Vouilloz Racing Team*). While Minnaar had shown impressive consistency throughout the season's qualifying and final sessions, Vouilloz had struggled in several races - which allowed the South African to close the gap following his breakout win in round seven.

Minnaar set the tone of the day by qualifying fastest, further reducing his deficit to just 8 points as Vouilloz seeded third-fastest. Sixth-ranked overall coming into the race, **Chris Kovarik** (*AUS, Intense Cycles*) qualified second-fastest and also served notice that the final round would be a thriller.

Greg Minnaar, RSA

Fifth-seeded **Cedric Gracia** (*FRA, Volvo-Cannondale*) overtook the hotseat from **Nathan Rankin** (*NZL, NZMBA*) in the finals with a time of 5:04.7, but was quickly replaced by **Mickael Pascal** (*FRA, Be-One Team*) - who crossed the finish with a time of 5:04.13 - just 0.6 faster than Gracia who would finish fifth for the day, while Pascal would finish fourth.

The top-three finishers - as well as the world cup overall champion - were soon decided in a nail-biter that took less than ten minutes to complete. First, #3 seeded Vouilloz beat Gracia's time with a run of 5:02, taking the hotseat as he awaited #2-seeded Kovarik. Chris, who was motivated to have a good run and make the top-five overall, soon blasted across the finish-line with a time of 4:59, taking the hotseat from Vouilloz.



Everyone then awaited the arrival of top-seeded Minnaar, who would have to finish faster than Vouilloz to earn the points necessary to win the overall title, and Vouilloz was sitting in second-place at the time. The crowd's attention soon went up the hill as Minnaar rode the final metres of the course, crossing the finish-line with a time of 5:01 - just one second faster than Vouilloz but

enough to upset the champion and take the title to South Africa, while Kovarik earned his career's first win.

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Nicolas Vouilloz, FRA

"It feels awesome," said the reserved Kovarik after his victory. "I had trouble with my visa this season, then with my knee, so I needed a good result to make the top-five. I thought I could have a decent run and finish top-five today, but I figured it couldn't get worse than it was, so I went for it. Mid-run I felt good and thought I could win it - and put a jumble in the points."

And that's what he did, playing a part in Minnaar's championship upset, making for two very happy young riders on this day.

"It felt great," said Minnaar after receiving hugs and congratulation from his team and parents. "I'm the first non-European to win the downhill title. I thought I had a chance to win it today, and knew I had to beat Nico. So I was very happy to have a clean run."

Minnaar went on to say *"I always tried to be consistent this season, and I think that had a lot to do with my success. Nico is such a good rider, so I'm even more stoked to beat him. I had some crazy lines in my qualifier, which also helped - along with the boost I got from winning the last round in Kaprun."*

As for Vouilloz, he was philosophical about the loss of the title. *"It was not the year for the favorites"* he quipped, in reference to previous series-leaders **Steve Peat** (GBR, Team GT) and **Fabien Barel** (FRA, Team GT), who were both injured mid-season. *"I was more disappointed this morning with my qualifier, but not so disappointed with my final run. I made a good race, was confident and rode at my capacity - even though I don't think I'm good shape right now."*

Vouilloz went on to say *"I knew I wasn't so fast at the bottom of this course, but I think I lost the world cup at every race this season. After I lost the world championships last season I thought that maybe this wasn't my year. And now I hope to be in good shape for Worlds - I don't know if I can win, but I hope to make a good race."*

Asked if he thought age played into his season, the 25-year-old replied, *"I wasn't thinking 'oh he's young so he will be faster.' Age isn't a problem, but when you're young you do have new approaches. And to be honest, with Greg - I know he's good but I think I can go faster than him still. But not today."*

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words: Ari Cheren



	#	UCI Code	Surname	Firstname	Team	Time	Gap
1	6	AUS19780301	KOVARIK	Christopher	INTENSE CYCLES- FOX RACING	4:59.96	
2	2	RSA19811113	MINNAAR	Greg	GLOBAL RACING	5:01.48	1.52
3	1	FRA19760208	VOUILLOZ	Nicolas	VOUILLOZ RACING TEAM	5:02.20	2.24
4	3	FRA19791011	PASCAL	Mickael	BE-ONE TEAM	5:04.13	4.17
5	5	FRA19780323	GRACIA	Cedric	VOLVO CANNONDALE	5:04.70	4.74
6	65	NZL19790430	RANKIN	Nathan	NZMBA	5:09.92	9.96
7	26	AUS19800920	WADDELL	John	SUNRACE STURMEY	5:10.82	10.86
8	31	USA19740531	VOREIS	Kirt	HARO/LEE DUNGAREES	5:10.85	10.89
9	14	GBR19700916	WARNER	Rob	GIANT TOYOTA	5:11.42	11.46
10	35	NZL19760430	KIRCALDIE	John	MAXXIS TIRES	5:12.56	12.60
11	9	ESP19730828	SAIZ	Oscar	BE-ONE TEAM	5:12.62	12.66
11	29	ESP19790210	VAZQUEZ LOPEZ	David	GIANT BICYCLES	5:12.62	12.66
13	43	AUS19810622	RANDO	Jared	FOES AZONIC	5:13.32	13.36
14	12	AUS19750623	RONNING	Michael	INTENSE CYCLES	5:14.43	14.47
15	42	GBR19741123	LONGDEN	Will	TEAM MOUNTAINBIKING UK	5:15.36	15.40
16	28	USA19790809	BAILEY	Colin	MAXXIS	5:15.59	15.63
17	16	CZE19780529	MAROSI	Michal	AUTHOR - RB SKODA AUTO	5:16.06	16.10
18	47	USA19790118	LEDUC	Todd	AZONIC FOES	5:16.54	16.58
19	71	USA19681030	STOCKTON	Derin	INTENSE TIRES	5:18.29	18.33
20	125	CAN19711121	MAY	Leon	BALFA CYCLES	5:18.94	18.98
21	8	AUS19771105	MCCARROLL	Sean	GLOBAL RACING	5:19.03	19.07
22	11	USA19700306	CARTER	Eric	MONGOSE HYANDAI	5:19.07	19.11
23	18	ESP19740930	MISSER VILASECA	Tomas	MISSER BROS	5:19.26	19.3
24	73	AUS19830119	CORY	Benjamin *	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM	5:19.28	19.32
25	44	AUS19790715	PANOZZO	Joel	SUNRACE SANTA CRUZ	5:19.34	19.38
26	13	SUI19770916	CALUORI	Claudio	SWITZERLAND	5:20.90	20.94
27	38	USA19730223	SIGFRID	Jason	DHNW YETI COMPASS	5:21.72	21.76
28	64	GER19760514	TSCHUGG	Guido	WHEELER	5:21.93	21.97
29	20	SVK19820410	POLC	Filip	SLOVAK CYCLING FEDERATION	5:22.24	22.28
30	55	ESP19790604	OULEGO MORENO	Ivan	MASSI	5:22.50	22.54
31	68	USA19730308	O ´DRISCOLL	Chris	RAZOR ROCK MTN CYCLE	5:22.82	22.86
32	58	GBR19810817	DONOGHUE	Neil	HALFORD BIKEHUT SCHWINN	5:24.18	24.22
33	25	USA19780320	HOUSEMAN	Rich	TOMAC	5:26.69	26.73
34	93	CAN19750601	ONYSCHUK	Chad	FORD DEVINCI	5:27.17	27.21
35	129	USA19780526	LANCASTER	Richard	TEAM WTB	5:28.33	28.37

36	109	AUS19850330	MCLAUGHLIN	David *	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM	5:30.46	30.50
37	95	USA19760220	BOSCH	Todd	RACER EDGE	5:32.21	32.25
38	100	CAN19820317	LAURIN	Mathieu	GT CANADA	5:32.56	32.6
39	59	GBR19810815	JARMAN	Rob	HALFORD BIKEHUT SCHWINN	5:33.77	33.81
40	113	USA19820109	WHITSELL	Jesse	IRON HORSE	5:34.71	34.75
41	99	IRL19830503	ROSS	Colin	IRISH CYCLING FEDERATION	5:35.42	35.46
42	82	GBR19810228	CHEETHAM	Jon	HALFORD BIKEHUT SCHWINN	5:36.61	36.65
43	101	USA19730602	MORGAN	Alex	BCDBCD.COM	5:37.25	37.29
44	77	GBR19780602	BEAUMONT	Scott	TEAM KONA FORD FOCUS	5:37.67	37.71
45	111	CAN19770705	MARKON	Olivier	INDEPENDENT	5:39.25	39.29
46	115	AUS19830428	FRENCH	Simon	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM	5:40.85	40.89
47	128	AUS19850721	HILL	Samuel	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM	5:41.06	41.10
48	116	AUS19830912	MILLS	Danny	AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TEAM	5:41.19	41.23
49	88	USA19700506	LAWWILL	Joe	TREK FOX SHOX	5:42.39	42.43
50	98	NZL19830330	BEAVER	Cheyne	TEAM LAHAR	5:42.45	42.49
51	91	IRL19790505	YOONG	Andrew	IRISH CYCLING FEDERATION	5:43.27	43.31
52	105	CAN19801204	MCLEAN	Peter	GEARS RACING	5:43.36	43.4
53	96	USA19730705	EBBETT	Kyle	IRON HORSE	5:43.73	43.77
54	90	ESP19780424	BAGO	Jordi	ORANGE ESPANA	5:47.07	47.11
55	124	CAN19770801	ROQUEBRUNE	Phillip	INDEPENDENT	5:48.71	48.75
56	110	CAN19750709	PROVENCHER	Sebastien	PERIGNY	5:49.94	49.98
57	83	JPN19761223	KANEKO	Daisaku	GLOBAL RACING	5:51.52	51.56
58	114	CAN19790320	MAILHOT	Stephane	INDEPENDENT	5:54.64	54.68
59	84	JPN19800422	IDEGAWA	Naoki	GLOBAL RACING	5:55.22	55.26
60	89	GBR19760727	SMITH	Waylon	ROYAL ORANGE	6:01.00	+1:01.04
61	119	CAN19731227	BARDOU	Hugo	INDEPENDENT	6:01.22	+1:01.26
62	112	USA19780822	PRATER	Joshua	MR DIRT SUN RINGLE	6:08.22	+1:08.26
63	126	RSA19840329	SCHUTTE	Nicolass	FRITZ PIENNAO CYCLES	6:09.13	+1:09.17
64	117	CAN19771229	MARCOTTE	Vincent	MARTIN SWISS	6:14.16	+1:14.20
65	123	VEN19770313	CASADIEGO	Gustavo	GT OF VENEZUELA	6:40.56	+1:40.60
66	56	CAN19710520	SHANDRO	Andrew	FORD DEVINCI	7:18.43	+2:18.47
67	127	RSA19840901	BEYTAGH	Geritt	FRITZ PIENNAO CYCLES	8:14.36	+3:14.40
68	23	ESP19760807	MISSER VILASECA	Pau	MISSER BROS	11:42.37	+6:42.41
	122	VEN19741021	ALVARADO	Carlos	BODINGTON DH TEAM	DNF	
	17	AUS19810531	RENNIE	Nathan	YETI- PEARL IZUMI	DNS	