

MTB World Cup XC #3 & DH #2 - CDM

Champery, Switzerland, June 9-10, 2007

June 10: Elite Men Downhill

Lehikoinen wins, but Hill stars in mixed conditions

By Rob Jones – cyclingnews.com

The second round of the Downhill World Cup was the final event in Champery, Switzerland on Sunday and, once again, rain played a major role in the outcome of the competition. Although Finland's Matti Lehikoinen (G-Cross Honda) took the men's victory, the ride that left everyone in awe was by world champion Sam Hill (Ironhorse-Monster Energy). The Australian came down in the pouring rain, while Lehikoinen and the rest of the top five came down in dry conditions, and still finished third. Without a midcourse crash, Hill would have likely won despite the conditions.

The course was one of the most extreme seen on the World Cup circuit, with an average gradient of 37.5 percent, and steep sections well over 50 percent. This was not a pedaling course, but one requiring exceptional control and nerves of steel to navigate the constant corners, drops and jumps.

Parts were almost un-walkable, as Greg Minnaar (G-Cross Honda) unfortunately found out. The South African slipped while walking the course in a pre-race inspection two days before the race and as he reached out to grab something to stop sliding down the slope, he dislocated his shoulder. Minnaar had to pop the joint back in himself and make his way to the bottom. He still raced - after physio and all strapped up - but crashed in the semi-final and could only manage 74th in the final.

On race day, early morning rain soaked the course and delayed the start of the semi-final by an hour, as organizers waited for the water to at least partially drain out of the wooded and muddy sections. The course did start to dry out significantly for the final.

Hill showed in the men's qualifier that this course suited him. His time of 4.01.89 was a full 14.56 ahead of the next qualifier, Mickael Pascal (Q by Saab-Salomon).

One of the more interesting rides was by former multi-time world champion Nicolas Vouilloz (Lapierre), who came out of retirement this year with the intention of racing two World Cups only (Champery and Schladming, Austria). Vouilloz's time off hasn't seemed to hurt him any, as he qualified fifth fastest. However, he came down in the rain for the final and could only manage 63rd.

Steve Peat (Santa Cruz Syndicate) set the first fast time, at 4:11.81, and his time stood until Lehikoinen knocked 1.6 seconds off. Shortly after Lehikoinen went off the rain started at the top of the course, first a few drops, then heavier and heavier, eventually turning into hail for a short period. The wet weather gradually moved down the mountain, slackened for a while and then started up again. Only after Hill had completed his run did it stop and the sun come out.

Hill's wild ride had other riders watching in awe on the big screen at the finish. He was ahead of Lehikoinen until his crash, and only finished three-hundredths of a second behind Peat for third.

"I played the rain game in the semi, and stopped on the track for maybe 20 seconds so I would start earlier. It paid off," said Lehikoinen. "But Sam, Sam is an animal ... what can you say after that ride?"

Hill was succinct: "I like the track. I knew Matti's time before I started, but still felt that I could beat it despite the rain. But I crashed about halfway, because I couldn't slow down on the rocks after going over a triple.

"I was trying not to think about how sketchy it was...I was pretty well sliding through all the corners," explained Hill of his approach. "It was as clean a run as you could have under the conditions, and I think without the crash I would have won. This morning I did a 4.01, and the best they (Lehikoinen and Peat) could do was 4.10, 4.11."

Race Notes

- Peat takes over the World Cup lead from Marc Beaumont (MBUK/Santa Cruz), with 335 points, but Hill is just behind at 317. Lehikoinen moves into third with his win at 271 points.

Results

1	Matti Lehtikoinen (Fin)	Team G-Cross Honda	4.10.20
2	Steve Peat (Gbr)	Santa Cruz Syndicate	2.00
3	Samuel Hill (Aus)	Iron Horse / Monster Energy	
4	Fabien Barel (Fra)	Kona Les Gets	5.10
5	Michael Hannah (Aus)	Cannondale The Cut	11.30
6	Adam Brayton (Gbr)	Mtb-Direct.Co.Uk	12.00
7	Josh Bryceland (Gbr)		12.40
8	Marcus Klausmann (Ger)	Ghost International Racing	12.50
9	Adam Vagner (Cze)		13.40
10	Remi Thirion (Fra)		15.40
11	Ben Reid (Irl)		16.00
12	Alan Beggin (Ita)		17.20
13	Dan Stanbridge (Gbr)	Mojo Orange	17.40
14	Dave Wardell (Gbr)	GT / Burgtec	
15	Tom Deacon (Gbr)		19.10
16	Fabien Cousinie (Fra)		
17	Mathias Haas (Aut)		21.00
18	Dominik Gspan (Sui)		21.10
19	Claudio Caluori (Sui)	Ms-Intense Factory-Racing	22.50
20	Markolf Berchtold (Bra)		22.40
21	Nico Vink (Bel)	Dolphin Bike Team	24.50
22	Duncan Riffle (USA)		25.50
23	Marco Milivinti (Ita)		26.10
24	Mathieu Troquier (Fra)		26.40
25	Espen Johnsen (Nor)		26.50
26	Mike Skinner (NZl)		28.10
27	Scott Mears (Gbr)		27.40
28	Kamil Tatarkovic (Cze)	Kona Les Gets	27.50
29	Mickael Pascal (Fra)	Q By Saab-Salomon	28.40
30	Nathan Rennie (Aus)	Santa Cruz Syndicate	29.00
31	Karim Amour (Fra)		29.20
32	Samuel Zbinden (Sui)		29.40
33	Damien Spagnolo (Fra)	Q By Saab-Salomon	30.10
34	Ralph Jones (Gbr)		31.00
35	Esteban Deronzier (Fra)	Chatel Mountain Cycle	31.10
36	Richard Cunynghame (Gbr)	Mtb-Direct.Co.Uk	32.10
37	Chris Ball (Gbr)		32.20
38	Benny Strasser (Ger)		33.50
39	Arnaud Delente (Fra)		34.40
40	Brendan Fairclough (Gbr)	Team G-Cross Honda	35.40
41	Nick Beer (Sui)		36.00
42	Joe Barnes (Gbr)		36.10
43	R. Leiva Figueroa (Chi)	Ssangyong-Fusion Pro Team	36.00
44	Chris Hutchens (Gbr)		36.20
45	Patrik Kotrla (Cze)		37.10
46	Georg Sieder (Aut)		38.40
47	Samuel Blenkinsop (NZl)	Gravity Group	42.20
48	Marc Beaumont (Gbr)	Team Mbuk Santacruz	42.40
49	Justin Leov (NZl)		
50	Matej Charvat (Cze)		44.00
51	Ben Cathro (Gbr)	Q By Saab-Salomon	44.40
52	Cedric Gracia (Fra)	Commencal Oakley	
53	Damien Mermoud (Sui)		47.10
54	Vlastimil Hyncica (Cze)		49.50
55	Marco Bugnone (Ita)		50.10
56	Thomas Jeandin (Sui)		52.20
57	David Vazquez Lopez (Esp)	Msc Bikes	53.00
58	Pasqual Canals Flix (Esp)	Massi	56.30
59	Marcel Beer (Sui)		57.20
60	Joris Bigoni (Fra)		59.20
61	Erik Irmisch (Ger)		59.40
62	Herman Olund (Swe)		1.02.30
63	Nicolas Vouilloz (Fra)	Team Lapierre International	1.07.40
64	Neil Donoghue (Gbr)	Team Mbuk Santacruz	1.10.20

65 Dan Atherton (Gbr) Animal Commencal	1.15.10
66 Bryn Atkinson (Aus)	1.17.20
67 Gee Atherton (Gbr) Animal Commencal	1.19.00
68 Julien Camellini (Fra) Mojo Orange	1.25.00
69 Mario Sieder (Aut)	1.31.50
70 Matthew Simmonds (Gbr)	1.35.40
71 Bernat Guardia Pascual (Esp) Msc Bikes	1.35.50
72 Fabien Pedemanaud (Fra)	1.36.00
73 Andrew Neethling (RSA)	1.54.50
74 Greg Minnaar (RSA) Team G-Cross Honda	1.56.10
75 Will Longden (Gbr) Team Mbuk Santacruz	2.01.30
76 Thibaut Ruffin (Fra)	2.11.50
77 Ruairidh Cunningham (Gbr)	2.20.10
78 Matthew Scoles (NZl)	2.22.40
79 Oscar Saiz Castane (Esp)	2.25.00
80 Joseph Smith (Gbr)	2.52.40
81 Robin Wallner (Swe)	5.17.30
82 Glenn Haden (NZl)	
DSQ Remy Charrier (Fra)	