

MTB World Cup XC #7 & DH #5 - CDM

Bromont, Canada, August 1-3, 2008

August 2: Elite women downhill

Atherton repeats in slippery conditions

By Sue George in Bromont, Québec – cyclingnews.com

World Champion Rachel Atherton (Animal Commencal) overcame a disappointing, mistake-filled qualifying run to log her second, consecutive World Cup win with a smooth final run despite rainy, slippery conditions Saturday afternoon. Sabrina Jonnier (Team Maxxis) was briefly in the hot seat, but had to settle for second again, a little over two seconds behind Atherton. Tracy Moseley (Kona) finished third, one additional second later.

"I set off at the gate, and I was pretty nervous because I had a bad qualifier," said Atherton. "The ground was really wet and I was a bit scared because it rained quite a lot at the top. I was slipping and sliding but I kept it pinned and tried to ride it like it was dry. Luckily it paid off."

"It's good to win two weekends in a row," said Atherton, who not happy with her qualifier. "I didn't think I'd win here. I didn't know if I'd pull it back. When you have a bad race (as she said she did in qualifying), it's always good to pull it back with a good one."



Rachel Atherton (Animal Commencal) won
Photo ©: FJ Hughes

Light rain started after the first four racers completed their final runs. After a few minutes of heavier rain, the precipitation tapered off, but the several of the women commented that after a week of regular and often heavy rains, conditions were even more slippery than in the morning's qualifying runs, which were conducted under cloudy skies on a downhill course that differed from when Bromont has previously held World Cups and the 1992 World Championship.

Miranda Miller, Elisa Canepa (Playerbike - Ironhorse), and Danice Uyesugi traded time in the hot seat before Anita Molcik (4 Elements Yeti) clocked a 3:35.25, five seconds faster than Uyesugi.

"The rain started when I was on the start," said Molcik, who was happy with her run. "The track was slippery. I had some stops, but I think in these conditions, every rider will have some problems - except maybe for the top three."

Neither of the trio of racers that followed her could better her time, but Floriane Pugin (Playerbike - Iron Horse) took advantage of her opportunity and posted a blazing 3:25.26.

"I wasn't expecting it to be so wet because we had rain at the start, but just for five minutes before, so I didn't think it would already be wet, but it was," said Pugin. "It was more slippery in finals than in qualifying, but I think it was my best run of the week."

Although Claire Buchar and Mio Suemasa (MS Intense Factory Racing) gave it their best shots, neither could best Pugin's time, a time that would hold up for fifth.

"There are a lot of flat sections where you have to do a lot of sprinting," said Buchar, Canada's best finisher in sixth. "It's tough physically. This track is so stop and go, with tight corners and mud. You need a lot of power here."

It was another French woman, Jonnier, who would unseat her with a 3:16.64. But Jonnier's time in the hot seat was especially short-lived as Atherton came down with a 3:14.68 immediately thereafter.

"It was really slippery so I just tried to stay on my bike, but it apparently wasn't fast enough," said Jonnier, who didn't blame the rain. "It was just how it was - it's not like I could do anything about it."

Try as they would, neither Moseley nor Emmeline Ragot (Suspension Center) could surpass Atherton.

"I didn't ride the bottom half well, but I'm pleased with how I rode the technical stuff," said Moseley. "It was another solid result. Not quite where I want to be but at least I'm close enough."

"The run wasn't bad," an understated, but relieved Atherton said after winning. "I made three mistakes, stalling and then I sort of hit a tree at the top - barely squeezed past. But I've learned from experience that you can never give up, no matter what happens."

A challenging course

The course seemed to take a toll on the women, many of whom were upset after their qualifying runs. The track challenged both the physical abilities of the women as well as their mental outlook.

"Even in the dry, it would have been a tough track, but the rain out there made it hard," said Moseley.

"There holes were getting bigger. There were a few sections I was hoping I could get through. Normally by race day, I can pretty much pin it when it comes to the track, but this was still pretty much a lottery. The rain at the start (of the final) was a bit of a worry."

"There were big holes where you don't expect them," added Harriet Harper. "It's claimed a few riders in spots. There are big rocks everywhere. It's a real mind game." The difficulty was impossible to put out of her mind. "I couldn't really sleep last night."

"The course is really difficult, especially with the mud," said Jonnier after her qualifying run.

Even World Champion Atherton seemed to struggle at first.

"In qualifying, I got to the first turn and messed up really badly," said Atherton. "I nearly crashed. Then I got to a few turns down and went over the bars. And then I got a few more turns down and hit a tree. I was surprised to still get the third best time. I knew if I had a good run in the final I'd be up there, but you never know with the girls - they always go faster in the finals."

Results

1 Rachel Atherton (GBr) Animal Commencal	3.14.35
2 Sabrina Jonnier (Fra) Team Maxxis	0.02.29
3 Tracy Moseley (GBr) Kona	0.03.33
4 Emmeline Ragot (Fra) Suspension Center	0.03.80
5 Floriane Pugin (Fra) Playbiker - Iron Horse	0.10.91
6 Claire Buchar (Can)	0.20.24
7 Mio Suemasa (Jpn) MS-Intense Factory-Racing	0.20.43
8 Anita Molcik (Aut) 4 Elements Yeti	0.20.90
9 Scarlett Hagen (NZl)	0.24.56
10 Micayla Gatto (Can)	0.25.20
11 Danice Uyesugi (Can)	0.26.28
12 Fionn Griffiths (GBr) Norco World Team	0.37.02
13 Elisa Canepa (Ita) Playbiker - Iron Horse	0.50.63
14 Myriam Nicole (Fra)	0.52.73
15 Amy Laird (NZl)	0.54.14
16 Miranda Miller (Can)	0.56.58
17 Harriet Harper (NZl)	0.57.02
18 Amber Zirnhelt (Can)	1.49.35
19 Sheila Morris (Can)	2.14.65
DNS Caroline Buchanan (Aus)	

Teams

1 Santa Cruz Syndicate	90 pts
2 Animal Commencal	70
3 Team Maxxis	69
4 Monster Energy / Iron Horse	66
5 MS-Intense Factory-Racing	47
6 Playbiker - Iron Horse	46
7 Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	42
8 Giant Mountain Bike Team	34
9 Kona	32
10 Suspension Center	30
11 Team Bike Radar	28
12 Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	27
13 4 Elements Yeti/Hotec/RSP	23

14	Subaru Mountain Bike Pro Team	22
15	Kenda Tomac	22
16	Norco World Team	19
17	GT Bicycles	17
18	Team Sunn	15
19	Massi	11
20	Dolphin-Trek Mountainbike Racing Team	8
21	Cannondale Factory Racing	2