

MTB World Cup XC #6 & DH #4 - CDM

Mont Sainte Anne, Canada, July 25-27, 2008

July 26: Elite women downhill

Rainbow-clad Atherton wins women's downhill

By Sue George in Mont-Sainte-Anne, Québec – cyclingnews.com

Making her first World Cup appearance in the rainbow jersey of the World Champion, Rachel Atherton (Animal Commencal) won an exciting downhill final ahead of Frenchwoman Sabrina Jonnier (Maxxis) and fellow Brit Tracy Moseley (Kona).

"Winning today is kind of saying to everyone my world title wasn't just a one off," said Atherton after defeating Jonnier by a mere 1.43 seconds.

"This is the first time I've won two World Cups in a year, and it's my first win here. Last year, I had a puncture. Two years ago, I was too young and my muscles weren't big enough," she said, laughing.

Despite no rain on race day, the course was still generally wet from frequent rains all last week, making it slippery, especially over the roots and rocks. The course dried significantly between the semi-final run and the finals, but the ruts created by riding the course wet over several days made for some treacherous racing on a course considered by most to be demanding even when dry. The softer course as meant less rest and even more pedalling than usual on a course that is relatively long and requires plenty of pedalling already.



Rachael Atherton (Animal Commencal)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine



Atherton's final run wasn't flawless, but she said it was the kind of course that was more about making the fewest and least significant errors. "I made a lot of mistakes on this final run and I almost crashed on the last turn. Then I told myself 'Calm down.' It's a long track and you can make mistakes and still be good.

"There's no way you can get down without making mistakes on this track - well not for a girl," said Atherton, qualifying her reply before adding with a laugh, "Maybe for the men?"

Rachael Atherton (Animal Commencal)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

In contrast, Jonnier had some troubles during her final run. "I made too many mistakes, but I had a big smile on my face on the way down. I had some problems this morning (in the semi-final)." Happy with her second-place run, she reflected, "I wasn't strong enough apparently - maybe next time. I knew Rachel would be strong - she's been pretty strong this year."

Jonnier confessed to struggling with the conditions. "Yes, I'm not used to riding in the mud. I think I'm probably the worst girl riding in the mud. The English girls have this one me."

Moseley was the other English woman to finish in the top three. "My run was pretty good on the top section. Then I had a brake fade problem part-way down, so I was conscious about not coming into corners too fast," she said. "I was pretty tired by the final run. It wasn't perfect, but there were no major mistakes. I'm satisfied."

Moseley described the course after her qualifying run. "It's just really tiring. It saps your energy the whole way down. It's fatiguing on the whole body, so it's hard not to make mistakes. It's certainly a tough race."

Helen Gaskell paid a visit to the hot seat early with a time of 5.43.63, which held up for seventh overall. The British woman was happy with her finish and to be back racing. "My run was average, but I'm just coming back from a back injury, so I found it hard. It's been a long path back."



Sabrina Jonnier (Team Maxxis)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Her time held up for three riders, when Fionn Griffiths (Norco World Team) came through with a 5.37.21.



Tracy Moseley (Kona)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

"I did the top section pretty good and then in the woods, I hit a tree and stopped," said Griffiths of her run. "I didn't come off my bike, but it did slow my momentum in the woods." She counted her experience as a factor helpful to putting that bobble out of her mind for the remainder of the run. "There were also a few bits where I couldn't get my feet clipped back in which wasn't optimal, but things like that happen to everyone."

Mio Suemasa (MS Intense Factory Racing) took the next turn in the hot seat after logging a time of 5.35.52. Floriane Pugin (Playbiker - Ironhorse) might have bumped her out, but she flatted during her run - near the top and finished with a much slower time. She said afterward that she was disappointed to flat two World Cups in a row.

Suemesa was bumped out of the spotlight by Sabrina Jonnier (Team Maxxis) who clocked a much faster 5.13.79. After Emmeline Ragot (Suspension Center), Moseley came down as the second to last rider. Her time of 5:21.86 would only be good enough for third ultimately.

Knowing a good battle was likely in the making, the crowd went wild as Atherton took the final run. She crossed the line in 5:12.36 - narrowly defeating Jonnier for the win.

Race notes

- Canadian Marie-Eve Marcotte went down on her final run. "I crashed after the first high speed section. I came down after a double jump section and I hit a rock." Marcotte's lower chest slammed into her saddle, leaving her with a contusion and bruised lower ribs. "I stopped and thought about it and considered exiting the course right there, but I got back and on and rode to the finish." After receiving a medical check, she was back out along the course in time to watch the finish of the men's race.

- American Melissa Buhl (KHS) suffered a mechanical during her qualifying run and did not make it into the finals. The misfortune may have been a blessing in disguise as Buhl got to rest during the finals and went on to win the 4X later in the day.

Results

1 Rachel Atherton (GBr) Animal Commencal	5.12.36
2 Sabrina Jonnier (Fra) Team Maxxis	0.01.44
3 Tracy Moseley (GBr) Kona	0.09.54
4 Mio Suemasa (Jpn) Ms-Intense Factory-Racing	0.23.14
5 Fionn Griffiths (GBr) Norco World Team	0.24.84
6 Claire Buchar (Can)	0.27.04
7 Helen Gaskell (GBr)	0.31.24
8 Anita Molcik (Aut) 4 Elements Yeti/Hotec/Rsp	0.34.84
9 Scarlett Hagen (NZl)	0.35.04
10 Micayla Gatto (Can)	0.35.34
11 Harriet Harper (NZl)	0.44.54
12 Danice Uyesugi (Can)	0.48.44
13 Emmeline Ragot (Fra) Suspension Center	0.51.74
14 Amy Laird (NZl)	0.53.44
14 Katrina Strand (Can)	
16 Emilie Siegenthaler (Swi) Suspension Center	1.06.84
17 Helene Valerie Fruhwirth (Aut)	1.10.94
18 Floriane Pugin (Fra) Playbiker - Iron Horse	1.27.14
19 Marie-Eve Marcotte (Can)	3.09.94
20 Myriam Nicole (Fra)	4.05.54