

MTB World Cup XC, DH & 4X #1 - CDM

Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, April 10-12, 2009

April 12: Elite men downhill

Minnaar maximises home soil advantage

By Rob Jones in Pietermaritzburg – cyclingnews.com

The opening round of the 2009 Nissan UCI Mountain Bike World Cup concluded on Sunday with a storybook ending that couldn't have been scripted any better, as local hero Greg Minnaar (Santa Cruz Syndicate) won the downhill in front of family and friends in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

"It is a huge, huge win for me," said Minnaar. "With my family here, and all the people supporting and cheering for me it was very special to win here. In some ways it was nice that Mick [Hannah] qualified first, because that took a little pressure off. My run was very good, quite clean, with only little mistakes. I'm very happy that I was able to get this win and keep the leader's jersey."

The three-kilometre course favoured fitness as much as technical prowess, with long sections of pedalling interspersed with sharp drop-offs and jumps. Spectators came out in droves to cheer on Minnaar, pushing total attendance beyond 16,000, which far exceeded organizer's expectations.

The men's race was expected to be a real battle, and that is what happened. In qualifying, the top 10 riders went under four minutes, but in the final there were 28 who cracked that barrier.



Greg Minnaar (Santa Cruz Syndicate) proudly
Photo ©: Rob Jones



Michael Hannah (GT Bicycles)
Photo ©: Rob Jones

Great Britain's Ruaridh Cunningham (Chain Reaction-Intense) was the first to do so at 3:59.12, and his time stood up until American Aaron Holmes Gwin (Yeti Fox Shox Factory) knocked three seconds off. After this riders starting chipping away steadily at the lead until Cameron Cole (Maxxis-Rocky Mountain), the 53rd rider to start, took the best time down to 3:53.20. Cole's time stood until former world and World Cup champion Sam Hill (Specialized Factory) brought it down to 3:50.18 with seven riders remaining.

Hill's time stood up through three riders, before the legendary Steve Peat (Santa Cruz Syndicate) was the first to go under 3:50, recording 3:49.25. Australian Chris Kovarik (Chain Reaction-Intense), winner on this course the previous week was next, but crashed in a rocky section near the top, knocking him out of contention.

Then it was the turn of Minnaar, whose run was so smooth it looked almost effortless, as he sailed over the jumps and pedaled furiously through the flatter sections. The noise from the partisan crowd was almost deafening, and when

Minnaar crossed the finish line, knocking almost six seconds off his teammate Peat's time, the cheers could be heard back up to the start line.

However there was still one rider to go - Australian Mick Hannah (GT Bicycles), who had qualified first. The spectators were quiet as Hannah came past, respectful of his skill, but quietly hoping for a South African victory. Their hopes were answered when Hannah posted a time of 3:45.69 - fast enough for second, but not fast enough to displace Minnaar.

Results

1	Greg Minnaar (RSA) Santa Cruz Syndicate	3.43.44
2	Michael Hannah (Aus) GT Bicycles	0.02.25
3	Steve Peat (GBr) Santa Cruz Syndicate	0.05.81
4	Samuel Hill (Aus) Monster Energy / Specialized / Mad Catz	0.06.74
5	Gee Atherton (GBr) Animal Commencal	0.08.57
6	Cameron Cole (NZl) Team Maxxis-Rocky Mountain Bicycles	0.09.76
7	Justin Leov (NZl) Trek World Racing	0.10.57
8	Jared Graves (Aus) Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	0.10.88
9	Marc Beaumont (GBr) GT Bicycles	0.11.39
10	Julien Camellini (Fra) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0.11.51
11	Nathan Rennie (Aus) Kenda Morewood	0.11.58
12	Duncan Riffle (USA) Duncan Riffle Racing	0.11.85
13	Dan Atherton (GBr) Animal Commencal	0.12.07
14	Andrew Neethling (RSA) Trek World Racing	0.12.24
15	Ivan Oulego Moreno (Spa) Massi	0.12.31
16	Aurélien Giordanengo (Fra)	0.12.72
17	Aaron Holmes Gwin (USA) Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	0.12.84
18	Bernat Guardia Pascual (Spa) Massi	0.13.10
19	David Vazquez Lopez (Spa) Lapierre Powered By Saab Salomon	0.13.20
20	Steve Smith (Can) MS Evil Racing	0.13.76
21	Florent Payet (Fra) Subaru Mountain Bike Pro Team	0.14.10
22	Fabien Cousinie (Fra)	0.14.17
23	Mickael Pascal (Fra) MSC Bikes	0.14.34
24	Cedric Gracia (Fra)	0.15.35
25	Pasqual Canals Flix (Spa) XMS-Devinici World Cup Team	0.15.49
26	Ruaridh Cunningham (GBr) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0.15.68
27	Damien Spagnolo (Fra) Subaru Mountain Bike Pro Team	0.15.70
28	Samuel Blenkinsop (NZl) Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	0.16.16
29	Wyn Masters (NZl) Ancillotti Doganaccia Racing Team	0.16.75
30	Jonty Neethling (RSA)	0.16.80
31	Nick Beer (Swi) Scott 11	0.17.64
32	Brendan Fairclough (GBr) Monster Energy / Specialized / Mad Catz	0.17.76
33	Joris Bigoni (Fra)	0.17.83
34	Thibaut Ruffin (Fra)	0.18.18
35	Bradley Benedict (USA) Duncan Riffle Racing	0.18.28
36	Thomas Braithwaite (GBr)	0.18.72
37	Filip Polc (Svk) MS Evil Racing	0.18.75
38	Pierre Charles Georges (Fra) Solid Aclass Factory Team	0.19.02
39	Josh Bryceland (GBr) Santa Cruz Syndicate	0.19.04
40	Sam Dale (GBr)	0.19.09
41	Aari Barrett* (NZl) Scott 11	0.19.49
42	Robin Wallner (Swe)	0.19.83
43	Johann Potgieter (RSA)	0.19.99
44	Remi Thirion (Fra) Team Sunn	0.20.13
45	Mitchell Delfs (Aus) Kenda Morewood	0.20.32
46	Will Rischbieth (Aus)	0.20.83
47	Jared Rando (Aus) Giant Mountain Bike Team	0.21.01
48	Dennis Dertell (Swe)	0.21.09
49	Nicolas Ortiz (Fra)	0.21.19
50	Joseph Smith (GBr) Kona	0.21.57
51	Matthew Simmonds (GBr) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0.21.74
52	Neil Donoghue (GBr)	0.21.80
53	Rowan Sorrell (GBr)	0.22.01
54	Dan Stanbridge (GBr)	0.22.46
55	Marco Bugnone (Ita) Argentina Bike Gravity Team	0.22.53
56	Claudio Cozzi (Ita) Dytech DH	0.22.81
57	Tom Deacon (GBr) 2Stagefactory	0.22.85
58	Danny Hart* (GBr) Lapierre Powered By Saab Salomon	0.23.10
59	Dominik Gspan (Swi)	0.23.17
60	Adam Brayton (GBr) Just Reid Race Team	0.23.36
61	Ryan Condrashoff (USA) X-Fusion-Intense	0.24.17
62	Joshua Button (Aus)	0.25.28
63	Luke Strobels (USA) Team Maxxis-Rocky Mountain Bicycles	0.25.41
64	Marco Milivinti (Ita) Dytech DH	0.25.62
65	Lorenzo Suding (Ita) Dytech DH	0.26.57
66	Pierre Van Der Merwe (RSA)	0.26.62

67 Timothy Bentley* (RSA)	0.26.78
68 Scott Mears (GBr)	0.26.92
69 Louis-Bresler Knipe (RSA)	0.27.00
70 Laurie Dinham* (Aus)	0.27.23
71 Gary Barnard (RSA)	0.28.72
72 Darryn Stow (RSA)	0.29.01
73 Hayden Brown (RSA)	0.30.29
74 James Hughes (GBr)	0.30.57
75 Antonio Ferreiro Pajuelo (Spa) XMS-Devinci World Cup Team	0.31.39
76 Emyr Davies (GBr)	0.31.80
77 Simon Dinkelman* (RSA)	0.33.23
78 Daniel Critchlow (GBr) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0.39.08
79 Kevin Aiello* (USA) GT Bicycles	0.46.45
80 Kieran Bennett (NZl) X-Fusion-Intense	0.48.03
81 Matti Lehtikainen (Fin) MS Evil Racing	0.48.19
82 Chris Kovarik (Aus) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	2.46.70

* indicates junior riders

Teams

1 Trek World Racing	81 pts
2 Santa Cruz Syndicate	72
3 Team Maxxis-Rocky Mountain Bicycles	58
4 GT Bicycles	57
5 Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	54
6 Animal Commencal	46
7 Iron Horse-Kenda-Playbiker	42
8 Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	40
9 Suspension Center	35
10 Norco World Team	30
11 Monster Energy / Specialized / Mad Catz	30
12 Massi	29
13 Scott 11	21
14 Kenda Morewood	20
15 Duncan Riffle Racing	19
16 Subaru Mountain Bike Pro Team	14
17 Lapierre Powered By Saab Salomon	12
18 MS Evil Racing	11
19 MSC Bikes	8
20 XMS-Devinci World Cup Team	6
21 Ancillotti Doganaccia Racing Team	2