

Beaumont plummets to victory

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Atherton takes World Cup lead from Minnaar



Marc Beaumont (GT Bicycles) on his way to winning. (Image credit: Tour of Japan)

The men's downhill World Cup competition tightened after round five in Val di Sole, Italy, on Sunday as Marc Beaumont (GT) secured the victory giving him the second World Cup win of his career. Meanwhile, Gee Atherton (Commencal) took the leader's jersey from Greg Minnaar (Santa Cruz Syndicate) by the extremely slim margin of seven points.

Canada's Steve Smith (MS Evil) finished fifth, becoming the first Canadian man in at least a decade to make a podium appearance at a downhill World Cup.

There were two races in the men's competition - the one for the World Cup win, and the one between Minnaar and Atherton for the overall title. Atherton qualified first, on the course where he had won his world title in 2008, while Minnaar

struggled in the upper, rocky section.

This actually put Atherton into the World Cup lead, based on ranking points awarded for qualifying. However, a similar situation had happened a week earlier at Champéry, and Minnaar had pulled out a stellar final run to retain his leader's jersey.

Australian Mitchell Delfs set the first fast time for the men, only to be bumped by Markus Pekoll (Solid A-Class). Pekoll spent a long time in the Hot Seat, and his time would eventually hold up for tenth place. It took Minnaar to finally knock the Austrian rider out of the lead, and his time would stand up to six riders before Beaumont finally took the best time down by nearly a second and a half.

At that point there were still seven riders to go, but none came close to unseating Beaumont until there was only Atherton left. But Atherton was over a second slower at the first split, and even further back at the second, eventually finishing third, behind Minnaar. However, the difference between

second and third was not enough to keep Minnaar in the leader's jersey and Atherton took it by a mere seven points - 1007 points to 1000 after five rounds of racing.

"Qualifying went pretty well," said Beaumont, "Just steady and I put a nice run together, and I was feeling good again this morning, so I just tried to go about it as if it was practice.

"I posted a pretty good time, but there's some fast boys, and I was thinking maybe I can scrap a podium. I wasn't expecting to win by any means. I'm pretty shocked, and not really sure what to say," he continued.

"My previous win in Spain [in 2007], a lot of people frowned upon it, because it was weird circumstances with the weather. This proves to me that I'm capable of doing it, and I've done it on a level playing field. Hopefully this is kind of a resurgence, and I can get on the podium a little more often."

For Atherton, it was a bittersweet victory. "I knew that I had to put a solid run in, in qualifying, and start chasing the points," he explained. "It's what saved me and has given me the lead. But, taking third place wasn't exactly my game plan... it's good enough, though.

"It's definitely been my best season, but it's been frustrating watching Greg, being so consistent. I've been waiting for him to slip up and hammer some points, but it hasn't happened. He's really making me work for it.

"I didn't make mistakes, exactly, but you do have to have a faultless run. I was riding a bit nervous and a bit tense, and really just fighting the bike all the way down, not flowing at all, and it showed in my results."

Smith, who has a string of top 10 results and has finished as high as sixth at World Cups in the past, was happy to finally make it onto the podium. "I crashed out in two of the other four [World Cups], so I just wanted to have a clean run here and have a solid race," he said.

"I wasn't expecting to get on the podium, but conditions were tough up there, really loose powder, so anything can happen, and I just squeezed on the podium. I loved this track, it's rough and hard, first day of riding it I knew that I loved it.

"So far [this podium] is the highlight of my career, I've been trying to get on the podium the last couple of years, and with the crashes this year I was almost more worried about just making it down with a clean run. I did that and got a podium."

#	RIDER NAME (COUNTRY) TEAM	RESULT
1	Marc Beaumont (GBr) GT Bicycles	0:03:18
2	Greg Minnaar (RSA) Santa Cruz Syndicate	0:00:01
3	Gee Atherton (GBr) Commencal	0:00:03
4	Andrew Neethling (RSA) Trek World Racing	0:00:03
5	Steve Smith (Can) MS Evil Racing	0:00:04
6	Steve Peat (GBr) Santa Cruz Syndicate	0:00:04
7	Danny Hart (GBr) Giant Factory Team	0:00:04
8	Samuel Blenkinsop (NZl) Lapierre International	0:00:05
9	Josh Bryceland (GBr) Santa Cruz Syndicate	0:00:06
10	Markus Pekoll (Aut) Solid Aclass Factory Team	0:00:06
11	Matti Lehtikainen (Fin) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0:00:06
12	Michael Hannah (Aus) GT Bicycles	0:00:07
13	Brook Macdonald (NZl) MS Evil Racing	0:00:08
14	Aaron Gwin (USA) Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	0:00:08
15	Mickael Pascal (Fra)	0:00:08
16	Lewis Buchanan° (GBr) MS Evil Racing	0:00:09
17	Romain Paulhan (Fra)	0:00:09
18	Bryn Atkinson (Aus)	0:00:10
19	Joseph Smith (GBr) Kona	0:00:10
20	Cédric Gracia (Fra)	0:00:11
21	Nick Beer (Swi) Scott 11	0:00:11
22	Chris Kovarik (Aus) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0:00:11
23	Mitchell Delfs (Aus)	0:00:11
24	Sam Dale (GBr)	0:00:11
25	Matthew Simmonds (GBr) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0:00:12
26	Luke Strobel (USA) MS Evil Racing	0:00:12
27	Pierre Charles Georges (Fra) Solid Aclass Factory Team	0:00:12
28	Fabien Pedemanaud (Fra) Scott 11	0:00:12
29	Bradley Benedict (USA)	0:00:14
30	Pasqual Canals Flix (Spa) XMS Racing Squad	0:00:14
31	Ludovic Oget° (Fra) Ryde-Racing	0:00:14
32	Shaun O'connor (Aus) Kenda-Playbiker	0:00:14

33	Duncan Riffle (USA) Giant Factory Team	0:00:16
34	Maxime Remy (Fra) Suspension Center	0:00:16
35	Ruaridh Cunningham (GBr) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0:00:16
36	Marcel Beer (Swi)	0:00:17
37	Florent Payet (Fra) Blackmountain Morewood United	0:00:18
38	Jack Reading (GBr)	0:00:18
39	Marcus Klausmann (Ger) Ghost A.T.G. Pro Team	0:00:18
40	Cyrille Kurtz (Fra) Team Lac Blanc Massif Des Vosges	0:00:19
41	Wyn Masters (NZl) Kenda-Playbiker	0:00:19
42	Adam Brayton (GBr)	0:00:19
43	Matej Charvat (Cze) K.T.R. Racing Team	0:00:19
44	Scott Mears (GBr)	0:00:20
45	Rémi Thirion (Fra) Team Sunn Montgenevre	0:00:20
46	Matthew Scoles (NZl) Team Cingolani - Protone	0:00:20
47	Dennis Dertell (Swe)	0:00:20
48	Curtis Keene (USA)	0:00:21
49	Richard Thomas (GBr)	0:00:21
50	Antonio Ferreiro Pajuelo (Spa) XMS Racing Squad	0:00:22
51	Joris Bigoni (Fra)	0:00:22
52	Aurélien Giordanengo (Fra) Mondraker Factory Team	0:00:22
53	Thomas Braithwaite (GBr)	0:00:22
54	Dominik Gspan (Swi)	0:00:22
55	Thibaut Ruffin (Fra) Commencal Superiders	0:00:23
56	Oliver Burton (GBr)	0:00:23
57	Bernard Kerr (GBr) Norco World Team	0:00:24
58	Martin Mikulenka (Cze)	0:00:24
59	Sam Flockhart° (GBr) Lapierre International	0:00:24
60	George Brannigan° (NZl) Ancillotti Doganaccia Racing Team	0:00:24
61	Damien Spagnolo (Fra) Mondraker Factory Team	0:00:24
62	Harry Heath (GBr)	0:00:25
63	Marco Milivinti (Ita) Team Cingolani - Protone	0:00:26
64	Jed Rooney° (NZl)	0:00:27
65	Charly Di Pasquale (Fra)	0:00:27

66	Alexandre Lohner (Fra)	0:00:27
67	Eliot Jackson (USA)	0:00:29
68	Thomas Jeandin (Swi)	0:00:29
69	Rupert Chapman° (NZl)	0:00:29
70	Nejc Rutar (Slo) MBK Orbea	0:00:31
71	Ben Cathro (GBr)	0:00:32
72	Julien Camellini (Fra) Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	0:00:37
72	Luis Paulo Vicente Ferreira (Por)	
74	Martin Frei (Swi)	0:00:40
75	Filip Polc (Svk) MS Evil Racing	0:00:44
76	Lorenzo Suding (Ita)	0:00:45
77	Nathan Rankin (NZl) Kenda-Playbiker	0:01:03
78	Robin Wallner (Swe) Team Sunn Montgenevre	0:03:11
79	Brendan Fairclough (GBr) Monster Energy / Specialized / Mad Catz	0:03:42
80	Fergus Lamb (GBr)	0:03:49
DNS	Justin Leov (NZl) Trek World Racing	
DNS	Bernat Guardia Pascual (Spa) Massi Team	
DNS	Emanuel Pombo (Por)	

TEAMS

#	Rider Name (Country) Team	Result
1	Santa Cruz Syndicate	83 pts
2	MS Evil Racing	66
3	Scott 11	63
4	Trek World Racing	62
5	GT Bicycles	59
6	Chain Reaction Cycles/Intense	59
7	Suspension Center	40
8	Team Maxxis-Rocky Mountain	35
9	Commencal	32
10	Commencal Superiders	30
11	Solid Aclass Factory Team	25
12	Giant Factory Team	24
13	Lapierre International	23

14	Morzine-Avoriaz/Haute-Savoie	23
15	Dr-Gravity Union	20
16	RC Alpine Commencal Austria	18
17	Yeti Fox Shox Factory Race Team	17
18	Kona	12
19	XMS Racing Squad	1