

Cliffhanger in the Alps

Intro:

Round three of the inaugural Swatch Dual World Cup arrived in Les Gets, France, amid mild controversy and increasing fan acceptance. Dual, which is like dual slalom, only without separate tracks, is the latest discipline in mountain bike racing. The dual has enjoyed widespread fan acceptance since its debut at Stellenbosch, South Africa, although some top downhill riders are sitting out the series. Their concern is the risk of collision the day before the downhill race. Thousands of spectators lined the course on Saturday evening to watch many of downhill's brightest stars compete for UCI World Cup points. The interest of those who could not attend was served by live television coverage.

The format of the Dual is a single-elimination, aka knock-out event, where the field is reduced from 32 men and 16 women, until two riders remain to contest the final. Runs took an average of 30 seconds.

WOMEN:

For **Katrina Miller** (AUS, Jamis-Manitou) this event was about opportunity and courage. In round two she had a lucky escape, recovering from riding off course to come back and beat **Tara Llanes** (Mt Dew/Specialized). After that scare she rode with great precision, and in the final against **Sabrina Jonnier** (FRA, Sintesi Verlicchi) she never looked like losing. **Helen Mortimer** (GBR, Sintesi Verlicchi) outrode **Malin Lindgren** (SWE, Scott International) to claim third place.

This was the first win of the season for the Australian, but last week's winner **Sari Jorgenson** (SUI, Yeti), who finished 9th retained the Swatch white jersey of the series leader.

MEN:

High-flying **David Cullinan** (USA, Schwinn-Toyota), **Brian Lopes** (USA, Mongoose) and **Shaun Palmer** (USA, Mt Dew/Specialized) wowed the crowd with huge air and fast action through the berms to capture a USA 1-2-3 and show the thrilling potential for this new sport. Trained on the jumps and trails of Southern California, this trio dominated all comers and finessed their way through the course, fighting for the single best line through the turns.

Cullinan worked his way up through the ladder, beating Palmer in the semis and setting up a final with Lopes. Expectations for this clash were damped at the first corner when Lopes went down hard, losing more than 50 metres to Cullinan.

The most exciting round of the race was the *Palmer - Cullinan semi-final*. Cullinan, who has undergone heart valve replacement surgery no less than three times, outdid wild-boy Palmer not only in the finesse department, but also by his sheer pedalling speed.

Palmer took some consolation by beating **Scott Beaumont** (GBR, Kona) in the consolation round and taking third for the day. With his second win in as many weeks, Cullinan retained the white Swatch leader's jersey, commenting *"I can't believe this - it's a dream. It's been a long time since I've had this kind of success."*

Cullinan, who was the 1991 downhill world champion, and is widely regarded as one of the finest stylists of all, seems to have recovered in one of sport's most remarkable come-back stories of all.

Women/Femmes



| <i>pos</i> | <i>bib</i> | <i>UCIcode</i> | <i>name/nom</i> | <i>nat</i> | <i>team</i> | <i>points</i> |
|------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | 203 | AUS19750915 | MILLER Katrina | AUS | JAMIS/MANITOU/AR | 50 |
| 2 | 201 | FRA19810819 | JONNIER Sabrina | FRA | SINTESI VERLICCHI | 40 |
| 3 | 204 | GBR19760801 | MORTIMER Helen | GBR | SINTESI VERLICCHI | 30 |
| 4 | 202 | SWE19740824 | LINDGREN Malin | SWE | SCOTT INTL | 20 |
| 5 | 206 | USA19761128 | LLANES Tara | USA | MT DEW/SPECIALIZ | 10 |
| 5 | 207 | GBR19711206 | V. MEERBEECK Karen | GBR | GIANT | 10 |
| 5 | 208 | CZE19780621 | KURANDOVA Helena | CZE | KANGAROO/DIRT | 10 |
| 5 | 212 | USA19690419 | SHER Lisa | USA | ROTEC | 10 |
| 9 | 205 | SUI19800725 | JORGENSEN Sari | SUI | YETI | |
| 9 | 209 | AUT19670106 | MÖSER Florentina | AUT | LIETZ SPORT | |
| 9 | 210 | ESP19790704 | BLAS Miriam | ESP | SUNN-NIKE/LEFREA | |
| 9 | 211 | GER19710927 | HAMMA Ulrike | GER | AMERICAN EAGLE | |
| 9 | 213 | NED19820707 | BEERTEN Anneke | NED | | |
| 9 | 214 | SWE19770707 | FAGERSTRÖM Sofia | SWE | | |
| 9 | 215 | USA19690202 | LISNOCK Christine | USA | ANIMAL/PLAYSTATI | |
| 9 | 216 | SUI19620828 | GANTNER Isabelle | SUI | K2 | |

Knock Out Table

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|--|--|-----|--|--|-------------|--|--|--------|
| | | 1/8 | | | 1/4 | | | Semi-Finals | | | Finals |
|--|--|-----|--|--|-----|--|--|-------------|--|--|--------|

| Qual. | Bib | Name | | Bib | Name | | Bib | Name | | Bib | Name |
|-------|-----|------|--------------------|-----|------|--------------------|-----|------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 201 | JONNIER Sabrina | | | | | | | | |
| | 16 | 216 | GANTNER Isabelle | | 201 | JONNIER Sabrina | | | | | |
| | 8 | 208 | KURANDOVA Helena | | 208 | KURANDOVA Helena | | | | | |
| | 9 | 209 | MÖSER Florentina | | | | | 201 | JONNIER Sabrina | | |
| | 4 | 204 | MORTIMER Helen | | | | | 204 | MORTIMER Helen | | |
| | 13 | 213 | BEERTEN Anneke | | 204 | MORTIMER Helen | | | | | |
| | 5 | 205 | JORGENSEN Sari | | 212 | SHER Lisa | | | | | Final |
| | 12 | 212 | SHER Lisa | | | | | | 201 | JONNIER Sabrina | |
| | 2 | 202 | LINDGREN Malin | | | | | | 203 | MILLER Katrina | |
| | 15 | 215 | LISNOCK Christine | | 202 | LINDGREN Malin | | | | | |
| | 7 | 207 | V. MEERBEECK Karen | | 207 | V. MEERBEECK Karen | | | | | |
| | 10 | 210 | BLAS Miriam | | | | | 202 | LINDGREN Malin | | |
| | 3 | 203 | MILLER Katrina | | | | | 203 | MILLER Katrina | | Consolation |
| | 14 | 214 | FAGERSTRÖM Sofia | | 203 | MILLER Katrina | | | 204 | MORTIMER Helen | |
| | 6 | 206 | LLANES Tara | | 206 | LLANES Tara | | | 202 | LINDGREN Malin | |
| | 11 | 211 | HAMMA Ulrike | | | | | | | | |