

Venue: Spindleruv Mlyn, Czech Republic- XC#5- 10/11 May 1997

Paola Pezzo (ITA, Gary Fisher) sped to her third win of the '97 Grundig/UCI World Cup series, leaving an on-form field to ponder what might be in the second half of the series, which commences at Mount Snow, Vermont on June 21.

World Champion, **Alison Sydor** (CAN, Volvo-Cannondale) - looking her best so far this season - led the field through a frigid rain shower on the first of five laps, but was soon overhauled by Briton, **Caroline Alexander** (Ritchey), who towed a five rider group, also including Pezzo, **Chantal Daucourt** (SUI, VW-Trek), **Margarit Fullana** (ESP, Liberto Megamo) and last week's winner, **Alison Dunlap** (USA, GT).

Dunlap may have been on form at Budapest, but here she was clearly below her best, and was left behind on the second big climb of the circuit. Into lap two, Alexander held a slim lead ahead of Sydor, Pezzo, Fullana and Daucourt.

From the start of each lap begins a long, open, ski-slope climb on which a rider almost four minutes behind could see the leader at the top. On lap three, Alexander and Sydor could only watch as Pezzo rode away to open a 20 second gap on this climb, and then again as she extended her lead on the second climb on the lap. By the top of the first climb on the fourth lap, Alexander and Sydor, may have felt the tacky mud was like glue as not far ahead Pezzo worked her lead of about 43 seconds.



Paola makes it three this season

From there on, the Italian repeatedly took advantage of the open slopes to look back at her opposition, and an occasional smile on her face suggested that her glances were more to inspect the fruit of her labour than to assess her likelihood of being caught.

"It was like she was toying with us," said Alexander at the finish. Alexander had little trouble escaping from Sydor on the final lap, and closed Pezzo to 39 seconds, but the 27 year-old Olympic Champion from Boscohiesanuova, near Verona, never looked challenged. "I like this type of course: lots of steep, slow climbing," explained Pezzo at the finish. She went on to say, "I want to keep the Blue Jersey, but we will have to see what happens in North America."

The next five courses will be typically more technical than the first five, and of course more US women will be present. It seems unlikely that the current top five or six riders will be displaced by others when the World Cup circuit enters its second half, what is interesting will be how much Alison Sydor and Caroline Alexander improve, and if Alison Dunlap can reproduce her race-winning form. Barring injury or illness, Pezzo, who has a commanding lead of 43 points in the series, is unlikely to lose the Blue Jersey. The race for runner-up is not yet settled, though.

Paul Skilbeck

Course: 6.2km, 250m climbing each lap. Mixture of wide roads and trails on exposed alpine slopes, and narrow woodland tracks featuring tight corners and tree roots.

Spectators: 5,000;

Weather: Cold, broken cloud with rain showers.

Laps/Distance: 5

Average speed: Women - 17.5 kp/h

Women's XC Results

Pos	Bib	Name	First Name	Nat	Team	WCPTS	Time
1	1	PEZZO	PAOLA	ITA	GARY FISHER	75	1:46:44.47
2	10	ALEXANDER	CAROLINE	GBR	RITCHEY	70	1:47:23.68
3	2	SYDOR	ALISON	CAN	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	66	1:48:07.31
4	17	FULLANA	MARGARITA	ESP	LIBERTO MEGAMO A	62	1:49:19.04
5	6	DAUCOURT	CHANTAL	SUI	TREK/VOLKSWAGON	58	1:50:46.02
6	3	DUNLAP	ALISON	USA	TEAM GT	55	1:50:54.38
7	4	DE NEGRI	NADIA	ITA	BIANCHI MARTINI	52	1:51:12.57
8	8	LEBOUCHER	LAURENCE	FRA	LA POSTE	49	1:53:20.58
9	7	STROPPARO	ANNABELLA	ITA	VOLVO-CANNONDALE	46	1:54:21.09
10	19	ROBINSON	LOUISE	GBR	TEAM RALEIGH	43	1:54:56.56
11	5	TOMLINSON	LESLEY	CAN	KONA FACTORY	40	1:55:48.06
12	25	TEMPORELLI	SANDRA	FRA	LA POSTE	39	1:56:59.44
13	13	RÖESCH	NORA	GER	PROFLEX/MASTERCA	38	1:57:15.92
14	21	ROVIRA	SILVIA	ESP	SPECIALIZED-SPAI	37	1:57:49.33
15	20	MCQUAID	MELANIE	CAN	ROCKY MOUNTAIN	36	1:58:23.08
16	14	ZU PUTLITZ	HEDDA	GER	TEAM H+H	35	2:00:00.36
17	100	EPIFANOVA	ALLA	RUS	BUDVAR	34	2:01:32.65
18	12	TURCUTTO	MARIA PAOLA	ITA	CECINI LIVIGNO	33	2:02:45.59
19	18	MARUNDE	REGINA	GER	GT GERMANY	32	2:03:07.23
20	23	SPITZ	SABINE	GER	TEAM KONA	31	2:03:54.21
21	16	TANIKAWA	KANAKO	JPN	A&F;	30	2:05:10.55
22	26	BRUNGER	TRACY	GBR	PROFLEX/MASTERCA	29	2:06:13.42
23	56	COPNALL	JENNY	GBR		28	2:06:39.17
24	59	BRAUMANN	BIRGIT	AUT	CYCLOPIA TREK	27	2:07:18.82
25	38	JONSSON	ANNICA	SWE	NATIONAL TEAM SW	26	2:08:45.40

26	34	MICHELS-SMITH	ANDREA	GER	KHS GERMANY	25	2:14:37.86
-1 lap							
27	113	FRACZEK	JUSTYNA	POL	RMF FM COCA COLA	24	- 1 LAP
28	112	DAMKOVA	LUDMILA	CZE	LAVINA SPORT MTB	23	- 1 LAP
-2 laps							
29	114	KOLMEROVA	BOHDANA	CZE	CYCKOSPORT TITEC	22	- 2 LAPS
30	111	SEDLAKOVA	KATERINA	CZE	SK ULTRO-SPORT S	21	- 2 LAPS
dnf							
0	15	FÜRST	SILVIA	SUI	MT DEW/SPECIALIZ	0	DNF
0	30	DORLAND	CORINE	NED	VSF BATAVUS	0	DNF
0	102	NEUMANNOVA	KATERINA	CZE	CESKA SPORITELNA	0	DNF
0	115	GLOSOVA	IVANA	CZE	UNITE HOLESOV	0	DNF
0	51	OHRSTIG	EMELIE	SWE	GT-SWEDEN	0	DNF