

Newnham, Plymouth, GBR- 16-17.5.98- XC#5-

Leboucher comes of age

"I wasn't going to let this one get away," said **Laurence Leboucher** (FRA, Peugeot La Poste), jubilant after giving France its first ever female XC world cup winner. "Every race I enter now, I go to win," she added. "With this win I've proven I can do it, and so now it is all a game for me."



Leboucher (26) chose May 16, on the edge of Dartmoor, near Plymouth, England, to show herself as a true pretender to the Grundig/UCI World Cup title.

In spectacular style, she beat a fast-moving field of the world's best at this year's final World Cup XC race outside North America.

After chasing Leboucher hard for most of the race, **Gunn-Rita Dahle** (NOR, American Eagle) had to settle for a strong second place. She was unable to parlay last week's win into a double, but continued to show a promising return to form after a bad time last year.



The main excitement in an action-packed race was a thrilling sprint for third, which took place when **Alison**

Up at the front, Dahle succumbed to the French woman's pressure, and Leboucher increased her lead to over a minute by the finish. As the lap progressed, Sydor strengthened her grip on third place, with Grigson in fourth and Alexander chasing in 5th.

But Alexander was not content with that. With only a half of one 11.5km lap remaining Alexander began a late-race surge up onto MBG Moorland, leaving Grigson behind and advancing on Sydor. It was a bold move, and the gambit almost paid off when Sydor either dropped or jammed her chain at the last stream crossing, inside the final 500m. With Leboucher and Dahle safely home, the tension at the finish line was electric as the crowd wondered whether Alexander would catch the beleaguered Sydor.

According to Alexander: "People were telling me that [Alison] was running with her bike. I had had the same experience in Budapest, dragging my bike in the end of the race, so I know how tough that is."

Sure enough, Sydor came running onto the open grass of the finish straight. Glancing back she saw the British champion bearing down on her in full sprint. For a moment it was touch and go, but the line arrived just in time, and Sydor held onto third. It was one of those great moments in which a great champion shows her true colours. "It was a full sprint for sure, but a run of desperation. You've got to fight for every point, and you never know which race you'll have to drop. I think experience still counts for something out here," smiled Sydor.



But before the crowd had calmed down from this sprint, another fierce finish straight battle exploded. Road racer Dunlap was forced to draw on all her experience as **Barbara Blatter** (SUI, Swiss Bike Natl) challenged for sixth place. The American had just enough in reserve to hold her position.

Sydor (CAN, Volvo-Cannondale), ran in ahead of a charging **Caroline Alexander** (GBR, Ritchey).

Comment

The Action

Early in the race, Dahle showed her intentions by reeling in Sydor, who had escaped in the start loop. Leboucher and **Margarita Fullana** (ESP, Mt. Dew/Specialized) rounded out the lead, while Sydor dropped back to 4th.

By the end of the first lap of this 38.3km race, it was Leboucher and Fullana in the lead, with Dahle chasing them in a scene reminiscent of St Wendel one week earlier. 40 seconds behind the leading duo came a group with Sydor, Alexander, **Mary Grigson** (AUS, AIS/Giant) and **Alison Dunlap** (USA, GT).

Up at the front, Leboucher turned the screw on the pace and opened a small gap on Fullana, who was shadowed by Dahle. *"I felt good on the first lap,"* Leboucher later said. *"I knew last race that I was fit, so I felt I could go strong today."*

But she was going to have to fight for it. Behind her, Dahle surged past Fullana and early in the second lap was only seven seconds behind the leader. Fullana rode at 17 seconds back, and Grigson was fourth at 51. Local heroine, Alexander, responded to the cheers of the 7,000 strong crowd, and moved past Sydor into fifth place.

Ever the fighter, Sydor hit back in the technical sections and went past first Dunlap and then Alexander. Going up the following climb, she kept the power on and set her sights on Grigson, who was in view ahead.

By the half way stage, the race looked like this: Leboucher had a 30-second cushion to Dahle, with Fullana and Sydor now together at one minute. But behind these two, there was a heaving throng of stars, and the minor placings were wide open.

At the beginning of the 3rd, final lap, Dahle launched a mighty attack on Leboucher, and closed the gap to 15 seconds, but Leboucher had the measure of the Norwegian, and her unrelenting rhythm was sufficient to keep her at the front.

By now, first and second places were clear-cut, but the battle for third was a blaze of place-swapping action. Grigson went past Fullana, and a few seconds behind the Spaniard, Sydor was being closed down by Alexander. And Dunlap was not far behind the Briton.

While the glory belonged to Leboucher, for Dahle this was also a triumph. She now seems clear of the illness and poor form that plagued her last year, and once again spoke with the voice of a top contender. *"I think I did the first lap too hard today. I really had to fight in the later laps. (Laurence) was flying!"*

As for Sydor, with her hard-won third place, she not only retains the leader's jersey but also overtakes Paola Pezzo for first place in the UCI Rankings, which account for races both in and outside World Cup competition. Sydor was philosophical about today, content with the overall picture, but realistic about the task at hand. *"I rode my race, at my pace - that's all you can do."*



With so many women going so strongly in the women's World Cup, none of the riders is looking beyond the day. As Leboucher put it, *"Everybody's very strong right now, so anybody can win."*

Source: Ari Cheren

Women/Femmes



place	bib	UCIcode	name/nom	nat	team	t	+
			LEBOUCHER				
1	6	FRA19720222	Laurence	FRA	PEUGEOT LA POSTE	2:04:02.15	
2	4	NOR19730210	DAHLE Gunn-rita	NOR	AMERICAN EAGLE	2:05:18.29	1:16.14
3	1	CAN19660909	SYDOR Alison	CAN	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	2:07:05.82	3:03.66
4	12	GBR19680303	ALEXANDER Caroline	GBR	RITCHEY	2:07:06.52	3:04.36
5	3	ESP19720409	FULLANA Margarita	ESP	MT DEW/SPECIALIZ	2:07:40.93	3:38.77
6	2	USA19690727	DUNLAP Alison	USA	TEAM GT	2:07:58.67	3:56.52
7	25	SUI19701222	BLATTER Barbara	SUI	SWISS BIKE NATL	2:07:59.47	3:57.32
8	11	AUS19710603	GRIGSON Mary	AUS	A.I.S.	2:08:03.04	4:00.89
9	9	CAN19660316	REDDEN Christina	CAN	RITCHEY	2:08:56.06	4:53.90
10	7	SUI19660623	DAUCOURT Chantal	SUI	TREK/VOLKSWAGEN	2:11:42.78	7:40.62
11	28	SUI19640723	GASSMANN Daniela	SUI	WHEELER	2:12:11.44	8:09.29
			PALMER-KOMAR				
12	20	CAN19670127	Susan	CAN	HARO	2:12:14.97	8:12.81
			MICHELS-SMITH				
13	22	GER19711114	Andrea	GER	IKO/CORRATEC	2:12:35.17	8:33.02
14	17	GER19650904	ZU PUTTLITZ Hedda	GER	BE-ONE	2:12:58.10	8:55.94
15	18	GER19711227	SPITZ Sabine	GER	TEAM KONA-EMS	2:14:07.89	10:05.74
16	10	CAN19591226	TOMLINSON Lesley	CAN	POLO SPORT	2:14:57.41	10:55.25
17	13	SUI19610508	FÜRST Silvia	SUI	BE-ONE	2:16:14.97	12:12.81
18	19	SWE19701227	JONSSON Annica	SWE	CRESCENT	2:16:24.65	12:22.50
19	40	BEL19641010	LAROY Lory	BEL	BE-ONE	2:16:47.50	12:45.35
20	33	GBR19650121	ROBINSON Louise	GBR	RALEIGH	2:16:58.48	12:56.33
21	39	ITA19680704	STROPPARO Annabella	ITA	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	2:17:26.50	13:24.35
22	37	GBR19751119	COPNALL Jenny	GBR	BIKEPARK/RALEIGH	2:18:15.27	14:13.11
23	31	ESP19671215	ROVIRA Silvia	ESP	MARIN SPAIN	2:18:27.70	14:25.54
24	55	NED19730125	VINK Elsbeth	NED	AMERICAN EAGLE	2:19:09.35	15:07.19
25	27	SWE19720302	LINDBERG Madeleine	SWE	CRESCENT	2:19:16.74	15:14.59
26	15	FRA19690125	TEMPORELLI Sandra	FRA	PEUGEOT LA POSTE	2:20:21.08	16:18.92
27	76	ESP19740520	MOLL Roth	ESP	SCOTT	2:20:27.06	16:24.90

28	41 BEL19710602	VAN DEUN Hilde	BEL	SMOUT	2:20:44.85	16:42.69
29	47 JPN19700524	KOBAYASHI Kanako	JPN	A & F	2:20:51.29	16:49.14
30	24 GBR19700608	BRUNGER Tracy	GBR	K2 BIKE	2:21:41.32	17:39.16
31	49 ESP19730927	PUIGGROS Janet	ESP	FAMAC-GUIXOLS	2:21:54.97	17:52.81
32	29 CAN19761119	DORION Melanie	CAN	ORYX-PROCYCLE	2:21:59.69	17:57.54
33	35 FRA19690624	CLARET Danièle	FRA	EGS	2:25:10.72	21:08.57
34	60 FRA19680224	MARQUESTANT Sylvie	FRA		2:25:26.44	21:24.28
35	72 GBR19720607	SLATER Julie	GBR	SUNN/ATP/BAE	2:25:57.91	21:55.76
36	69 GBR19720906	IBBOTSON Jane	GBR	GIANT/DIRT TECH/	2:27:04.94	23:02.79
37	79 GBR19680517	WILDE Amanda	GBR	SENSIBLE BIKE/TR	2:27:10.23	23:08.07
38	59 NED19670206	RAVENSTIJN Reza	NED	DUTCH NATIONAL T	2:27:19.25	23:17.09
39	67 NED19690710	VAN LOON Annemiek	NED	TREK STAPPENBELT	2:28:35.88	24:33.72
40	61 NED19680902	LENSEN Marielle	NED		2:29:24.61	25:22.45
41	70 GBR19760402	PICKETT Rachel	GBR	PEUGEOT/MI RACE	2:29:29.83	25:27.67
42	77 GBR19750608	OLDFIELD-HODGE Sam	GBR	SUNN	2:30:13.89	26:11.73
43	75 GBR19640107	SHAKESHAFT Julie	GBR	GIANT/DIRT TECH/	2:31:48.54	27:46.38
44	66 IRL19770524	OWENS Tarja	IRL		2:33:23.35	29:21.19
45	56 GER19750708	RÖSCH Nora	GER	K2 BIKE	2:34:50.85	30:48.69
46	63 FRA19710316	CARRE Odile	FRA	SIEL	2:35:55.98	31:53.82
47	78 GBR19740401	FEY Tracey	GBR		2:40:36.46	36:34.30
48	68 BEL19751107	CAGNIE Silvie	BEL	TREK USA	2:43:24.87	39:22.71
49	65 BEL19700209	VERSCHAEVE Hilde	BEL	TREK USA	- 2 lap	
50	64 BEL19610508	BRACKX Annick	BEL	TREK USA	- 2 lap	
	8 RUS19761202	EPIFANOVA Alla	RUS	VOLVO/CANNONDALE	DNF	
	34 GBR19690413	ROUNTREE Isla	GBR	RALEIGH	DNF	
	71 GBR19760625	THOMAS Sue	GBR	RALEIGH/M-TRAX	DNF	
	73 BEL19720407	DEROO Mieke	BEL	TREK USA	DNF	