

Diesel/UCI Mountain Bike World Cup - 1999

Houffalize, BEL - xc#8 - 4-5 September 1999 - Report / Rapport - women / femmes

It was a close call for **Alison Sydor** (*CAN*), but the great rider won her third UCI Mountain Bike World Cup title in a climactic end to the series. The race at Houffalize was won by the bird-like **Margarita Fullana** (*ESP*), who claimed her third World Cup round victory of the season and by doing so deprived second-placed **Gunn-Rita Dahle** (*NOR*) of the points needed to overtake Sydor in the overall competition.

From her first withering attack late on lap one, Fullana, 27 from Mallorca, controlled the race. Dahle was quick to respond to the Spaniard's attack, but starting lap two, the Norwegian trailed by 15 seconds. Fullana continued her big push and by the end of lap two was 45 seconds clear. In the closing kilometres her lead increased and she crossed the line jubilantly waving the Spanish flag (with a Specialized decal prominently in the middle), 1'17" ahead of Dahle.

"I attacked very hard in the first lap and then again in the second... I wanted to win today very much. I thought nothing about the world championships or anything else. I only wanted to win."



Margarita Fullana

1999 has been Fullana's best season to date, and makes one wonder what might have happened if she had planned her season otherwise. Entering only four of the eight races in the series, she entered the series in round Three at El Escorial, and took the first world cup round win of her career. Two weeks later, at St Wendel she finished outside the top 15, but bounced back with another win in Plymouth one week later. Fullana then skipped rounds six and seven in North America, and returned to the World Cup circuit here at Houffalize. *"To win in Spain was like a dream. And then in England I was on a cloud. Now I know I can win and I want to win more,"* she said.

The rough and tumble Houffalize course clearly suited Fullana's repertoire. A nimble climber, who is feared as much in road racing as on the mountain bike, she danced up the short, steep pitches that give the Houffalize course its Ardennes flavour. But besides a few steep pitches and some exposed roots, technical challenges are relatively few and far between at Houffalize, which was just fine for Fullana, who has not yet come far enough from her road racing background to acquire the excellent bike handling skills of riders such as Sydor and Dahle.



Dahle, who felt she might be a little flat after finishing ninth overall in the 14-stage Grand Boucle Feminine road race in August, couldn't match Fullana's climbing speed. *"I started to go for the gold, but even in the first lap I knew I didn't feel good. It wasn't my day. I didn't have the touch I had in Canmore,"* said Dahle, whose win at the freezing race in Canada was her only world cup victory of the season.

When Fullana rode clear on lap one, the battle between Sydor and Dahle for the World Cup win did not end. Sydor admits her weakness is training too hard and not resting enough. With the world championships just two weeks away, it could have been this that caused her to have an off day, while Dahle looked a lot better than she said she felt. The Norwegian started the race needing to score 100 points more than the Canadian to claim the crystal globe. A second place finish for Dahle would have left Sydor requiring 5th place points to avoid losing the series she has led since round two.

While Sydor was below her best, some other riders at Houffalize looked very strong. **Barbara Blatter (SUI)** unwittingly helped Dahle's cause by having her best race of the series. Although strong in the early part of the race, the first-year pro faded in the middle laps as the tenacious Sydor moved past her, into third place. But Blatter recovered and attacked early in the final lap, putting more than 20" into Sydor who finished fourth.

Not far behind Sydor for much of the race were other big names, including the Olympic and two-times world champion **Paola Pezzo (ITA)**, other potential threats were **Chantal Daucourt (SUI)** and **Caroline Alexander (GBR)**. Yet none of them went close enough to be a serious threat to Sydor's World Cup ambitions.

After the race, a relieved looking Sydor said it was the hardest World Cup season she has ever had. With a new scoring structure in which every result in the series counts towards the overall score, the stiff season-long challenge from Dahle made it hard work. *"This year I won two races and never finished less than fourth, but the whole season came down to like one minute,"* said Sydor, and added: *"When you have the competition with the likes of Gunn-Rita, this makes it my most satisfying World Cup victory."*

Sydor, 33, comes from Vancouver. Since the UCI Rankings began at the beginning of 1996, she has been ranked number one for some 35 of the 44 months. Her tally of world championships wins amounts to three (1994,'95, '96), she has amassed 16 world cup round wins, and earned the silver medal at the 1996 Olympic Games.



Alison Sydor et al ...

<i>place</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nom</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t+</i>
1	ESP19720409	FULLANA	Margarita	ESP	2:06:03.00	
2	NOR19731002	DAHLE	Gunn Rita	NOR	2:07:20.00	1:17.00
3	SUI19701222	BLATTER	Barbara	SUI	2:07:43.00	1:40.00
4	CAN19660909	SYDOR	Alison	CAN	2:08:12.00	2:09.00
5	ITA19690108	PEZZO	Paola	ITA	2:09:51.00	3:48.00
6	SUI19660623	DAUCOURT	Chantal	SUI	2:10:49.00	4:46.00
7	GBR19680303	ALEXANDER	Caroline	GBR	2:11:24.00	5:21.00
8	NED19730125	VINK	Elsbeth	NED	2:11:48.00	5:45.00
9	USA19651111	MATTHES	Ruthie	USA	2:13:14.00	7:11.00
10	ITA19680704	STROPPARO	Annabella	ITA	2:14:02.00	7:59.00
11	USA19690727	DUNLAP	Alison	USA	2:14:20.00	8:17.00
12	FRA19720222	LEBOUCHER	Laurence	FRA	2:14:20.00	8:17.00
13	AUS19710603	GRIGSON	Mary	AUS	2:14:24.00	8:21.00
14	CAN19660316	REDDEN	Christina	CAN	2:16:10.00	10:07.00
15	SUI19740613	RUSCA	Maroussia	SUI	2:16:19.00	10:16.00
16	BEL19641010	LAROY	Lory	BEL	2:17:30.00	11:27.00
17	CAN19761119	DORION	Melanie	CAN	2:18:38.00	12:35.00
18	AUS19770730	GEYSEN	Hanneke	AUS	2:19:09.00	13:06.00
19	SWE19701227	JONSSON	Annica	SWE	2:20:03.00	14:00.00
20	CAN19591226	TOMLINSON	Lesley	CAN	2:20:27.00	14:24.00
21	NED19730630	DORLAND	Corine	NED	2:20:51.00	14:48.00
22	ESP19671215	ROVIRA	Silvia	ESP	2:21:05.00	15:02.00
23	GER19650904	ZU PUTLITZ	Hedda	GER	2:21:07.00	15:04.00
24	SWE19780409	ÖSTERGREN	Maria	SWE	2:21:08.00	15:05.00
25	USA19641117	KAIN	Shari	USA	2:22:42.00	16:39.00
26	FRA19691106	VILLENEUVE	Sophie	FRA	2:23:11.00	17:08.00
27	CAN19690202	SINCLAIR	Patricia	CAN	2:23:56.00	17:53.00
28	USA19631122	TROMBLEY	Ann	USA	2:24:20.00	18:17.00
29	RSA19651227	KOTZE	Hannele	RSA	2:24:50.00	18:47.00
30	ARG19720518	FLORIT-JUAREZ	Jimena	ARG	2:24:59.00	18:56.00
31	RSA19700925	GREEN	Erica	RSA	2:25:03.00	19:00.00
32	RUS19761202	EPIFANOVA	Alla	RUS	2:26:07.00	20:04.00
33	POL19770701	STACHURA	Anna	POL	2:26:44.00	20:41.00
34	GER19670901	JÜNGST	Birgit	GER	2:27:32.00	21:29.00
35	NED19670807	VAN WERSCH	Loes	NED	2:28:16.00	22:13.00
36	SUI19691014	HENZI	Petra	SUI	2:28:16.00	22:13.00
37	AUS19761216	BAYLIS	Anna	AUS	2:28:55.00	22:52.00
38	NZL19690329	PARKER	Sadie	NZL	2:29:33.00	23:30.00
39	GER19720321	SCHWING	Katrin	GER	2:29:59.00	23:56.00
40	GBR19650121	ROBINSON	Louise	GBR	2:30:28.00	24:25.00
41	MEX19701115	MUÑOZ CARRETE	Cariza	MEX	2:30:42.00	24:39.00
42	JPN19700524	KOBAYASHI	Kanako	JPN	2:31:07.00	25:04.00
43	GER19720512	WEISS	Helga	GER	2:33:18.00	27:15.00

44 SUI19770530	BUCHER	Renate	SUI	2:33:47.00	27:44.00
45 CZE19730208	JERABKOVA	Jana	CZE	2:34:13.00	28:10.00
46 NED19750429	SOLLAART	Tessa	NED	2:35:05.00	29:02.00
47 FRA19800805	GUIRRONNET	Sandrine	FRA	2:35:45.00	29:42.00
48 JPN19681008	NAMBU	Hiroko	JPN	2:37:09.00	31:06.00
49 CAN19730517	MCQUAID	Melanie	CAN	2:40:35.00	34:32.00

50 GER19750708	RÖSCH	Nora	GER	- 1 lap
51 JPN19651030	NAKAGOME	Yukari	JPN	- 1 lap
52 AUS19761002	FRANKE	Dellys	AUS	- 1 lap
53 IRL19770524	OWENS	Tarja	IRL	- 1 lap
54 GBR19751119	COPNALL	Jenny	GBR	- 1 lap
55 GBR19760625	THOMAS	Sue	GBR	- 1 lap
56 FRA19710625	COSSARD	Séverine	FRA	- 1 lap
57 GER19711114	MICHELS-SMITH	Andrea	GER	- 1 lap
58 BEL19790820	SERVAIS	Melanie	BEL	- 1 lap
59 DEN19770410	BRUHN	Nadine	DEN	- 1 lap
60 UKR19750409	KACHALKA	Nataliya	UKR	- 1 lap
61 NED19741010	ROTTEVEEL	Marlies	NED	- 1 lap
62 AUT19730405	BRAUMANN	Birgit	AUT	- 1 lap
63 UKR19800203	SIMONOVA	Iryna	UKR	- 1 lap
64 NED19781218	VAN GERVEN	Renate	NED	- 1 lap
65 ESP19730927	PUIGROSS	Janet	ESP	- 1 lap
66 BEL19720407	DEROO	Mieke	BEL	- 1 lap
67 NED19800914	DIELEMAN	Mirjam	NED	- 1 lap

68 NED19711129	VAN DE VLIST	Ingrid	NED	- 2 laps
69 NED19701026	HEIJNEN	Diana	NED	- 2 laps
70 NED19781226	TURPIJN	Laura	NED	- 2 laps
71 NED19780302	HOFS	Petra	NED	- 2 laps

FRA19690125	TEMPORELLI	Sandra	FRA	DNF
GBR19700608	BRUNGER	Tracy	GBR	DNF
GER19711227	SPITZ	Sabine	GER	DNF
FRA19791016	MARCOUYRE	Hélène	FRA	DNF
BEL19710602	VAN DEUN	Hilde	BEL	DNF
GER19680826	MARUNDE	Regina	GER	DNF
POL19780805	JUSZCZAK	Sylwia	POL	DNF
NED19780406	VAN DE BRAND	Daphny	NED	DNF
FRA19710316	CARRE	Odile	FRA	DNF