

TT#1: NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, USA - 7-7/8.4.2001 Men / Hommes

Cross-Country Season Begins in Napa



After months of training and preparing by the hundreds of elite athletes that form its ranks, the 2001 Tissot-UCI Mountain Bike World Cup Cross-Country series finally got underway in the scenic vineyards of the western United States this weekend - with a pair of exciting races through the grape vines of Domaine Chandon in Napa, California. Surrounded by thousands of spectators who came to witness the first stop of the XC tour, two champions demonstrated their unbeatable form to claim both win number-one of the season and the coveted Tissot leader's jersey as well.

Spain's Jose Antonio Hermida (Bianchi Albacom) parlayed his 2000 U-23 World Championship to his first-ever world cup victory Sunday afternoon, just hours after 2000 World Cup Champion and Olympic Silver Medallist Barbara Blatter (SUI, Specialized) dominated the women's field to continue her powerful streak of performances.

Conditions were variable on Sunday, as both women and men competed on the rocky grounds of this famous sparkling wine producer. Rain fell just after the completion of the women's race, as well during the men's race - affecting the male riders as they negotiated the course's technical sections. Temperatures were chilly for most of the day, with sunlight peeking out only intermittently during each race.

Barbara Blatter (SUI, Specialized) has been on a successful roll since emerging into prominence last season, riding for a new sponsor and - along with all the other top-five finishing women - on a full suspension bike. She had talented company throughout the entire 22-mile event, as previous world cup winners Alison Dunlap (USA, Team GT) and Alison Sydor (CAN, Trek-Volkswagen) pursued Blatter for most of the nearly two-hour competition.



After sizing up her competition, Blatter took control of the race in the third of five laps, going off the front of the 42-woman field with Dunlap, Sydor and Chrissy Redden (CAN, Subaru-Gary Fisher). Dunlap described the event as a "yo-yo" type of race, where she would catch up with Blatter, Sydor would catch up with her - and then the three would break ranks again at some point on the course.

By the fourth lap it was clear that Blatter had the form to win, leaving Dunlap and Sydor in a battle for second. While Sydor stuck to Dunlap's wheel and let the GT rider do the majority of the work, Dunlap knew that she would have to make a definitive move if she wanted to shake her Canadian rival. She attacked, and was finally able to amass a 45-second lead over Sydor, crossing the finishline 30 seconds behind Blatter.

Caroline Alexander (GBR, Specialized) rounded out the women's podium, finishing 5th after a long race where she was nursing a sore wrist. Alexander, who won the recent Sea Otter Classic, crashed during a local AMBC race last week and severely bruised her left wrist, making it difficult to ride in Sunday's race.

QUOTES

Barbara Blatter, First Place:

"I had a really good feeling today. First I just watched the other riders, then I decided that I was the strongest today. In the 3rd lap I tried to make a little gap - it was hard, but was able to do it. Anything can happen, so I just tried to keep cool and not worry too much. It's perfect - and I'm not in top shape right now, so if I can win here, than that's good."

Alison Dunlap, Second Place:

"Barbara pulled away with two laps to go - she was definitely the strongest today. I knew I had to drop [Sydor] on the climbs, and went out as hard as I could. And then I just descended for my life, and was able to hold her off [for second place]. I knew I was stronger than her on the climbs, and that she'd have to pull back on the descents."

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words: Ari Cheren

	<i>bib</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nom</i>	<i>tt / gs</i>	<i>Time</i>
1	1	SUI19701222	BLATTER	Barbara	SPECIALIZED	1:53:07
2	2	USA19690727	DUNLAP	Alison	TEAM GT	1:53:37
3	3	CAN19660909	SYDOR	Alison	TREK/VOLKSWAGEN MTB	1:54:22
4	6	CAN19660316	REDDEN	Chrissy	SUBARU-GARY FISHER	1:54:33
5	37	GBR19680303	ALEXANDER	Caroline	SPECIALIZED	1:55:06
6	7	NED19730630	DORLAND	Corine	BE-ONE TEAM	1:56:28
7	15	GER19711227	SPITZ	Sabine	MERIDA INTERNATIONAL	1:57:06
8	77	RUS19771110	KALENTIEVA	Irina	RUSSIAN NATIONAL / MERIDA	1:57:33
9	32	ITA19680704	STROPPARO	Annabella	BE-ONE TEAM	1:57:45
10	10	GER19680826	MARUNDE	Regina	FOCUS	1:58:00
11	16	ARG19720518	FLORIT	Jimena	RLX POLO SPORT	1:59:04
12	50	AUS19761002	FRANKE	Dellys	MERIDA AUSTRALIA	1:59:42
13	59	USA19711009	HAYWOOD	Susan	TREK/VOLKSWAGEN TOURISM	2:00:27
14	57	USA19750506	LLOYD	Rachel	SUNRACE/SANTA CRUZ	2:00:38
15	72	USA19721231	BARNHOLT	Kerry	SOBE HEADSHOK	2:01:11
16	11	USA19651111	MATTHES	Ruthie	TREK/VOLKSWAGEN MTB	2:01:30
17	31	SUI19740613	RUSCA	Maroussia	ARROW SWISS BIKE TEAM	2:01:30
18	39	USA19670101	HALL	Gina	TEAM GT	2:02:41
19	24	CAN19591226	TOMLINSON	Lesley	ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIKE TEAM	2:03:20
20	21	SUI19691014	HENZI	Petra	FISHER K2	2:03:43
21	51	USA19771212	KOERBER	Willow	CANE CREEK	2:04:22
22	56	USA19770704	EMMETT	Kelli	TEAM GT	2:04:42
23	46	CAN19771024	PREMONT	Marie- helene	ORIX/PROCYCLE	2:04:51
24	34	USA19650705	QUICK	Rhonda	JAMBA JUICE	2:07:19
25	53	CAN19751112	BISARO	Kiara	COMOX VALLEY CYCLING CLUB	2:07:20
26	66	USA19690407	DALTON	Janie	TREK FACTORY MISSING LINK	2:07:44
27	19	AUS19761216	BAYLIS	Anna	RALPH-DENK RACING TEAM	2:08:11
28	75	USA19690719	VARDAROS	Christine	JAMBA JUICE	2:08:57
29	67	USA19681108	ELLIS	Sara	MOOTS	2:09:13
30	65	USA19690409	EMMERMAN	Julie	GARY FISHER	2:10:07
31	80	USA19650624	STREB	Marla	FOES / AZONIC	2:11:00
32	64	CAN19741012	YEW	Ann	TREK CANADA	2:11:29
33	78	RUS19780320	PAZITOVA	Valentina	RUSSIAN NATIONAL / MERIDA	- 1 lap
34	76	USA19730115	LAFFEY	Tonya	MAMMOTH SPORTING GOODS	- 1 lap
35	79	MEX19771015	LEAL	Veronica	GARY FISHER MEXICO	- 1 lap
36	54	CAN19661210	ROBICHAUD	Linda	SHIMANO CANADA	- 1 lap
37	58	GBR19780819	WILKINSON	Victoria	GREAT BRITAIN	- 2 laps
38	61	CAN19710211	COLE	Heather	SOULCRAFT	- 2 laps
39	73	USA19730816	KOCH	Jody	FORD NO BOUNDARIES	- 2 laps
40	63	CAN19750223	TOWNSEND	Claire	ORIX/PROCYCLE	- 2 laps
	25	CAN19690205	SINCLAIR	Trish	TEAM FORD/DEVINCI	DNF
	62	DEN19770410	BRUHN	Nadine	KOLDING BICYCLE CLUB	DNF