

## XC#2 : Houffalize, BEL : 25-26.05.2002

### Swiss Sauser & Spanish Fullana Victorious in Houffalize Classic

The **Tissot-UCI Mountain Bike World Cup** continued its opening European leg of the 2002 season this weekend at round two, when perhaps the largest fields of competitors in the circuit's history contested a classic event in the hills surrounding *Houffalize, Belgium*.



Now in its second decade of organizing world cup events, this location in the Ardennes Forest brought out its usual large crowds, in the tens of thousands. They were treated to two exciting races under cloudy and sometimes wet skies, headlined by wins by **Marga Fullana** (*ESP, Orbea*) and **Christoph Sauser** (*SUI, Volvo Cannondale*).

This year's five-lap men's race was destined to be a special one even before the competitors lined up for the start Sunday afternoon, as an enormous field of 209 riders managed to register for the event this weekend. That meant that it would be even more critical for contenders to have a good start, get up the steep paved climb and into the singletrack without incident if they hoped to maintain contact with the lead.

That sense of urgency could be felt from the gun as the pack - led by **Julien Absalon** (*FRA, Motorex-Bianchi*) - flew up the first climb and into the first lap with a tight bunch up front - which included many of the same faces from round one. After settling in, seven riders showed that they were in contention, breaking off the front by several seconds and, unlike the women's race earlier, staying together for much of the race.



Christoph Sauser, SUI

In the second lap that pack of seven was led by Belgian favorite **Roel Paulissen** (*BEL, Rainer-Wurz*), who was closely followed by last week's winner **Bart Brentjens** (*NED, Giant Bicycle*). Close behind them was two-time world cup winner **Christoph Sauser** (*SUI, Volvo Cannondale*) in third. World and World Cup Champion **Roland Green** (*CAN, Trek-Volkswagen*) rode in 4th position, followed by **Marco Bui** (*ITA,*

*Lanabau/Rainer-Wurz*), **Jose Hermida** (*ESP, Motorex-Bianchi*) and early leader Julien Absalon (*FRA, Motorex-Bianchi*).

Thirteen seconds further back another local favorite and former Houffalize winner **Filip Meirhaeghe** (*BEL, Specialized*) chased with newcomer **Peter Pouly** (*FRA*). **Miguel Martinez** (*FRA, Full Dynamix*) rode nearly 10 seconds further back, illustrating that few would be able to make the jump into the fast-moving leaders' group on this day.

Lap three showed some shuffling within the top ten riders, as the fastest seven kept 16 seconds ahead of the chasers. But Meirhaeghe had shot up to 4th position, while Absalon had dropped to 8th. Meanwhile, Roland Green (*CAN, Trek-Volkswagen*) looked to repeat his win here last year, and led out the group, with Sauser, Bui and then Meirhaeghe in tow. Paulissen, Brentjens and Hermida rounded out the "*magnificent seven*."

With just two laps remaining, the men began speeding up the front, dropping one of their members (Bui) and becoming a six-pack of contenders. Sauser took the lead as the riders went

up the famous big climb before the finish, surrounded by thousands of screaming fans. Green was second, followed by Brentjens, Paulissen, Meirhaeghe and Fumic. It was still anyone's race, as only meters separated the top-six men.



Bart Brentjens, NED

The fifth and final lap finally gave up the winner, as the men attacked on the paved climb out of the start/finish to begin their bell lap and see what they had left in their legs. After Green made the first attack, Sauser responded, but the only other riders able to go with them were Meirhaeghe, Brentjens and Paulissen. They raced hard into the technical section and drop by the Fosse d'Outh hotel, then climbed up the longest climb before heading into the further part of the course.

Sauser attacked again and was followed by a surging Paulissen, the two sharing the work up front while 20 seconds back Meirhaeghe and Brentjens rode closely, leaving behind Green as he failed to muster the speed needed for this final-lap contest. Minutes later Sauser led Paulissen into the finish area, the two still close together. But Paulissen crashed just seconds from the finish, losing 11 seconds to Sauser who took his third career world cup victory.

Meirhaeghe rode across 7 seconds later in 3rd place, while Brentjens finished 4th at 20 seconds and Green rounded out the podium in 5th, at 58 seconds. With the points gained from a win and a 4th-place finish, Brentjens kept the blue Tissot leader's jersey, as the cross-country circuit takes time off for the start of the downhill season next week in Scotland.

### **Christoph Sauser, 1st Place:**

*"I always dreamed about winning here in Houffalize. I saw the big crowds on TV other years and how much attention the winner gets, and I was jealous. Today I didn't want to work too much, but I felt confident throughout the race. In the last lap I got a gap with Roel, then he closed the gap and led. In the next downhill I passed him, but he came back so I knew I had to be first into the downhill section - I didn't want him to lead there. For me to win here is a big dream come true."*



### **Roel Paulissen, 2nd Place:**

*"In the last lap we were all kind of looking at each other, but after a drop Christoph attacked, and I was at the end of the break group in 4th position. I attacked and caught Christoph, we had 15 to 20 seconds lead. He then took 10 seconds out of me on the last downhill, but I closed again at the river near the finish line. But I crashed in the last corner on the slippery rocks, so we didn't get to have a sprint finish."*

### **Filip Meirhaeghe, 3rd Place:**

*"I had a bad start, but a good race. I felt better than last week, where I had just come from the road and didn't have the right rhythm for top level mountain bike racing. At the last lap we all attacked at the same place, but you had to race metre by metre - it was like a time trial. The fans were great - they gave me goose bumps - it gave me the motivation to hang on."*

Words: **Ari Cheren**

Images: **Mark Dawson** [www.fattirefotos.com](http://www.fattirefotos.com)



	#	UCI Code	Surname	Firstname	Team	Time	Gap
1	7	SUI19760313	SAUSER	Christoph	VOLVO-CANNONDALE	1:49:37	
2	3	BEL19760427	PAULISSEN	Roel	LANABAU-RW	1:49:48	11
3	6	BEL19710305	MEIRHAEGHE	Filip	SPECIALIZED	1:49:56	19
4	1	NED19681010	BRENTJENS	Bart	GIANT GLOBAL	1:49:57	20
5	2	CAN19740729	GREEN	Roland	TREK VOLKSWAGEN	1:50:35	58
6	10	FRA19800816	ABSALON	Julien *	MOTOREX-BIANCHI	1:50:37	1:00
7	5	GER19760520	FUMIC	Lado	TEAM-T-MOBILE	1:50:45	1:08
8	4	ESP19780824	HERMIDA	Jose Antonio	MOTOREX-BIANCHI	1:51:10	1:33
9	9	ITA19771017	BUI	Marco	LANABAU-RW	1:51:17	1:40
10	14	FRA19731117	DUBAU	Ludovic	ORBEA	1:52:01	2:24
11	65	FRA19680808	DUPOUEY	Christophe	GIANT GLOBAL	1:52:19	2:42
12	17	FRA19770720	POULY	Peter		1:52:48	3:11
13	19	POL19740801	GALINSKI	Marek	CCC-POLSAT ROAD	1:52:54	3:17
14	11	ITA19770721	FRUET	Martino		1:53:06	3:29
15	45	POL19780806	KARCZYNSKI	Marcin	LOTTO-PZU	1:53:32	3:55
16	29	CAN19801209	HESJEDAL	Ryder *	SUBARU-GARYFISH	1:53:37	4:00
17	58	SUI19770213	KALBERER	Thomas	ARROW	1:53:48	4:11
18	25	GER19820330	FUMIC	Manuel *	TEAM-T-MOBILE	1:53:49	4:12
19	16	POL19780503	KOWAL	Mariusz	LOTTO-PZU	1:54:19	4:42
20	89	ITA19750428	DE BERTOLIS	Massimo		1:55:03	5:26
21	74	SWE19800517	KESSIAKOFF	Fredrik *	TEAM CRESCENT	1:55:22	5:45
22	12	FRA19740928	CHEVALLIER	Jerome		1:55:28	5:51
23	15	NZL19780630	LEUCHS	Kashi	VOLVO-CANNONDAL	1:55:29	5:52
24	20	MEX19770523	MADRIGAL	Ziranda		1:55:30	5:53
25	26	MEX19770729	BARRIGA	Salvador		1:56:34	6:57
26	49	GER19750625	MARX	Torsten		1:56:50	7:13
27	13	CAN19760503	MCGRATH	Seamus	HAROLEEDUNGAREE	1:56:52	7:15
28	27	USA19751225	WELLS	Todd	MONGOOSEHYUNDAI	1:56:57	7:20
29	38	GER19810505	KASS	Jochen *	TEAM-T-MOBILE	1:57:10	7:33
30	107	GER19780511	DILGER	Andreas		1:57:30	7:53
31	37	SUI19780613	BUNDI	Silvio		1:57:48	8:11
32	59	AUS19751114	FLEMING	Josh		1:57:49	8:12
33	62	ESP19810928	COLOMA	Carlos *	ORBEA	1:58:02	8:25
34	31	ESP19770907	ORTIZ	Antonio		1:58:09	8:32
35	44	NOR19780305	AUSTAD	Hakon	MERIDA INTER.	1:58:25	8:48
36	47	GER19780314	PLATT	Karl		1:58:33	8:56
37	22	ESP19770425	DIAZ DE LA PENA	Alejandro		1:58:48	9:11
38	35	ESP19830901	LEJARRETA ERRASTI	Inaki *	ORBEA	1:58:52	9:15
39	104	DEN19790918	POULSEN	Christian		1:59:00	9:23
40	32	AUS19800122	TABERLAY	Sid *		1:59:11	9:34
41	30	GBR19820412	KILLEEN	Liam *	SUBARU-GARYFISH	1:59:23	9:46
42	110	POL19731119	KAISER	Andrej	LOTTO-PZU	1:59:44	10:07
43	78	SUI19740702	SOLER	Daniel		1:59:51	10:14
44	126	BEL19791223	TIELENS	Jimmy		1:59:57	10:20



<b>45</b>	122	SWE19780918	ERICSSON	Frederick		2:00:02	10:25
<b>46</b>	33	NED19760514	PETERS	Bas		2:00:11	10:34
<b>47</b>	105	SWE19710426	PALMBERG	Magnus		2:00:12	10:35
<b>48</b>	69	AUT19801011	SOUKUP	Christoph *		2:00:12	10:35
<b>49</b>	87	CZE19770322	SPESNY	Milan		2:00:13	10:36
<b>50</b>	53	AUS19710207	GORDON	Craig		2:00:14	10:37
<b>51</b>	46	GBR19661211	CLARKE	Barrie		2:00:29	10:52
<b>52</b>	159	BEL19690113	POELVOORDE	Ronny		2:00:35	10:58
<b>53</b>	24	SUI19760713	HOCHSTRASSER	Thomas	GIANT GLOBAL	2:00:56	11:19
<b>54</b>	79	AUT19770108	SCHEIDERBAUER	Jorg	BE ONE XC	2:01:02	11:25
<b>55</b>	97	SUI19800712	GIRARD	Julien *		2:01:04	11:27
<b>56</b>	48	ESP19701211	ADRADA RODRIGUEZ	Julian		2:01:30	11:53
<b>57</b>	93	SUI19740621	HELLER	Marcel	ARROW	2:01:31	11:54
<b>58</b>	84	GBR19690403	CRAIG	Nick		2:01:33	11:56
<b>59</b>	72	ESP19760317	MARQUEZ	José		2:01:35	11:58
<b>60</b>	83	GER19771130	GOLZ	Marc	TEAM-T-MOBILE	2:02:04	12:27
<b>61</b>	94	SUI19780731	BISCHOF	Christof		2:02:13	12:36
<b>62</b>	51	GER19820702	BOHME	Tim *		2:02:15	12:38
<b>63</b>	52	ESP19781023	GISPERT LABARTA	Marti	GIANT GLOBAL	2:02:16	12:39
<b>64</b>	103	ESP19760529	GISPERT LABARTA	Eloj		2:02:30	12:53
<b>65</b>	191	NOR19810502	SUNDAL	Thomas Nasset *		2:02:42	13:05
<b>66</b>	56	DEN19770522	BONNE	Thomas		2:02:52	13:15
<b>67</b>	61	GBR19760607	BECKINGSALE	Oliver		2:02:54	13:17
<b>68</b>	57	AUT19810117	WEISS	Michael *		2:03:11	13:34
<b>69</b>	188	DEN19800108	NIELSEN	Klaus *		2:03:19	13:42
<b>70</b>	236	POL19831130	PRZYBYLA	Marcin *		2:03:24	13:47
<b>71</b>	147	ITA19751001	ZOLI	Yader		2:04:03	14:26
<b>72</b>	156	SUI19830911	GRAF	Jurg *		2:04:04	14:27
<b>73</b>	113	MEX19750109	ZACARIAS	Armando		2:04:16	14:39
<b>74</b>	101	AUT19750731	KRALER	Martin		2:04:17	14:40
<b>75</b>	134	NED19710705	DE VRIES	Micha		2:04:36	14:59
<b>76</b>	67	CAN19700512	HESTLER	Andreas		2:04:40	15:03
<b>77</b>	132	NOR19770103	STORMO	Frederik		2:04:49	15:12
<b>78</b>	242	GER19811116	GENZE	Hannes *		2:04:49	15:12
<b>79</b>	91	AUT19761214	RAMETSTEINER	Roman		2:04:58	15:21
<b>80</b>	167	FRA19780306	BOMBARDO	Gregory		2:05:09	15:32
<b>81</b>	157	SWE19820602	DARVELL	Magnus *		2:05:13	15:36
<b>82</b>	118	GBR19800216	DIXON	Phil *		2:05:15	15:38
<b>83</b>	146	GBR19800712	MORLEY	Tim *		2:05:16	15:39
<b>84</b>	106	BEL19820722	BYNENS	Damien *		2:05:33	15:56
<b>85</b>	77	NAM19710714	HEYMANS	Mannie		2:05:36	15:59
<b>86</b>	238	ESP19840909	RUZAFI CUETO	Ruben *		2:05:41	16:04
<b>87</b>	75	COL19720630	GARAVITO BARRAGAN	Diego Javier		2:05:42	16:05
<b>88</b>	99	NED19791010	BAKKER	Erwin		2:06:02	16:25
<b>89</b>	178	FRA19810702	GROSDIDIER	Remy *		2:06:38	17:01
<b>90</b>	227	CHN19780509	FUYU	Li		2:06:45	17:08
<b>91</b>	139	NOR19801010	JORGENSEN	Petter *		2:06:46	17:09
<b>92</b>	145	NED19800406	REUVERS	Rob *		2:06:47	17:10
<b>93</b>	201	NOR19770429	MICHAELSEN	Frode		2:06:54	17:17
<b>94</b>	161	SUI19800827	RICHLI	Simon *		2:06:57	17:20
<b>95</b>	125	GBR19800804	CRAWFORTH	Jody *		2:06:58	17:21
<b>96</b>	155	GER19800604	SCHMUDE	Friedeman *		2:07:17	17:40
<b>97</b>	112	POL19820531	FORMICKI	Piotr *	CCC-POLSAT	2:07:56	18:19
<b>98</b>	92	GER19780221	ESCHENBACH	Florian		2:08:02	18:25
<b>99</b>	109	AUT19731010	KNAUBERT	Matthias		2:08:07	18:30
<b>100</b>	193	NED19760114	HEEMSKERK	Tim		2:08:15	18:38
<b>101</b>	239	ESP19791201	AREVALO	Jose Ignacio		2:08:32	18:55

<b>102</b>	163	POR19791211	SIMAO	Nelio		2:08:39	19:02
<b>103</b>	154	SUI19750425	BENOIT	Stephane		2:09:03	19:26
<b>104</b>	244	GER19810517	HELNING	Christian *		2:09:15	19:38
<b>105</b>	229	CHN19760312	YONGBIA	Zhu		2:09:16	19:39
<b>106</b>	183	AUT19820310	GATTERER	Alexander *		2:09:20	19:43
<b>107</b>	169	NED19750424	DIJKHUIS	Atze		2:10:10	20:33
<b>108</b>	217	GBR19801209	FARMER	Steve *		2:10:44	21:07
<b>109</b>	98	EST19720916	KUKK	Sigvard	KAYABA-YEMA	2:10:51	21:14
<b>110</b>	189	SWE19810302	ERIKSSON	Daniel *		2:10:58	21:21
<b>111</b>	137	GBR19790702	TOOGOOD	Zak		2:11:06	21:29
<b>112</b>	185	GER19820428	BINDER	Ludwig *		2:11:13	21:36
<b>113</b>	128	AUS19731205	LEIS	Mark		2:11:31	21:54
<b>114</b>	141	CHI19791012	SILVA	Cristobal		2:11:37	22:00
<b>115</b>	215	GBR19830719	SPENCER	Philip *		2:12:07	22:30
<b>116</b>	198	DEN19810331	NIELSEN	Tommy *		2:12:29	22:52
<b>117</b>	168	AUT19760101	EILER	Alexander		2:13:22	23:45
<b>118</b>	204	SWE19810409	FRIBERG	Calle *		2:13:28	23:51
<b>119</b>	148	AUT19711123	HAUER	Gerald		- 1 lap	
<b>120</b>	213	NED19820911	WAGENAAR	Mathijs *		- 1 lap	
<b>121</b>	228	AUS19830308	LEFMANN	Aiden *		- 1 lap	
<b>122</b>	208	FRA19820327	BOURLY	Fabien *		- 1 lap	
<b>123</b>	233	BEL19800425	JACOBS	Gody *		- 1 lap	
<b>124</b>	144	SUI19741105	MUELLER	Lukas		- 1 lap	
<b>125</b>	196	GBR19750429	GARDNER	Sam		- 1 lap	
<b>126</b>	234	BEL19770124	APPERMANS	Steve		- 1 lap	
<b>127</b>	177	NED19751225	DONA	Simon		- 1 lap	
<b>128</b>	123	NED19771105	TJALLINGII	Marten		- 1 lap	
<b>129</b>	252	SUI19800301	MULLER	Roland *		- 1 lap	
<b>130</b>	248	GER19830820	FELKEL	Thomas *		- 1 lap	
<b>131</b>	223	FRA19640212	TOLLITTE	Frederic		- 1 lap	
<b>132</b>	243	AUT19780621	PLANK	Roland		- 1 lap	
<b>133</b>	206	AUT19820806	THALER	Guido *		- 1 lap	
<b>134</b>	176	GER19770620	PRIGGE	Sascha		- 1 lap	
<b>135</b>	130	GER19750517	KURSCHAT	Wolfram		- 1 lap	
<b>136</b>	231	NED19770212	VAN BUSSEL	Pascal		- 1 lap	
<b>137</b>	218	NED19810216	ROELEFS	Martijn *		- 1 lap	
<b>138</b>	221	BEL19780614	BROEKMANS	Arne		- 1 lap	
<b>139</b>	172	BEL19771101	HENDERIECKX	Kris		- 1 lap	
<b>140</b>	216	GBR19781019	DUNFORD	Tim		- 1 lap	
<b>141</b>	222		VAN DE WALLE	Dirk		- 1 lap	
<b>142</b>	195	GBR19760711	COOPER	Philip		- 1 lap	
<b>143</b>	250	BEL19720205	FAORO	Franck		- 1 lap	
<b>144</b>	174	SLO19741002	GRKMAN	Primoz		- 1 lap	
<b>145</b>	179	NED19791115	REIJNHOUT	Onno		- 1 lap	
<b>146</b>	219	AUS19830804	CRAWFORD	Jai *		- 1 lap	
<b>147</b>	119	RSA19760702	SWANEPOEL	Ben Melt		- 1 lap	
<b>148</b>	225	NED19760225	GILISSEN	Dion		- 2 laps	
<b>149</b>	226	NOR19800412	SEFLAND	Havard *		- 2 laps	
<b>150</b>	143	GRE19830101	KASKANIS	Konstantinos *		- 2 laps	
<b>151</b>	247	BEL19820315	MASSAER	Joris *		- 2 laps	
<b>152</b>	194	BEL19750528	DE SCHOESITTER	Steve		- 2 laps	
	8	ITA19750310	ACQUAROLI	Dario		DNF	
	18	SWE19750603	TAVELL	Philip	MERIDA INTER.	DNF	
	21	GER19700904	BRESSER	Carsten	TEAM-T-MOBILE	DNF	
	23	FRA19811021	FILIPPI	Nicolas *	MOTOREX-BIANCHI	DNF	
	28	CAN19730419	SHEPPARD	Chris	HAROLEEDUNGAREE	DNF	
	34	DEN19800725	ANDERSEN	Peter Riis *	TEAM-T-MOBILE	DNF	

	36	AUT19760923	BAUER	Siegfried		DNF	
	39	NOR19691210	HOYDAHL	Rune	GIANT GLOBAL	DNF	
	40	BEL19800402	COENEN	Davy *		DNF	
	42	SUI19700217	FRISCHKNECHT	Thomas		DNF	
	50	FRA19760117	MARTINEZ	Miguel	MAPEI - QUICK STEP	DNF	
	54	FRA19781126	RAVANEL	Cedric	ORBEA	DNF	
	55	AUT19780617	PRESSLAUER	Peter		DNF	
	63	GER19740627	HANISCH	Marc		DNF	
	64	NED19800616	AL	Thys *		DNF	
	71	SUI19800312	MANETSCH	Reto *		DNF	
	81	IRL19710406	SEYMOUR	Robin		DNF	
	82	CZE19731201	KORINEK	Radim	CESKASPORITELNA	DNF	
	85	USA19820226	FERGUSON	Walker *	SUBARU-GARYFISH	DNF	
	86	BEL19790218	TREVISAN	Patrick		DNF	
	88	ITA19740206	PALLHUBER	Johann	LANABAU-RW	DNF	
	100	GER19820318	SICKMUELLER	Johannes *		DNF	
	102	SUI19800510	NAF	Ralph *		DNF	
	108	SUI19800712	GIRARD	Valentin *		DNF	
	114	BEL19750321	GALLE	David	ORBEA	DNF	
	115	SUI19810120	WEBER	Balz *	ARROW	DNF	
	121	FRA19781206	LEBRETON	Pierre		DNF	
	127	GRE19780802	SIMELIDIS	Kostas		DNF	
	129	NOR19800401	STORMO	Lars Petter *		DNF	
	131	GRE19780403	KOTOULAS	Emmanouil		DNF	
	133	GBR19760723	COLLINS	Dave		DNF	
	135	BEL19761101	HANKART	David		DNF	
	136	NOR19801005	HOLE	Jostein *		DNF	
	138	CZE19780617	DOLEZAL	Tomas		DNF	
	151	NOR19840514	NORDHAUG	Lars Petter *		DNF	
	153	SWE19750321	SPARR	Henrik		DNF	
	158	SUI19820416	GUJAN	Martin *		DNF	
	162	BEL19690913	VEN	Peter		DNF	
	164	NOR19781026	BOLSTAD	Jorn Espen		DNF	
	166	DEN19760214	VESTERLUND	Klaus		DNF	
	173	AUT19780411	HAMBERGER	Hannes		DNF	
	175	BEL19820513	WIJNANTS	Maarten *		DNF	
	184	NED19820515	PIETERSMA	Jelmer *		DNF	
	186	GBR19770705	LANSLEY	Adrian		DNF	
	199	GER19800219	HUG	Marc *		DNF	
	202	GER19811004	JOERGES	Benjamin *		DNF	
	203	IRL19750929	MASON	John		DNF	
	205	GER19800924	LOSCH	Stefan *		DNF	
	214	BEL19770309	GAUDY	Patrick		DNF	
	224		GAASTRA	René		DNF	
	241	ESP19830916	ESTEBAN	Ismael *		DNF	
	246	GER19770815	KESSLER	Frank		DNF	
	197	DEN19820203	KJELDSSEN	Jakob *		DSQ	
	41	AUT19770630	KIRCHER	Robert	LANABAU-RW	DNS	
	117	SUI19770707	FAHRNI	Ludovic		DNS	
	192	GBR19770905	OLDHAM	Paul		DNS	
	249	BEL19840713	CARION	Arnaud *		DNS	