

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*).

Marga Fullana (*ESP, Orbea*) continued her winning streak on Sunday morning when she beat **Caroline Alexander** (*GBR, GBR Nat'l Team*) by 40 seconds in a hard-fought women's event to remain the overall leader of the world cup series. After missing two international events last season, Fullana again proved that she can not only win - but win consistently as she led the field from start to finish in their four-lap 30.8 km race.



Marga Fullana, ESP

The women began their race up the steep paved climb out of the town center, as Fullana led the large group of 89 competitors. By the middle of the first lap, she was being closely followed by three other women. Caroline Alexander (*GBR, GBR Nat'l Team*), **Sabine Spitz** (*GER, Merida*) and **Annabella Stropparo** (*ITA, Be-One*) - all tough competitors from last week in Madrid - no doubt had learned not to let the leader get away so early this time.

But near the finish of the first lap, Fullana had built up a lead of 12 seconds on her chasers, while the top five remained intact. In the middle of the second lap, Alexander closed the gap by a few seconds, while Stropparo moved up into third position after passing Spitz. They were joined by defending world cup champion **Barbara Blatter** (*SUI, Specialized*), who had to start from 47th position after missing last week's opening round due to illness. It was another 20 seconds back to the sixth

rider, **Regina Marunde** (*GER, Focus*), who was being chased down by World Champion **Alison Dunlap** (*USA, Luna Chix*).

In the third lap Fullana's lead remained steady at 16 seconds, as she expended just enough energy to remain in the lead. Only Alexander was able to maintain contact, while an accelerating Blatter and Stropparo both fell off the lead - Stropparo passing Blatter in lap three while Spitz rounded out the top-five. Marga had pushed harder to distance herself from the field - yet still was not fully attacking.

Fifteen minutes later at the beginning of the fourth and final lap, one and a quarter hours' and 22.5 km racing were completed. Fullana's lead had now grown to 25 seconds over Alexander

after the leader made a small push and gained ten to fifteen seconds on the field. Stropparo was chasing 35 seconds back, gaining 15 seconds on the leaders while Blatter held steady.

Ten minutes later, with just minutes remaining in the race, Fullana increased her lead over Alexander by another 10 seconds, while Stropparo dropped 5 seconds to the leader and Blatter 15. At this point Alison Dunlap attacked from behind, passing Spitz and then Blatter, moving into 4th position.

Soon Marga crossed the finish, 40 seconds clear of Alexander, 48 seconds ahead of Stropparo and 1:21 ahead of Dunlap - while Blatter rounded out the podium in 5th place, 1:26 off the lead.



Marga Fullana, ESP

Marga Fullana, 1st place:

"Everybody waited for me to make my pace today, but nobody came up when I set my rhythm, except for Caroline. Today's race was harder than last week, but the course was better for me, with more long climbs. I knew if I did my pace they couldn't follow me today, but I only did enough to win."

Caroline Alexander, 2nd Place:

"I was too cautious today, I should have put the race to [Marga], I shouldn't have waited for her. It's the strongest I've felt in a long time though."

Annabella Stroppar, 3rd Place:

"I was feeling sick during the race, and was feverish by the end. In the beginning I was pushing hard to get a good position. But on the 2nd lap I was tired, and was just thinking to keep good

position. It was a fast race, and if you didn't have good form than you just had to push that much harder."

Words: **Ari Cheren**

Images: **Mark Dawson** www.fattirefotos.com



	#	UCI Code	Last Name	First Name	Age	Time
1	1	ESP19720409	FULLANA	Marga	30	1:46:20
2	4	GBR19680303	ALEXANDER	Caroline	34	1:47:00
3	54	ITA19680704	STROPPARO	Annabella	34	1:47:08
4	2	USA19690727	DUNLAP	Alison	33	1:47:41
5	52	SUI19701222	BLATTER	Barbara	32	1:47:46
6	3	GER19711227	SPITZ	Sabine	31	1:47:52
7	6	GER19680826	MARUNDE	Regina	34	1:49:14
8	8	NOR19730210	DAHLE	Gunn-rita	29	1:50:29
9	5	CAN19660909	SYDOR	Alison	36	1:50:56
10	71	SWE19780409	OSTERGREN	Maria	24	1:50:59
11	11	FRA19720222	LEBOUCHER	Laurence	30	1:51:30
12	20	ITA19690108	GIACOMUZZI	Elena	33	1:51:43
13	9	AUS19710603	GRIGSON	Mary	31	1:52:25
14	12	SUI19691014	HENZI	Petra	33	1:52:45
15	19	CAN19660316	REDDEN	Chrissy	36	1:53:25
16	29	CAN19771024	PREMONT	Marie-Helene	25	1:53:59
17	13	RUS19761202	EPIFANOVA	Alla	26	1:54:15
18	56	ESP19671215	ROVIRA PLANAS	Silvia	35	1:54:24
19	24	FRA19810110	THEVENET	Marion	21	1:54:41
20	28	FRA19791016	MARCOUYRE	Helene	23	1:54:53
21	10	SUI19740613	RUSCA	Maroussia	28	1:55:12
22	15	GER19740727	KLOSE	Sandra	28	1:55:23
23	21	GER19700708	KRAFT	Yvonne	32	1:55:24
24	26	GER19720321	SCHWING	Katrin	30	1:55:42
25	16	SUI19820329	TRAXEL	Sonja	20	1:55:50
26	58	SWE19710318	ENOCSSON	Anna	31	1:55:58
27	55	AUT19730405	BRAUMANN	Birgit	29	1:56:17
28	61	SVK19760204	STEVKOVA	Janka	26	1:56:58
29	17	POL19810216	SZAFRANIEC	Anna	21	1:56:59
30	57	AUT19670510	EMBACHER	Hildegard	35	1:57:10
31	39	CAN19751112	BISARO	Kiara	27	1:57:24
32	32	ESP19730917	PUIGGROS MIRANDA	Janet	29	1:57:41
33	31	ITA19730107	PORTA	Daniela	29	1:58:19
34	30	AUS19761002	FRANKE	Dellys	26	1:58:26
35	97	SUI19820329	WALKER	Nadja	20	1:58:37
36	33	BRA19761227	MOURAO	Jacqueline	26	1:58:56
37	42	CHN19780205	MA	Yan Ping	24	1:59:35
38	44	GBR19760625	THOMAS	Sue	26	1:59:44
39	25	AUT19711003	SCHORKMAYER	Petra	31	1:59:52
40	45	CAN19690205	SINCLAIR	Trish	33	2:00:29
41	34	DEN19740109	ANDERSEN	Mette	28	2:00:30
42	37	NOR19690525	KOSTOL	Ragnhild	33	2:00:42
43	62	SUI19820208	LEUMANN	Katrin	20	2:00:55
44	14	AUT19750708	JUNGMEIER	Barbel	27	2:01:18
45	68	FRA19720104	SOUCHON	Virginie	30	2:01:20
46	59	HUN19740303	VAJDA	Marta	28	2:01:32
47	22	JPN19681008	NAMBU	Hiroko	34	2:01:50

48	69	FRA19780401	ENAU	Sabrina	24	2:02:56
49	50	GER19730317	RAHNER	Carolyn	29	2:03:04
50	36	AUS19771026	LOW	Jaci	25	2:03:17
51	38	USA19670101	HALL	Gina	35	2:03:55
52	66	BEL19641002	QUINTENS	Hilda	38	2:04:02
53	95	FRA19760501	BAUD	Vivianne	26	2:04:05
54	53	AUS19761216	BAYLIS	Anna	26	2:04:21
55	106	SUI19820406	FAHRNI	Joelle	20	2:04:51
56	76	FRA19730412	CLOLUS-ROCHET	Sonia	29	2:04:55
57	99	CHN19820404	ZHANG	Na	20	2:04:56
58	108	AUS19680503	MASSON	Karen	34	2:05:07
59	48	FRA19800805	GUIRRONNET	Sandrine	22	2:05:32
60	40	GBR19751119	COPNALL	Jenny	27	2:05:46
61	78	FRA19830625	PESENTI	Julie	19	2:06:15
62	93	CHN19791124	JING	Li	23	2:06:53
63	41	RUS19780810	PAZITOVA	Valentina	24	2:07:16
64	84	FRA19810205	HANSEN	Severine	21	2:07:17
65	64	IRL19770525	OWENS	Tarja	25	2:07:31
66	47	ISR19680831	COPANS	Laurie	34	2:08:25
67	101	DEN19770410	BRUHN	Nadine	25	2:08:52
68	86	NED19800914	DIELEMAN	Mirjam	22	2:08:55
69	92	EST19830222	MEIER	Maaris	19	2:09:03
70	105	BEL19810611	DELFOSE	Catherine	21	2:09:57
71	67	AUS19750606	WALKER	Wendy	27	2:10:15
72	98	NED19781226	TURPIJN	Laura	24	2:11:18
73	87	NED19751218	VAN GERVEN	Renate	27	2:11:22
74	77	GBR19780819	WILKINSON	Victoria	24	2:13:52
75	94	GBR19830512	WAKEFIELD	Hazel		-1 Lap
76	96	NED19711129	VAN DER VLIST	Ingrid		-1 Lap
	18	USA19711009	HAYWOOD	Susan	31	DNF
	23	NED19730630	DORLAND	Corine	29	DNF
	35	BEL19710602	VAN DEUN	Hilde	31	DNF
	63	ITA19650719	BERTOSSI	Camilla	37	DNF
	65	CZE19771209	HANUSOVA	Katerina	25	DNF
	74	SUI19780221	LOUIS	Daniela	24	DNF
	82	FRA19730915	GENTIEU	Sabine	29	DNF
	88	AUT19820810	LUCKINGER	Daniela	20	DNF
	89	NOR19821125	BYBERG	Lene	20	DNF
	91	NED19780302	HOFS	Petra	24	DNF
	107	GER19761120	GOCKERT	Sandra	26	DNF
	43	NED19710508	BOOG RAUWERDA	Bernardine	31	DNS
	104	BEL19830328	MICHIELS	Gitta	19	DNS