

MTB World Cup XC #3 - CDM

Madrid, Spain, May 3-4, 2008

May 4: Elite women cross country

Dahle recaptures winning feeling

By Luke Webber in Madrid, Spain – *cyclingnews.com*

Just three races since returning to competition, Gunn Rita Dahle Flesjå underlined why she is still considered the best female mountain biker in the world by coming to Madrid and winning under less than perfect circumstances. The Norwegian former World Champion outsprinted Canadian Marie-Helene Premont in a photo finish to take victory with at time of 1:48:14. Marga Fullana, racing in her home country, finished third at 1:13. Sabine Spitz and Georgia Gould rounded out the top five.

Just one year ago Dahle Flesjå was forced to stop riding after a long period of over racing and training led to a virus breaking her body down. It was only in Houffalize, Belgium, at the opening round of the cross country World Cup three weeks ago that Dahle Flesjå could return to racing at the top level. Then just a week later in Offenburg, she withdrew from the race due to ill health. Nobody expected today's result - least of all Dahle Flesjå herself.

Just last week in an exclusive interview with *Cyclingnews*, Dahle Flesjå outlined her plans for the year and nowhere in them figured a World Cup win.

"I could never have imagined taking this amazing victory today, it is like winning ten World Championships to me," said the happy Norwegian.



Gunn Rita Dahle-Flesjå (Multivan Merida) is elated with her first major victory
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine



Marie-Helene Premont (Rocky Mountain) chases
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Her husband and coach, Kenneth Flesjå was equally shocked, but said after his wife's win, "Here we had a diamond and you can never crack one of those. Gunn Rita was scratched and now we have polished that diamond back into shape."

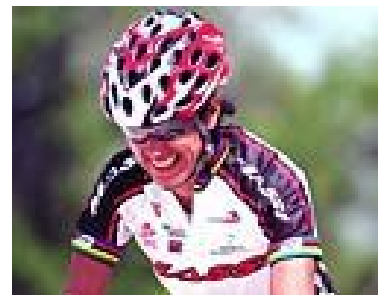
What may be most worrying for the competition however is that Dahle Flesjå is not yet in her peak form. It will be interesting to see what follows at the World Championships - surely a comeback to recapture Olympic gold could only be a dream?

The starting field for the women's event was greatly depleted to just 90 competitors compared to 140 in previous races. With current leader Irina Kalentieva missing due to illness, it was up to Dahle Flesjå, Marie-Helene Premont and home favourite Marga Fullana to set the pace. At times this hard-packed circuit resembled a road race with groups forming and this is exactly how the leading pair of Dahle Flesjå and Premont made their escape from an initial group of four with six chasers.

Working together after a fatiguing Fullana dropped off the pace, back both riders looked good for the win. All bets were on Premont who finished third and second at the previous two World Cup events, but it was Dahle Flesjå who won out in an almost-sprint finish.

After the finish, Premont commented on how well both riders had worked together to hold the gap. She said, "There was nothing left" to deny Gunn Rita the win.

Fullana came in to the finish with a great reception from the home fans, perhaps only matched by the response from the Merida team, whose result made up for all their misfortunes over the previous weeks including break-ins, thefts and illness.



The crowd goes berserk when Margarita Fullana (Masi) comes across
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Results

1 Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (Nor) Multivan Merida Biking Team	1.48.14 (21.62km/h)
2 Marie-Helene Premont (Can) Rocky Mountain	0.01
3 Margarita Fullana (Spa) Massi	1.14
4 Sabine Spitz (Ger) Central Ghost Pro Team	1.37
5 Georgia Gould (USA) Luna Womens MTB Team	2.38
6 Petra Henzi (Swi) Fischer-BMC	3.01
7 Ying Liu (Chn)	3.09
8 Lene Byberg (Nor) Specialized Factory Racing	3.18
9 Catherine Pendrel (Can) Luna Womens MTB Team	3.33
10 Katerina Nash (Cze) Luna Womens MTB Team	3.43
11 Blaza Klemencic (Slo) Giant Italia Team	3.52
12 Cecile Rode Ravanel (Fra) Team Lapierre International	4.00
13 Nathalie Schneitter* (Swi) Colnago Cap Arreghini	4.16
14 Laurence Leboucher (Fra)	4.21
15 Mary Mc Conneloug (USA)	4.22
16 Tanja Zakelj* (Slo)	4.31
17 Katrin Leumann (Swi)	4.42
18 Chengyuan Ren* (Chn)	4.50
19 Maroussia Rusca (Swi)	4.52
20 Elisabeth Osl (Aut) Team Ghost International	4.56
21 Eva Lechner (Ita) Colnago Cap Arreghini	5.32
22 Tereza Hurikova* (Cze) Ceska Sportitelna MTB	5.50
23 Jingjing Wang (Chn)	6.11
24 Adelheid Morath (Ger)	6.35
25 Esther Süss (Swi)	6.40
26 Heather Irmiger (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	7.08
27 Mical Dyck (Can)	7.10
28 Anna Villar Argente (Spa) Massi	7.15
29 Maria Osl (Aut) Sunshine Racers ASV Nals	7.44
30 Arielle Van Meurs (Ned)	8.01
31 Nina Homovec (Slo)	8.18
32 Alison Sydor (Can) Rocky Mountain	8.39
33 Githa Michiels (Bel)	9.02
34 Laura Turpijn (Ned)	9.15
35 Marielle Saner-Guinchard (Swi) Bikepark.Ch BMC	9.23
36 Dellys Starr (Aus)	9.25
37 Janka Stevkova (Svk)	9.31
38 Sabrina Enaux (Fra) Team Lapierre International	9.32
39 Helene Marcouyre (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour	9.43
40 Wendy Simms (Can) Kona	9.50
41 Susan Haywood (USA) Trek-VW	9.53
42 Laura Metzler* (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour	10.06
43 Vera Andreeva* (Rus)	10.08
44 Sandra Araujo (Por)	10.15
45 Francisca Campos Salas (Chi) Massi	10.19
46 Sandra Walter (Can)	10.40
47 Alexandra Engen* (Swe)	10.42
48 Ivonne Kraft (Ger)	11.21
49 Amanda Sin (Can)	11.31
50 Severine Hansen (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour	11.59
51 Sandra Santanyes Murillo (Spa) Cemelorca-Seguros10.Com	12.09
52 Julie Bresset* (Fra) Breiz Mountain	12.20
53 Emiliy Batty* (Can)	13.09
54 Asa Maria Erlandsson (Swe) Subaru-Gary Fisher	13.24
55 Ruth Moll Marques (Spa)	13.42
56 Cristina Mascarreras Sabria (Spa) Conor - Camping La Siesta	13.56
57 Kate Potter (Aus)	14.02
58 Yolanda Speedy (RSA)	14.22
59 Stephanie Wiedner* (Aut)	14.30
60 Rowena Fry (Aus)	14.36
61 Zoe King (Aus)	14.47
62 Ksenia Chernykh (Rus)	16.20
63 Emma Colson (Aus)	16.30
64 Caroline Mani* (Fra)	17.10
65 Laura Lorenza Morfin Macouzet (Mex)	17.25

66 Merc Tusell Quevedo (Spa) Massi	17.36
67 Kristien Nelen (Bel)	18.11
68 Susan Butler (USA)	18.22
69 Katherine O'shea (Aus)	22.31
70 Daniela Bunzli Rojas (Chi)	22.59

Behind one lap

71 Therese Rhodes*
 DNF Kiara Bisaro (Can)
 DNF Willow Koerber (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher
 DNF Kaytee Boyd (NZl)
 DNF Rocio Gamonal Ferrera (Spa)
 DNF Oxana Rybakova (Rus)
 DNF Tory Thomas (Aus)
 DNF Evgenia Belozeroval* (Rus)
 DNF Rocio Martin Rodriguez (Spa)
 DNF Nicole Lechl* (Ger) Team XLC Haibike
 DNS Katrin Schwing (Ger) Dolphin-Trek Mountainbike

Teams

1 Luna Womens MTB Team	71 pts
2 Multivan Merida Biking Team	40
3 Rocky Mountain	35
4 Massi	35
5 Central Ghost Pro Team	30
6 Colnago Cap Arreghini	28
7 Fischer-BMC	26
8 Specialized Factory Racing	23
9 Giant Italia Team	20
10 Team Lapierre International	19
11 Team Ghost International	11
12 Ceska Sportelna MTB	9
13 Subaru-Gary Fisher	5
14 Sunshine Racers ASV Nals	2