

MTB World Cup XC #6 & DH #4 - CDM

Mont Sainte Anne, Canada, July 25-27, 2008

July 27: Elite men cross country

Absalon wins with solo race starting on opening lap

By Sue George in Mont-Sainte-Anne, Québec – cyclingnews.com

Julien Absalon (Orbea) displayed fine form and well-honed technical skills as he dominated the elite men's cross country at the World Cup in Mont-Sainte-Anne. On the very first lap, he attacked his competition and left them behind to race for second.

Absalon wasn't originally planning on racing at Mont-Sainte-Anne. "After my bad race at worlds [where he DNF'ed - ed.], I changed my mind. I decided that it'd be better to do the World Cup here to keep racing on an international level and boost my confidence."

"I'm happy to win here - it's good for the mind with the Olympics in four weeks," said Absalon, who was wearing the French National Champion's jersey after winning the title again last weekend.



French national champion Julien Absalon (Orbea) takes the victory
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Some surged early and some took the long, steady approach on six laps of a demanding technical course with plenty of steep climbing, but in the end it was Canadian Geoff Kabush (Maxxis) taking a solid second place after a largely solo ride throughout the race. U23 Racer Burry Stander (GT Bicycles) raced to a third place finish, picking off riders on his way.



Geoff Kabush (Maxxis) finished second
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

From the gun, it was Absalon followed by Jose Antonio Hermida (Multivan Merida).

"I attacked in the first half to get in the front, so I could choose my lane and go where I wanted," said Absalon of his strategy. The win was a big boost for his confidence. "Before the world championships, it was difficult for me with back problems and lots of pressure. Now I'm in good shape."

Behind them were Jaroslav Kulhavy, Martin Gujan (Athleticum-MTB-Team), Lukas Flückiger (Athleticum-MTB-Team), Kabush, Seamus McGrath, Burry Stander (GT Bicycles), Max Plaxton (Rocky Mountain) and Adam Craig (Giant).

Kabush worked his way to the front of the chase at the beginning of lap two and eventually passed Hermida on lap three.

"My strategy was to go into the first climb at the front. I think I fell back to sixth or eighth. I stayed smooth and didn't fight too much on the first laps," said Kabush. "In the technical singletrack at the top of the first climb, I closed 20 or 30 seconds there in five minutes."

"I had to see what I could do to power back to Absalon. I thought he might tire a bit on his hardtail today, but he proved not to," said Kabush, who rode a dual suspension while many of the men rode hardtails.

The Canadian had the course dialled in. "I think I had more laps on the course than anyone after nationals last week." It helped him on his way to his best-ever finish at Mont-Sainte-Anne. Kabush has gotten second at a World Cup just once before - in 2005 at Angel Fire, New Mexico.

Hermida went from being in second to third to wondering whether he would finish the race after he crashed on the third lap.



Jose Antonio Hermida Ramos (Multivan Merida)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

"It was the crash of my life. I went flying and my bike landed far away. It had no seat afterward - it broke in the crash. My helmet was lost, too. I just sat for a few minutes or more, and they gave me water."

"I really thought I would have to quit the race. I've crashed in my life many times, but that was definitely one of the scariest ones - I just started flying and hit my head," said Hermida, still shaken after the finish.

He resumed racing, riding without a seat to the tech zone, where he got a new one installed. Eventually he started to come around and worked his way back up from 16th to 11th. "I banged my shoulder and knee - I think they will be painful later," he said after crossing the line.



Julien Absalon (Orbea) riding uphill
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Stander surprised himself with a third place in the middle of a pre-Beijing training block. "I had a rough first lap. I was pretty much riding into everything which wasn't the plan. I think I've been riding too much on the road."

Stander found his rhythm in the second lap when he was in ninth place, and slowed a bit before feeling good on the climbs on the third lap and starting to pick off racers on his way to a third place.

Riding a consistent pace throughout, Adam Craig (Giant Bicycles) kept passing riders who had gone out too hard and couldn't maintain their pace. On the last lap, he got a little extra help from Lady Luck and passed two more riders who suffered late race mechanicals.

Craig deliberately started conservatively, in 11th on the first lap. "Riding here is hard on you, but I was riding the good stuff all relaxed. I kept it smooth and conservative - that's how you ride fast at this race."

"I wasn't climbing all that well so all the guys who were pinning it Euro style were bouncing around on everything on the descents. Once they started cracking, they started messing up," said Craig, who worked to pick them off one by one.

Lukas Flüchiger (Athleticum) earned the final spot on the podium with a fifth place.

World Champion Christoph Sauser (Swisspower) did not start the race after being injured in a crash yesterday. A trip to the hospital afterward got him five stitches in his leg.



Adam Craig (Giant) riding in eighth place
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

"It would have been interesting to have Sauser in the race," said Absalon, "but it was a bad crash for him yesterday. I hope we will race in Bromont next weekend." That's where the next round of the World Cup will head August 1-3.

Results

1	Julien Absalon (Fra) Orbea	2.07.44
2	Geoff Kabush (Can) Team Maxxis	2.33
3	Burry Stander (RSA) GT Bicycle	4.53
4	Adam Craig (USA) Giant Mountain Bike Team	5.17
5	Lukas Fluckiger (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	5.37
6	Jaroslav Kulhavy (Cze)	6.20
7	Martin Gujan (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	7.03
8	Seamus McGrath (Can)	7.34
9	Liam Killeen (GBr) Specialized Factory Racing	8.30
10	Jeremy Horgan-Kobelski (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	9.32
11	Jose Antonio Hermida Ramos (Spa) Multivan Merida Biking Team	9.39
12	Wolfram Kurschat (Ger) Topeak Ergon Racing Team	10.09
13	Hannes Metzler (Aut) Giant Mountain Bike Team	10.45
14	Derek Zandstra (Can)	11.09
15	Bas Peters (Ned)	12.23
16	Michael Broderick (USA)	12.24
17	Jeremiah Bishop (USA) Trek-VW	12.30
18	Mathieu Toulouse (Can) Team Maxxis	13.02
19	Cedric Ravanel (Fra) Team Lapierre International	14.06
20	Raphael Gagne (Can) Rocky Mountain	14.33
21	Christoph Soukup (Aut)	14.48
22	Peter Glassford (Can)	15.25
23	Barry Wicks (USA) Kona	15.49
24	Samuel Schultz (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	17.27
25	Max Plaxton (Can) Rocky Mountain	18.05
26	Kris Sneddon (Can) Kona	18.13
27	Jan Skarnitzl (Cze)	18.38
28	Matthew Hadley (Can)	18.50
29	Todd Wells (USA) GT Bicycle	26.16
30	Jiri Friedl (Cze) Merida Biking Team	32.06

Behind one lap

31	Anders Hovdenes (Nor) Team Etto Hoydahl
32	Karl Markt (Aut)
33	Connor Mcconvey (Irl)
34	Stefan Widmer (Can)
35	Julien Fillion (Can)
36	Ola Kjren (Nor)
37	Andrew Watson (Can)
38	Josef Kamler (Cze) Ceska Sportelna MTB
39	Kashi Leuchs (NZl) Cannondale-Vredestein
40	Spencer Paxson (USA)
41	Matous Ulman (Cze)
42	Adam Snyder (USA)
43	Pierre Lebreton (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour
44	Francis Morin (Can)
45	Calle Friberg (Swe)
46	Eric Batty (Can)
47	Cristobal Silva Ibaceta (Chi)
48	Maxime Marotte (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour
49	Ryan Atkins (Can)
50	Kenji Takeya (Jpn)
51	Kyle Douglas (Can)

Behind two laps

52	Frank Schotman (Ned)
53	Ross Schnell (USA) Trek-VW
54	Jonathan Boulanger (Can)
55	Martin Fanger (Swi)
56	Nicola Rohrbach (Swi) Central Ghost Pro Team
57	Daniel Sessford (Can)
58	Tad Elliot (USA)
59	Craig Richey (Can)

60 Freddy Betremieux (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour
61 Martin Loo (Est) Merida Biking Team
62 Leni Trudel (Can)

Behind three laps

63 Martin Lazarski (Can)
64 Ethan Gilmour (USA)
65 John Gray (NZl)
66 Troy Wells (USA)
67 Mitchell Peterson (USA)
68 Pablo Roberto Voigt Rodriguez (Mex)
69 Timothy Madgwick (NZl)

Teams

1 Athleticum-MTB-Team	52 pts
2 Team Maxxis	48
3 Giant Mountain Bike Team	48
4 Orbea	40
5 GT Bicycles	34
6 Subaru-Gary Fisher	28
7 Specialized Factory Racing	22
8 Multivan Merida Biking Team	20
9 Topeak Ergon Racing Team	19
10 Rocky Mountain	17
11 Trek-VW	14
12 Kona	13
13 Team Lapierre International	12
14 Merida Biking Team	1