

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

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

July 27: Elite women cross country

Premont solos to win at home

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

Racing near her home, Canadian Marie-Helene Premont (Rocky Mountain) rode away from her competition on the first lap and never looked back on her way to victory in the cross country at the Mont-Sainte-Anne World Cup. She was followed by Catherine Pendrel (Luna Women's MTB Team), another Canadian riding solo to a second place. Norwegian Lene Byberg (Specialized Factory Racing) rode steadily to a strong third place finish.

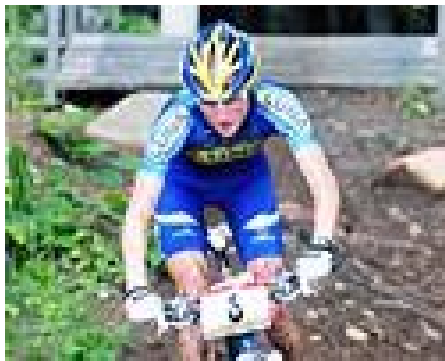
"It was really crazy to win here at home," said Premont. "The crowd was here for me and it really helped." Premont's popularity drew many spectators – it appeared there were more out to watch the women's race than the men's race. Cheers followed her around the course; it was easy to tell when Premont was coming by the reactions of her fans, many of whom were carrying and waving signs with Premont's photo.



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

Premont got a good start, but she also looked strong throughout the race. "My strategy was to be fast at the beginning and try to get that gap and to be careful after that," she said. In a clean ride finished up in 2:06:30, she had no mechanicals or crashes and her solid technical skills enabled her to ride everything.

Going into the first technical section on the initial lap, Premont led, followed by Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (Multivan Merida) and Pendrel.



Canadian Catherine Pendrel (Luna Women's MTB)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

"I had the best World Cup start I've ever had in my life," said Pendrel. "We were all close at the top of the first climb, but I wasn't aggressive enough and I went into the woods third wheel instead of on Marie's. That allowed a gap to form between us, and Marie started to pull away in the first woods section."

Pendrel said it was helpful for the two Canadians to have raced the same course one week ago for their national championships. "Both of us love this course and we were out there having fun. Mentally, we know we can do well here and that works to our advantage."

Pendrel caught and passed Dahle Flesjaa and spent the rest of the race pursuing Premont. "I was able to settle into my rhythm. She was very strong on the last section on the course - I knew it from nationals. On the first half of the course, I'd close on Marie, on the second half, she'd close to me. On the fourth lap, she opened it up. I knew I had enough to finish strong, but that I probably wouldn't catch her." She would end up 2:53 behind the winner.

Byberg surprised many with her third place. Clad in an almost fluorescent pink team uniform, the Norwegian started out in fifth early on the first lap and moved into fourth going into the second lap. At the end of lap two, she passed Dahle-Flesjaa for third, a spot she would hold until the end, when she finished 4:28 behind Premont.

Georgia Gould (Luna Women's MTB team) passed Dahle Flesjaa with 1.5 laps to go. The American and the Norwegian would hold their spots for the duration, finishing fourth and fifth to round out the podium.

Gould didn't let a poor start deter her from her best-ever World Cup finish. "I kind of got stuck behind a bunch of junk at the start, but I knew it would be a long race and I was able to move up. The first corner in the start loop, people were not holding their lines in the corner and I had to cut over to avoid crashing," said Gould, who added that the other women were so nervous they were executing crazy passes on the downhills. "I knew I didn't want to get hurt. I have to the Olympics next month."



Lene Byberg (Specialized)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Gould rode well technically and considered the race good preparation for the Olympics next month. "It's always good to practice handling your bike even if the course in Beijing isn't technical."

Dahle Flesjaa faded from second to fifth during the race, but was happy with her race, which occurred in the middle of a significant training block leading up to the Olympics. "I had to put in more training after the worlds. Since I was out last year, I haven't been able really to train much the last month," said world marathon champion Dahle Flesjaa, who was on a fishing trip while recovering from illness one year ago instead of racing the circuit. "We all have to think about Beijing now. It's great to be top five in a World Cup."

The top riders spoke positively of the challenging course with many steep climbs, short steep descents and technical rocky and rooty sections, some of which were slick with rains from the night before.

US National Champion Mary McConneloug (Kenda / Seven), who finished sixth, was one of the few top women to ride a full suspension. "I chose to ride the dually for the first time in six years. It really allowed me to rest on the descents and not get all beat up and then I could just focus on climbing."



Georgia Gould (Luna Women's MTB)
Photo ©: Dave McElwaine

Her decision may have come after seeing the course. "I was really happy to come to Mont-Sainte-Anne and see that the course was made more technical compared to last year. They changed it and added more sections that gave the course so much flow. This is now my favourite race course!" she said after finishing sixth, a performance that showed her form is coming on strong with just weeks to go until the Olympics.

Katerina Nash started the race well and was in fourth place for a time on the first lap, but it wasn't her day and she fell back a few places, finishing in seventh. "I was climbing well, but not descending well. It was one of those days when I didn't have it all together so I made some mistakes on the slick roots."

Notably absent from the race were current World Champion Marga Fullana, former World Champion Irina Kalentieva and Sabine Spitz, who finished second at both cross country and marathon worlds earlier this year.

Dahle Flesjaa was surprised that the other favourites were not in attendance. "I can't really understand why they are not here. World Cup races are big and important for the sponsors and for the teams," she said. "Especially for Marga, being the World champion, she should be here showing the rainbow jersey. When I had the World Champion's jersey, I felt that was part of promoting my sport," before adding with a shrug, "We all have different views of that."

Race notes

- The Canadians had a stellar day of racing on home soil. They placed six riders in the top 20 (Premont - first, Pendrel - second, Amanda Sin - 10th, Wendy Simms - 13th, Emily Batty - 17th and Jean Ann McKirdy - 20th).

- The next round of the World Cup heads south, but stays in Quebec. Round seven will happen in Bromont next weekend, August 1-3.

- Mont-Sainte-Anne will host the World Championships in 2010.

Results

1	Marie-Helene Premont (Can) Rocky Mountain	2.06.30
2	Catherine Pendrel (Can) Luna Womens MTB Team	2.54
3	Lene Byberg (Nor) Specialized Factory Racing	4.29
4	Georgia Gould (USA) Luna Womens MTB Team	5.07
5	Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (Nor) Multivan Merida Biking Team	5.24
6	Mary McConneloug (USA) Kenda / Seven	6.28
7	Katerina Nash (Cze) Luna Womens MTB Team	7.33
8	Elisabeth Osl (Aut) Team Ghost International	8.42
9	Sabrina Enaux (Fra) Team Lapierre International	11.33
10	Amanda Sin (Can)	12.15
11	Lea Davison (USA) Trek-VW	12.44
12	Katrin Leumann (Swi)	13.30
13	Wendy Simms (Can) Kona	13.52
14	Willow Koerber (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	15.25
15	Tereza Hurikova (Cze) Ceska Sportelna MTB	16.43
16	Laura Metzler (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour	17.44
17	Emily Batty (Can)	18.00
18	Laura Turpijn (Ned)	18.19
19	Laura Lorenza Morfin Macouzet (Mex)	19.46
20	Jean Ann McKirdy (Can) Rocky Mountain	20.14
21	Jaqueline Mourao (Bra)	22.32
22	Julie Krasniak (Fra) Team Lapierre International	23.06
23	Sandra Walter (Can)	23.33
24	Karine Travaillaud (Can)	25.14
25	Cecile Rode Ravanel (Fra) Team Lapierre International	25.59
26	Marie-Claude Surprenant (Can)	26.26

Behind one lap

27	Caroline Villeneuve (Can)
28	Helene Marcouyre (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour
29	Mical Dyck (Can)
30	Mikaela Kofman (Can)
31	Heather Irmiger (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher
32	Carla Salgado Gonzalez (Mex)
33	Joanna Harrington (Aus)
34	Rie Katayama (Jpn)
35	Marie Allaire (Can)
36	Veronique Fournier (Can)
37	Jamie Dinkins (USA)
38	Kathleen Villeneuve (Can)

Behind two laps

39	Marie Kunst (Den)
40	Caitlyn Tuel (USA)
41	Lisa Morgan (NZl)
42	Catherine Vipond (Can)
43	Julie Sanders (Can)
44	Kyia Anderson (USA)
45	Kaitlin Michener (Can)

Teams

1	Luna Womens MTB Team	89 pts
2	Rocky Mountain	51
3	Team Lapierre International	37
4	Specialized Factory Racing	32
5	Multivan Merida Biking Team	28
6	Team Ghost International	23
7	Trek-VW	20
8	Kona	18
9	BH-SR. Suntour	18
10	Subaru-Gary Fisher	17
11	Ceska Sportelna MTB	16

