

MTB World Cup XC #4 & DH #2 - CDM - CDM

Vallnord, Andorra, May 31-June 1, 2008

May 31: Elite men cross country

Sauser comes back to claim perfect victory

By Luke Webber in Vallnord, Andorra – cyclingnews.com

After three World Cup attempts it was finally the day for Christoph Sauser (Specialized Factory Racing) to take a popular win in Andorra but some surprising names accompanied him on the podium and most notably none were wearing the Rainbow Stripes.

Sauser won despite a bad mishap in the form of a flat tyre in the fifth lap. "I was thinking 'why why me again?!' But when I eventually caught and passed Burry [Stander] I was flying, I couldn't even feel my legs any more. Luckily for the bit that I had to run I could still go at good speed because Benno had put some tyre tread on the bottom of my Specialized road shoes. Sometimes you start and you think 'they start so hard!' But today I was wondering why don't they full on! I just rolled away, my legs started to burn badly on laps four and five when Burry was coming near, I always tried to keep him 15 seconds back so he did not have the chance to think he could beat me. Eventually though it was easy for him to pass because I was running up the hill at the time."



Sauser celebrates his first win
Photo: Luke Webber

Julien Absalon (Orbea) would not claim his fourth successive victory and would instead finish only ninth, owing to some mechanical issues and possibly the need to rest before the World Championships in order to regain peak form.

"I was expecting better than today, but I had a big crash on the first lap and I was too cautious because I did not want to crash again. I had also damaged my chainrings the gears were not working," said Absalon. "Put together: not a good day! I won't be going to Fort William, instead I will be going home to get in a bit of recovery maybe I need it!"

An obviously reflective Stander (GT Bicycles) stood at the finish amazed that he had the strength to lead and finish second at a World Cup at just 20 years of age, but annoyed that victory had been snatched from so close.

"Today's course was very technical, not fast like Madrid or Offenburg, but much slower and kept your concentration at all times," said Stander. "It was important not to make any silly mistakes but on lap five I crashed pretty hard and snapped my lockout lever. Just after that *Susi* [Sauser - ed.] had his flat and I could get by and into the lead which really lifted my morale. By the last lap though he was coming too strong, I could do nothing. With a flat coming back he was definitely the strongest rider today."

The final surprise of the day was Canadian Geoff Kabush (Maxxis) turning in his best result on Euro soil, third after a solid ride picking off positions all race long and not fading. "To do it in Europe is a big result for me," said Kabush. "It is a great course, with all the rain it made it subtly technical over the roots. I was able to start out pretty smooth, relax and start picking off guys at my leisure. Today I didn't want to fight for position, I wanted to save energy."

How it unfolded



Burry Stander was never far behind
Photo: Luke Webber

At 14:00 local time, under slow moving heavy cloud, 120 riders set out on a 5.2-kilometre lap around the bottom of Vallnord bike park. No start loop was required as this was a classic Alpine course with climbs that required granny ring and a good sense of balance to avoid spinning out or flipping over the back.

Geoff Kabush took the early lead but decided to drop back into the top ten. The first lap was a wicked selection process that tore the field apart something we were not used to seeing in the previous three rounds on flatter courses at sea level. On lap one, thirty riders could be described as in contention whereas the rest were already fighting to even reach the finish.

From the start Sauser took the initiative, holding off a group of ten riders containing all the favourites, including Absalon who was looking to make it four wins from four races today.

What was expected to follow was the usual chase back by the peloton and then an attack by the reigning World and Olympic champion which nobody would follow. The reality however was somewhat different.

Stander dragged everyone closer to Sauser before the biggest climb of the course, but when it hit the crippling grade, nobody could follow. Sauser held a gap of ten seconds to Stander and behind him was an ever-changing train of riders. Each time the stiff climb would claim a different victim and the order would be re-established.



Absalon was not so fortunate
Photo ♦: Luke Webber

On lap five disaster struck for Sauser ♦ a flat tyre meant a long run to the tech zone. Fortunately part of this run was up the steepest climb (there was almost no difference between running and riding speeds) and within one lap the Swiss was back on the wheel of Stander.

There is now one week until Fort William, the final World Cup before the World Championships.

Results

1	Christoph Sauser (Swi) Specialized Factory Racing	2.02.16
2	Burrry Stander (RSA) GT Bicycle	0.09
3	Geoff Kabush (Can) Team Maxxis	0.18
4	Lukas Fluckiger (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	1.09
5	Cedric Ravanel (Fra) Team Lapierre International	1.42
6	Todd Wells (USA) GT Bicycle	2.17
7	Tony Longo (Ita) Full-Dynamix-It	2.28
8	Sergio Mantecon Gutierrez (Spa) Cemelorca-Seguros10.Com	2.52
9	Inaki Lejarreta Errasti (Spa) Orbea	3.02
10	Fredrik Kessiakoff (Swe) Full-Dynamix-It	3.13
11	Julien Absalon (Fra) Orbea	3.48
12	Roel Paulissen (Bel) Cannondale-Vredestein	3.58
13	Kashi Leuchs (NZl) Cannondale-Vredestein	4.16
14	Jakob Fuglsang (Den) Cannondale-Vredestein	4.24
15	Nino Schurter (Swi) Swisspower Mtb Team	4.34
16	Adam Craig (USA) Giant Mountain Bike Team	4.37
17	Florian Vogel (Swi) Swisspower Mtb Team	4.46
18	Ralph Naef (Swi) Multivan Merida Biking Team	5.01
19	Thomas Frischknecht (Swi) Swisspower Mtb Team	5.12
20	Emil Lindgren (Swe) Full-Dynamix-It	5.20
21	Ruben Ruzafa Cueto (Spa) Orbea	5.30
22	Marti Gispert Labarta (Spa) ECP-Tau Ceramica	5.43
23	Moritz Milatz (Ger) Multivan Merida Biking Team	6.04
24	Christoph Soukup (Aut)	6.26
25	Milan Spesny (Cze) Merida Biking Team	
26	Matthias Fluckiger (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	6.53
27	Jorg Graf (Swi) Swisspower Mtb Team	7.18
28	Yader Zoli (Ita) Giant Italia Team	
29	Andreas Kugler (Swi) Fischer-BMC	7.33
30	Hannes Metzler (Aut) Giant Mountain Bike Team	7.41
31	Jeremy Horgan-Kobelski (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	7.53
32	Kristian Hynek (Cze)	8.12
33	Martin Gujan (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	8.37
34	Ivan Alvarez Gutierrez (Spa) Giant Italia Team	8.48
35	Karl Platt (Ger) Team Bulls	8.59
36	Gion Manetsch (Swi) Athleticum-MTB-Team	9.47
37	Manuel Fumic (Ger) Fumic.Brothers.International	9.49
38	Jochen Kass (Ger) Team Alb-Gold Mountainbike	9.54
39	Bas Peters (Ned)	9.59
40	Samuel Schultz (USA) Subaru-Gary Fisher	10.10
41	Jeremiah Bishop (USA) Trek-VW	10.31
42	Dario Alejandro Gasco (Arg) Massi	10.37

43	Marco Aurelio Fontana (Ita)	10.46
44	Nicola Rohrbach (Swi) Central Ghost Pro Team	10.58
45	Bart Brentjens (Ned) Dolphin-Trek Mountainbike Racing Team	11.11
46	Andras Parti (Hun)	11.30
47	Maxime Marotte (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour	11.41
48	Martin Fanger (Swi)	11.50
49	Jiri Friedl (Cze) Merida Biking Team	12.01
50	Marc Colom (Fra)	12.23
51	Klaus Nielsen (Den) Team Alb-Gold Mountainbike	12.40
52	Chris Jongewaard (Aus) Dolphin-Trek Mountainbike Racing Team	12.50
53	Stéphane Tempier (Fra) Gewiss Bianchi	12.58
54	Paul Van Der Ploeg (Aus)	13.05
55	Pierre Geoffroy Plantet (Fra) Team Lapierre International	13.10
56	Andrea Tiberi (Ita) Giant Italia Team	13.21
57	Lado Fumic (Ger) Fumic.Brothers.International	13.53
58	Michael Broderick (USA)	14.11
59	Jonathan Galante (Fra)	14.27
60	Israel Nunez Baticon (Spa) Massi	14.58
61	Javier Eduardo Puschel (Chi)	15.15
62	Guillaume Vinit (Fra) Scott Valloire Galibier	15.39

One lap behind

63	Fabien Canal (Fra) Team Lapierre International
64	Nicolas Vermeulen (Bel) Lingier-Versluys Team
65	Oriol Morata Abril (Spa)
66	Alexis Chenevier (Fra)
67	François Bailly Maitre (Fra) Scott Valloire Galibier
68	Sid Taberlay (Aus)
69	Marco Minnaard (Ned) Beone Chainreaction Mountainbiketeam
70	Vivien Legastelois (Fra) Team Lapierre International
71	Robert Gehbauer (Aut) Multivan Merida Biking Team
72	Josef Kamler (Cze) Ceska Sportelna MTB

Two laps behind

73	Lachlan Norris (Aus)
74	Mathieu Toulouse (Can) Team Maxxis
75	Anders Hovdenes (Nor) Team Etto Hoydahl
76	Alejandro Diaz De La Pena Lopez (Spa)
77	Lee Williams (GBr)
78	Jeremy Mounier (Fra)
79	Marc Trayter Alemany (Spa) ECP-Tau Ceramica
80	Giuseppe Lamastra (Ita)
81	Carlos Coloma Nicolas (Spa) ECP-Tau Ceramica
82	Ji Jianhua (Chn)
83	Sébastien Le Naour (Fra) Breiz Mountain
84	Matous Ulman (Cze)
85	Christof Bischof (Swi)

Three laps behind

86	Tim Bohme (Ger) Team Alb-Gold Mountainbike
87	Kohei Yamamoto (Jpn)
88	Freddy Betremieux (Fra) BH-SR. Suntour
89	Paul Gaillard (Fra)
90	Ian Field (GBr)
91	Hugo Navarian (Fra) Team CIBF Keops
92	Luka Kodra (Slo)
93	Ludovic Mottet (Bel) Windose Houffalize
94	Jo Thorson Nordskar (Nor) Team Etto Hoydahl
95	Chun Hing Chan (HKg)
96	Alexandre Geniez (Fra)

Four laps behind

97	Benoît Thyreault (Fra) Team CIBF Keops
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98 Joel Martinez Fernandez (And)
99 Ricardo Hazbun Velasquez (Chi)
100 Pierre Fuseau (Fra) Team CIBF Keops

Teams

1	GT Bicycle	61 pts
2	Full-Dynamix-It	56
3	Cannondale-Vredestein	54
4	Orbea	52
5	Swisspower Mtb Team	46
6	Specialized Factory Racing	40
7	Athleticum-MTB-Team	35
8	Team Maxxis	32
9	Team Lapierre International	28
10	Cemelorca-Seguros10.Com	23
11	Multivan Merida Biking Team	21
12	Giant Mountain Bike Team	16
13	ECP-Tau Ceramica	9
14	Merida Biking Team	6
15	Giant Italia Team	3
16	Fischer-BMC	2
