

Schurter takes off with a bang in opening World Cup

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Absalon, Kulhavy round out top three



*Florian Vogel (Scott Swisspower)
(Image credit: Zoon Cronje)*

The first round of the cross country UCI Mountain Bike World Cup, held in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, served notice that riders are entering the season in top form, with the elite men averaging over 20 kilometre per hour for their 31.8-kilometre race.

In the elite men's cross country race, the top three finishers in the 2010 World Cup standings finished in exactly that order, with Nino Schurter (Scott-Swisspower) beating rival Julien Absalon (Orbea) of France by a meager 16 seconds, with Jaroslav Kulhavy (Specialized) of the Czech Republic in third at 1:07. World Champion Jose Hermida (Multivan Merida Mountain Bike Team) and Marco Aurelio Fontana (Cannondale Factory Racing) claimed the final two podium spots.

Constant rivals Schurter and Absalon rode away from the rest of the field, with Kulhavy only able to hold on for the first half of the race before the duo dropped him. Absalon had the power on the climbs, but it was in the all important technical sections where Schurter held the advantage.

In the Treehouse rock garden section, Schurter was noticeably smoother, and it was here on lap five of the six-lap race that the Swiss rider made his move.

"Again, it was a great fight between Julien and me," said Schurter. "We are so close, but I was a little faster in the technical section and was able to get a gap, which I could hold to the finish line. I could see that he was coming back a bit on the climbs on the last lap, but it was just enough to hold on. It is always special to win against Julien."

Schurter entered the last lap 20 seconds ahead of Absalon, a gap which shrunk to only a handful of seconds by the top of the climb before he was able to open it again to finish 16 seconds ahead.

"I expected Nino would do well," said Absalon. "This track suited him very well, and I was having trouble with the rocky section each time. On lap five, I didn't crash, but I hit a tree and lost some time. And after that, we were both going full gas, so there was no chance to catch him."

#	Rider Name (Country) Team	Result
1	Nino Schurter (Swi) Scott-Swisspower MTB-Racing	1:34:50
2	Julien Absalon (Fra) Orbea	0:00:16
3	Jaroslav Kulhavy (Cze) Specialized Racing	0:01:07
4	José Antonio Hermida Ramos (Spa) Multivan Merida Biking Team	0:01:15
5	Marco Aurelio Fontana (Ita) Cannondale Factory Racing	0:01:46
6	Manuel Fumic (Ger) Cannondale Factory Racing	0:01:48
7	Inaki Lejarreta Errasti (Spa) Orbea	0:01:51
8	Stéphane Tempier (Fra) TX Active Bianchi	0:01:54
9	Carlos Coloma Nicolas (Spa) Wildwolf-Trek Racing	0:02:33
10	Todd Wells (USA) Specialized Racing	0:02:36
11	Burry Stander (RSA) Specialized Racing	0:02:45
12	Maxime Marotte (Fra) BH-Suntour-Peisey Vallandry	0:02:57
13	Christoph Sauser (Swi) Specialized Racing	0:03:08
14	Martin Gujan (Swi) Cannondale Factory Racing	0:03:11
15	Mathias Flückiger (Swi) Trek World Racing	0:03:30
16	Ivan Alvarez Gutierrez (Spa) Giant Italia Team	0:03:45
17	Patrik Gallati (Swi) BMC Mountain Bike Racing Team	0:03:53
18	Sergio Mantecon Gutierrez (Spa) Wildwolf-Trek Racing	0:04:08
19	Geoff Kabush (Can) Team Maxxis-Rocky Mountain	0:04:22
20	Ralph Naef (Swi) Multivan Merida Biking Team	0:04:47
21	Thomas Litscher (Swi) Felt Oetzal X-Bionic Team	0:05:11
22	Lukas Flückiger (Swi) Trek World Racing	0:05:32
23	Moritz Milatz (Ger) BMC Mountain Bike Racing Team	0:05:36
24	Rudi Van Houts (Ned)	0:05:44
25	Jelmer Pietersma (Ned) Milka Trek MTB Racing Team	0:05:56
26	Martin Fanger (Swi) Giant Swiss SR-Suntour	0:05:59
27	Liam Killeen (GBr) Giant Factory Off-Road Team	
28	Fabian Giger (Swi) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	0:06:06
29	Pierre-Geoffroy Plantet (Fra) Team Newcycling	0:06:14
30	Florian Vogel (Swi) Scott-Swisspower MTB-Racing	0:06:34
31	Ruben Ruzafa Cueto (Spa) Orbea	0:06:53
32	Jochen Kass (Ger) Multivan Merida Biking Team	0:07:06

33	Lukas Kaufmann (Swi)	0:07:18
34	Derek Zandstra (Can)	0:07:28
35	Wolfram Kurschat (Ger) Topeak Ergon Racing Team	0:07:37
36	Karl Markt (Aut) Felt Oetztal X-Bionic Team	0:07:51
37	Jeremy Horgan-Kobelski (USA) Subaru-Trek	0:07:52
38	Jukka Vastaranta (Fin) Milka Trek MTB Racing Team	0:08:08
39	Tony Longo (Ita) TX Active Bianchi	0:08:20
40	Oliver Beckingsale (GBr)	0:08:23
41	Marek Galinski (Pol) JBG-2 Professional MTB Team	
42	Andras Parti (Hun) Euro One-Cube MTB Team	0:08:27
43	Nicola Rohrbach (Swi) Elettroveneta-Corrateg	0:08:29
44	Kevin Van Hoovels (Bel) Versluys-Evenza Team	
45	Jiri Friedl (Cze) Rubena - Birell - Specialized Cycling Team	0:08:30
46	Milan Spesny (Cze) S&H Superior MTB Team	0:08:34
47	Matous Ulman (Cze) S&H Superior MTB Team	
48	Daniel Mcconnell (Aus)	0:09:02
49	Pascal Meyer (Swi) Thoemus Racing Team	0:09:03
50	Adam Craig (USA) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	0:09:26
51	Jiri Novak (Cze) S&H Superior MTB Team	0:09:41
52	Martino Fruet (Ita)	0:09:58
53	Uwe Hochenwarter (Aut) Muskelkater Genesis Team	0:10:07
54	Samuel Schultz (USA) Subaru-Trek	0:10:13
55	Chris Jongewaard (Aus)	
56	Hannes Metzler (Aut) Muskelkater Genesis Team	0:10:22
57	Marc Colom (Fra) Team Newcycling	0:10:24
58	Emil Lindgren (Swe) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	0:10:45
59	Umberto Corti (Ita) Team CBE Tecnoimpianti A.S.D.	0:11:02
60	Niels Wubben (Ned) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	0:11:13
61	Alban Lakata (Aut) Topeak Ergon Racing Team	0:11:18
62	Rene Tann (Ger)	0:11:48
63	Simon Scheiber (Aut) Felt Oetztal X-Bionic Team	0:12:03
64	Robert Mennen (Ger) Topeak Ergon Racing Team	0:12:20
65	Sergji Rysenko (Ukr) ISD Cycling Team	0:12:22

66	Matthias Leisling (Ger) Muskelkater Genesis Team	0:12:23
67	Ben Henderson (Aus)	0:12:29
68	Andrew Watson (Can)	0:12:33
69	Giuseppe Lamastra (Ita) Elettroveneta-Corrateg	0:12:42
70	Adam Morka (Can)	0:13:10
71	Matthys Beukes (RSA)	0:13:41
72	Martin Loo (Est) Infotre - Bi&Esse- Leecougan	0:14:02
73	Torsten Marx (Ger)	0:14:14
74	Evgeniy Pechenin (Rus) Forward-Udmurtia	0:14:25
75	Ludovic Dubau (Fra) Team Newcycling	0:14:42
76	Steffen Thum (Ger)	0:14:59
77	Magnus Darvell (Swe)	0:15:21
78	Andrea Tiberi (Ita) Torpado Surfing Shop	0:15:56
79	Simon Gegenheimer (Ger)	-1 lap
80	Frank Schotman (Ned) MPL Specialized MTB Team	
81	Christopher Maletz (Ger)	
82	Irjan Luttenberg (Ned) MPL Specialized MTB Team	
83	Michael Broderick (USA) Kenda/Seven/No Tubes	
84	Severin Disch (Swi) Thoemus Racing Team	
85	Troy Wells (USA)	
86	Kohei Yamamoto (Jpn) Team Bridgestone Anchor	
87	Mattias Wengelin (Swe)	
88	Lee Williams (GBr)	
89	Bjorn Brems (Bel) Versluys-Evenza Team	
90	Renay Groustra (RSA)	
91	Oliver Munnik (RSA)	
92	Pierre Lebreton (Fra) BH-Suntour-Peisey Vallandry	
93	Michele Casagrande (Ita) Elettroveneta-Corrateg	-2 laps
94	Ben Melt Swanepoel (RSA)	
95	Alexey Medvedev (Rus) Elettroveneta-Corrateg	
96	Adrien Niyonshuti (Rwa) MTN Qhubeka	
97	Matthias Waldhart (Aut)	
98	Lachlan Norris (Aus) Giant Factory Off-Road Team	-3 laps

99	Jelmer Jubbega (Ned) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	
100	Christoph Soukup (Aut)	
101	Lee John (Zim)	
102	Martinus Esmeyer (RSA)	
103	Christopher Wolhuter (RSA)	-4 laps
104	Sepp Freiburghaus (Swi) Thoemus Racing Team	
DNF	Alexis Vuillermoz (Fra) Lapierre International	
DNF	Henk Jaap Moorlag (Ned) Rabobank-Giant Offroad Team	
DNF	Philip Buys (RSA)	
DNF	Jan Skarnitzl (Cze) Rubena - Birell - Specialized Cycling Team	
DNF	Cédric Ravanel (Fra) Gt Skoda Chamonix	
DNF	Adrian Brzozka (Pol) JBG-2 Professional MTB Team	
DNF	Brandon Stewart (RSA)	
DNF	Marc Bassingthwaighe (Nam)	
DNF	Francois Theron (RSA)	
DNS	Max Knox (RSA)	