

MTB World Championships – CM

Livigno, Italy, August 31-September 4, 2005

By Rob Jones in Livigno www.cyclingnews.com
September 3: 4x

Americans dominate

Americans dominated the 4-Cross, taking both men's and women's world titles, as well as a bronze medal in the women's race. Brian Lopes regained the rainbow jersey after an absence of 2 years, while Jill Kintner took her first world title.

The long course was well groomed and, unlike other 4-cross races at world championships and World Cups, there were few complaints or crashes. Both Lopes and Kintner were the classes of their respective fields, riding from the front, and winning heats by bike lengths.

The 12 rider women's field was missing one strong contender - Anneke Beerten (Netherlands), who crashed during training earlier in the day and did not start. The women's final four were Kintner, Katrina Miller (Australia), Tara Llanes and Melissa Buhl (both USA). Kintner was already in front after the first double, while Miller had to fight off a strong challenge from Llanes and Buhl through the first two corners. Buhl was squeezed off course in the second corner, and Miller gradually pulled away from Llanes to take the silver medal.

"Everything has gone awesome for me this year - I think I have won all but three races so far this year" said Kintner. "I think the key here was to qualify well and get the inside gate. After that, it was 'stay calm, do a good gate, and don't make mistakes in the first turn'."

The men's competition was marred by a serious crash for 2003 world champion Michal Prokop (Czech Republic). Prokop went down by himself in the second corner after over jumping a berm. His right leg looked to be badly broken, and he was carried off in a stretcher.

Lopes was joined in the final by Mickael Deldycke (France), Greg Minnaar (South Africa) and Jared Graves (Australia). Lopes got off to his patented fast start, while Graves and Deldycke fought for second. Graves consistently managed to get the holeshot ahead of Deldycke in the corners, and held on to take the silver medal.

Lopes was definitely thinking about the last two years when he prepared for the race here. "It's been two rough years of injury ... but I guess this means I'm back. After winning two (world titles) and then not going into the Worlds fully prepped because I haven't raced a full season means that this feels really, really good. I turn 34 in a couple of days ... looking back, I didn't think I would still be racing at 34!

My starts were really good, but they were better in practice. Everyone always talks about how good my starts are, but I think I'm better on the third, fourth, fifth pedal stroke. The problem is with the courses now, you don't get more than a couple of pedal strokes, so lane choice is really important, and so I tried to qualify high (first)."

Race Notes

- Kintner attributes her newfound success to "I trained my ass off. Learned how to turn, lost weight, fixed my head ... learned how to be a professional. I moved to Australia (to be with boyfriend), and raced their summer series, I was racing against the guys." Kintner will likely also win the World Cup, since her main rival (Anneke Beerten) was injured today.

- Lopes has also won the World Cup overall, since the only person able to catch him is Prokop.

Final Update

- Prokop's leg is broken in 2 places (lower part of leg) and has been sent to a hospital in Switzerland where he will undergo surgery tonight.

Results

Women

Final

- 1 Jill Kintner (United States Of America)
- 2 Katrina Miller (Australia)
- 3 Tara Llanes (United States Of America)
- 4 Melissa Buhl (United States Of America)

Small Final

- 5 Joey Gough (Great Britain)
- 6 Leanna Gerrard (United States Of America)
- 7 Anita Molcik (Austria)
- 8 Vanessa Quin (New Zealand)

1/4 Finals

- 9 Jana Horakova (Czech Republic)
- 10 Lucia Oetjen (Switzerland)
- 11 Zsafia Koczka (Hungary)
- 12 Dalma Kiss (Hungary)
- 13 Anneke Beerten (Netherlands)