

UCI World Mountain Bike Championships

Championnats du Monde du l'UCI- MTB

Report/Rapport: Men/Hommes Cross country - 19.9.1999 - 13.30-16.30

Denmark's Rasmussen Wins Men's Cross-Country Gold

For the fourth time in mountain bike world championship history, Denmark won the Elite men's gold medal in cross-country racing Sunday, as **Michael Rasmussen (DEN)** surprised everyone but himself with a dominant race for victory. After struggling with his form for nearly two seasons, the thin blonde Dane took control early in a demanding four-lap race - and never relinquished his command until arriving at the deafeningly loud finish line two hours and fourteen minutes later, in ecstasy.



Michael Rasmussen

"It was beautiful," said a tearful Rasmussen upon his arrival at the finish, after he managed to hold off '98 U-23 World Champion **Miguel Martinez (FRA)** - racing in his first senior World's - gapping the diminutive Frenchman by nearly two minutes after 39 kilometres.

"I was way stronger on the climbs than Miguel, but he caught me on the descents," he continued. *"I knew if I had at least half a minute on the top of the first climb [in the final lap], then he would not be able to catch me before the finish."*

The men covered this double-loop course in Lre at full speed despite the muddy conditions from early-morning rains, 103 international riders going hard from the gun in a single-file line that quickly broke up into small groups by the top of the Village Loop's extended climb.

Leading that first charge was the race favourite - defending World Champion and winner of the World Cup final round in Belgium two weeks ago, **Christophe Dupouey**. While the man who crushed his competitors in Houffalize held a sizeable gap up front for the first full lap, he was quickly reeled in by two other outstanding athletes - **Bas Van Dooren (NED)** and Rasmussen.

Rasmussen had been the only rider to come close to Dupouey in the Belgium final, and rather than play catch up as he was forced to in that race, rode with power from the start today. *"I missed Dupouey in Belgium, as I didn't know if I had the power to ride with him,"* Rasmussen said. *"But this time I was right on him from the start. It was the ride of my life, and I felt great all day."*

After assuming the lead in the second lap, Rasmussen led three other contenders up the long climbs and down the technical, muddy descents. Martinez rode in second, Van Dooren in third, with Dupouey steady in fourth... until a mechanical problem with his rear derailleur cable made him the race's first casualty, forcing him to retire.

While there was movement in the lower positions for the podium - most notably steady performances from *Belgians* **Filip Meirhaeghe** and **Roel Paulissen** behind Van Dooren, it was soon clear that Rasmussen and Martinez were the ones to watch for victory.



But Martinez simply couldn't stay with the flying Dane, and soon lost any hope of catching him. *"He was faster than me on the climbs, I was faster on the descents,"* said Martinez after receiving the silver medal for his steady performance. *"I tried hard to catch him mid-race, but fell on the descent."*

In the final lap, Van Dooren fell back two positions, setting up Meirhaeghe for his second consecutive bronze medal. *"I was chasing all day in 10th place, but I never gave up. On the final climb I attacked for the medal, and am very happy with third place this year,"* said Meirhaeghe.

Rasmussen's gold medal today adds to the bronze medal he won as a Junior in Bromont's 1992 championships. And, combined with Henrik Djernis' three consecutive gold medals from '92-'94, gives Denmark five total medals in men's XC racing - the winningest country in the senior division. And as for the great Djernis, he placed 17th and put the race into perspective: *"This is one of the hardest races I have ever done, the course is so hard, there's no recovery at all."*

Thanks to Ari Cheren for this report



Rasmussen

Flash Quotes:

1st **Michael Rasmussen (DEN)**

Asked if this was the most painful race he has had: *"No, it was beautiful."*

"I was way stronger on the climbs than Miguel (Martinez) he caught me on the descents. I knew if I had at least half a minute on the top of the first climb, then he would not be able to catch me before the bottom... I decided to let Dupouey go (on the first lap) I couldn't follow him, but I knew it would be ok because he was going flat out and you have to have something left in reserve for the single track. If you're tired going into it you can mess up too easily... by the time we got to the bottom, we were right on him (Dupouey)."

Asked about this being his first major race win :

"I can't stay on form like others can for six months, so I have two peaks each year. My first was in April-May, this is my second peak. Today is a culmination of that. ."

2nd **Miguel Martinez (FRA)**

"He was faster than me on the climbs, I was faster on the descent.... I tried to catch him in the middle of the race, and I got ahead by 25 seconds, but I fell in the descent... "

Asked about his satisfaction with his result:

"It is a disappointment to me, but I want to be the Olympic champion next year."

3rd **Filip Meirhaeghe (BEL)**

"Last year I was disappointed with third place, but this year I am happy. There was no more I could have done. I couldn't follow the front guys, and I never even saw them... I was chasing the whole race I was in 10th place and thought maybe this is all I can do, but I never gave up, I kept on chasing and passed riders one by one. On the long climb I could see all the way up to third position, the gap was not so big, it was only about 40 seconds... At the start of Lap Four I was 12 seconds behind a podium place, and this was very good for my motivation."

About his last lap battle with Van Dooren and Paulissen

"I tried not to stay on their wheel, I had a good rhythm and did not want to break it, and also I did not want to get involved in a sprint finish. On the first climb, Bas Van Dooren attacked, and got away from Roel Paulissen. I went past Van Dooren and caught Paulissen on the descent. We were together on the climb and 100m from the top (of the final climb) I knew it was my time to attack, the downhill is my place. By the top of the climb I had 15 seconds lead over 4th place... Roel Paulissen must be really disappointed, he rode most of the race in 3rd or 4th place, and he must have thought the medal would be his, but this is bike racing... This was my medal!"

"I was sick after the European championships, and I stopped taking antibiotics only three days before Houffalize (the World Cup final). I knew my power would be down there and I never lowered my morale, I just trained really hard and arrived here with good form."



<i>bib</i>	<i>place</i>	<i>name/nom</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t+</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>
14	1	RASMUSSEN, Michael	DEN	2:14:08	0	DEN19740601
2	2	MARTINEZ, Miguel	FRA	2:16:00	1:52	FRA19760117
7	3	MEIRHAEGE, Filip	BEL	2:17:44	3:36	BEL19710305
9	4	PAULISSEN, Roel	BEL	2:18:10	4:02	BEL19760427
3	5	VAN DOOREN, Bas	NED	2:18:40	4:32	NED19730825
25	6	ACQUAROLI, Dario	ITA	2:21:03	6:55	ITA19750310
13	7	HOCHSTRASSER, Thomas	SUI	2:21:43	7:35	SUI19760713
8	8	CHIOTTI, Jerome	FRA	2:22:53	8:45	FRA19720118
12	9	AGERGAARD, Jesper	DEN	2:23:17	9:09	DEN19750218
4	10	SAUSER, Christophe	SUI	2:23:48	9:40	SUI19760413
6	11	BRENTJENS, Bart	NED	2:24:27	10:19	NED19681010
31	12	VAN DEN ABEELE, Peter	BEL	2:26:20	12:12	BEL19660501
114	13	PONTONI, Daniele	ITA	2:26:33	12:25	ITA19660908
17	14	TCHERKASSOV, Pavel	RUS	2:27:04	12:56	RUS19720513
23	15	FUMIC, Lado	GER	2:27:13	13:05	GER19760520
26	16	DUBAU, Ludovic	FRA	2:27:33	13:25	FRA19731117
56	17	DJERNIS, Henrik	DEN	2:27:46	13:38	DEN19660422
10	18	VOLLET, Gregory	FRA	2:27:49	13:41	FRA19750321
30	19	BINKERT, Markus	SUI	2:28:22	14:14	SUI19740807
60	20	LARSEN, Tom	NOR	2:29:52	15:44	NOR19720422
79	21	STRANCAR, Primož	SLO	2:30:09	16:01	SLO19720916
5	22	FRISCHKNECHT, Thomas	SUI	2:30:15	16:07	SUI19700217
22	23	TOLHOEK, Patrick	NED	2:30:40	16:32	NED19650626
24	24	CIONI, Dario	ITA	2:30:55	16:47	ITA19741202
41	25	CRAIG, Nick	GBR	2:31:03	16:55	GBR19690403
68	26	BRESSER, Carsten	GER	2:31:32	17:24	GER19700904
32	27	MC GRATH, Seamus	CAN	2:31:52	17:44	CAN19760503
39	28	GALINSKI, Marek	POL	2:32:30	18:22	POL19740801
11	29	PALLHUBER, Hubert	ITA	2:32:54	18:46	ITA19650917
27	30	LEZAUN, Roberto	ESP	2:33:08	19:00	ESP19670723
62	31	BECKINGSALE, Oliver	GBR	2:33:24	19:16	GBR19760607
64	32	WEICHERT, Marc	GER	2:33:34	19:26	GER19720309
43	33	GORDON, Craig	AUS	2:33:39	19:31	AUS19710207

53	34	KORINEK,Radim	CZE	2:33:48	19:40	CZE19731201
74	35	ZOLI,Yader	ITA	2:33:49	19:41	ITA19751001
46	36	BETTIN,Mauro	ITA	2:33:58	19:50	ITA19681221
16	37	ARNOULD,Dominique	FRA	2:34:03	19:55	FRA19661119
47	38	DE KNEGT,Gerben	NED	2:34:16	20:08	NED19751211
48	39	LARSEN,Steve	USA	2:34:23	20:15	USA19700313
18	40	HOYDHAL,Rune	NOR	2:34:38	20:30	NOR19691210
34	41	WOODS,Rob	AUS	2:35:19	21:11	AUS19680305
28	42	JUAREZ,Tinker	USA	2:35:22	21:14	USA19610304
40	43	BRENES,Andres	CRC	2:36:14	22:06	CRC19641218
127	44	ELSNIC,Pavel	CZE	2:36:32	22:24	CZE19690222
21	45	SHEPPARD,Chris	CAN	2:36:45	22:37	CAN19730419
81	46	FLEMING,Josh	AUS	2:36:59	22:51	AUS19751114
71	47	GARRO,Juan Carlos	ESP	2:37:35	23:27	ESP19681117
49	48	HELLER,Marcel	SUI	2:37:56	23:48	SUI19740621
59	49	SEYMOUR,Robin	IRL	2:38:18	24:10	IRL19710406
33	50	CLARKE,Barrie	GBR	2:38:25	24:17	GBR19661211
84	51	BARENYI,Milan	SVK	2:38:47	24:39	SVK19740114
78	52	STICHA,Pavel	CZE	2:39:09	25:01	CZE19680606
75	53	GARCIA HERNANDEZ,Luis	ESP	2:39:15	25:07	ESP19700929
67	54	TOURVILLE,Eric	CAN	2:40:14	26:06	CAN19740128
95	55	OLABERRIA,Azaldegui And.	ESP	2:40:30	26:22	ESP19690124
110	56	RUHE,Marc	LIE	2:40:37	26:29	LIE19730210
101	57	MALMSTEN,Johan	SWE	2:41:04	26:56	SWE19760212
36	58	ROWNEY,Paul	AUS	2:41:34	27:26	AUS19701202
76	59	ZORN,Siegfried	AUT	2:42:27	28:19	AUT19670920
80	60	PERSSON,Roger	SWE	2:43:18	29:10	SWE19740601
85	61	PETERS,Bas	NED	2:43:21	29:13	NED19760514
54	62	LASENBY,Paul	GBR	2:43:39	29:31	GBR19731104
35	63	HESTLER,Andreas	CAN	2:43:43	29:35	CAN19700512
66	64	WIENS,David	USA	2:44:02	29:54	USA19640907
88	65	RAVELLI,Marcio	BRA	2:45:01	30:53	BRA19720207
44	66	SWENSON,Carl	USA	2:45:16	31:08	USA19700420
70	67	KILLEN,Jimi	USA	2:45:24	31:16	USA19730328
96	68	KONDIS,Lubos	SVK	2:45:48	31:40	SVK19760629
77	69	HILBE,Christian	AUT	2:47:40	33:32	AUT19760317
92	70	DE VRIES,Micha	NED	2:48:13	34:05	NED19710705
69	71	MOTE,Laurence	NZL	2:49:02	34:54	NZL19740807
138	72	ZHU,Yongbiao	CHN	2:52:23	38:15	CHN19760312
91	73	FRIEDE,Jaromir	CZE	2:53:16	39:08	CZE19750325
45	74	WALLACE,Matt	AUS	0	0	AUS19720707
104	75	PEREIRA,Odair	BRA	0	0	BRA19740628
123	76	BOGAR,Gabor	HUN	0	0	HUN19740504
133	77	SAKAEDA,Tomio	JPN	0	0	JPN19760521

89	78	SLAVICEK,Jan	CZE	0	0	CZE19690814
107	79	MCNAMARA,Philip	IRL	0	0	IRL19740517
135	80	CORVALAN,Francisco	CHI	0	0	CHI19711007
58	81	WEDGE,Peter	CAN	0	0	CAN19720918
100	82	CHUNG,Andrew	NZL	0	0	NZL19751007
137	83	BLATCH,Rob	RSA	0	0	RSA19741203
132	84	ANDO,Yasuhiro	JPN	0	0	JPN19691213
113	85	DIRKS,Gerard	RSA	0	0	RSA19730727
1	86	DUPOUEY,Christophe	FRA	0	0	FRA19680808
15	86	KURCHAT,Wolfram	GER	0	0	GER19750517
19	86	GREEN,Roland	CAN	0	0	CAN19740729
29	86	BRAMATI,Luca	ITA	0	0	ITA19681106
37	86	BROWN,Travis	USA	0	0	USA19690807
50	86	STOCKLI,Lukas	SUI	0	0	SUI19721112
55	86	TAVELL,Philip	SWE	0	0	SWE19750603
57	86	KRISTENSEN,Lennie	DEN	0	0	DEN19680516
63	86	WEEVERS,Jan	NED	0	0	NED19650520
83	86	GRIFFITH-JONES,Gwilym	NZL	0	0	NZL19720419
93	86	MCCAULEY,Richard	IRL	0	0	IRL19710818
94	86	MITCHELL,Julian	NZL	0	0	NZL19710828
106	86	POMFRET,Stephen	GBR	0	0	GBR19710411
117	86	STOVERN,Martin	NOR	0	0	NOR19760724
120	86	PALMBERG,Magnus	SWE	0	0	SWE19710426
125	86	MAASIKMETS,Alges	EST	0	0	EST19680818
134	86	CORVALAN,Fernando	CHI	0	0	CHI19670409
20	103	WABEL,Beat	SUI	0	18:34	SUI19670523