

UCI World Mountain Bike Championships

Championnats du Monde du l'UCI- MTB

Report/Rapport: Women/Femmes - Juniors Cross country - 17.9.1999 - 09.30-11.00

Anna Szafraniec won the first gold medal of the 1999 World Mountain Bike Championships for *Poland* in the two-lap junior women's cross-country race on Friday morning.

On a 10km course made treacherous by wet and windy conditions, Szafraniec crossed the line in one hour, 24mins 42 seconds, 27 seconds ahead of **Lea Flückiger** of *Switzerland* in silver. **Sonja Traxel**, also of *Switzerland*, took the bronze at 1 minute 35 seconds.

The result upset the expected order of French domination, as defending world champion and reigning European champion **Cécile Rode** (*FRA*) was pushed back to fourth place at 1 min 56secs. In 1998, the nation made a clean sweep of the medals and looked invincible.

Low temperatures from the start threatened the young women's performances. Szafraniec, from the Krakow area of southern Poland, admitted she nearly collapsed on the start line as the wind chill factor hit hard. «*I'm skinny and I got very cold,* » she said, «*I had to pedal hard to warm up.* »

«*The conditions were terrible,* » said Traxel, «*but I didn't notice I was racing so hard.* »

The race was competitive from the gun, with only 35 seconds separating the first four at the halfway point. Szafraniec lead out up the first climb, with Traxel and **Lucrezia Lamastra** of *Italy* on her heels. A duel developed as Séverinne Hansen, the 1998 World runner-up, caught and overtook Szafraniec and began to break away. But on the descent to the town centre at the end of the first lap, Hansen crashed, and her bike rolled down into the river. On retrieving it, she slipped again, injured her knee and could not continue. Szafraniec was on the front again, hotly pursued by Flückiger, then Rode, who was still in a medal position, then Traxel.

By this stage the steepest climbs and the descents beside the tumbling mountain stream and down the hairpins were either unsafe or impossible to ride, forcing even the leaders to push and scramble. Further down the 30-strong field, competitors complained of cramp, hair plastered to their mud-spattered faces.

Szafraniec could never relax with the Swiss and French breathing down her neck, but she held a narrow lead with confidence born of five years's MTB racing. The Polish junior champion took the bronze medal at the 1997 Worlds, was eighth in 1998, and worked the 1999 season to peak for this event. Two weeks earlier she finished runner-up at the final World Cup round in Houffalize, and a week ago she won a round of the German series.

Switzerland landed three girls in the first six, Poland two in the first seven. France lost out with Hansen's withdrawal, while **Marion Thevenet** (*ITA*) boosted the national status with an eighth-place position.

Thanks to Nicky Crowther for this report

Anna Szafraniec, gold

"I took the lead at the beginning of the second lap, but the competition was very strong, and it was hard."

Lea Flückiger, silver

"I was surprised when it was Anna who went, not one of the French girls, but I was concerned with myself. I had some difficulties on the last lap, I crashed and had to walk the bike a bit."

Sonja Traxel, bronze



Anna Szafraniec

"I had a battle with the Frenchgirl (Cécile Rode) for third place, but got faster and moved away."



<i>bib</i>	<i>place</i>	<i>name/nom</i>	<i>nat</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>t+</i>	<i>UCIcode</i>
7	1	SZAFRANIEC,Anna	POL	1:24:42	0	POL19810216
6	2	FLUCKIGER,Lea	SUI	1:25:09	27	SUI19811130
19	3	TRAXEL,Sonja	SUI	1:26:17	1:35	SUI19820329
1	4	RODE,Cécile	FRA	1:26:38	1:56	FRA19810106
9	5	LAMASTRA,Lucrezia	ITA	1:28:09	3:27	ITA19810712
14	6	RUPF,Katja	SUI	1:29:02	4:20	SUI19810605
15	7	SADLECKA,Magdialena	POL	1:29:04	4:22	POL19820317
11	8	THEVENET,Marion	FRA	1:29:49	5:07	FRA19810110
5	9	MENDE,Anna-Maria	GER	1:31:14	6:32	GER19810716
3	10	HALL-PATCH,Clare	CAN	1:33:46	9:04	CAN19820724
18	11	DOSTER,Mareike	GER	1:36:19	11:37	GER19820106
17	12	SANDERS,Julie	CAN	1:37:36	12:54	CAN19821021
30	13	FRIDH,Jenny	SWE	1:37:54	13:12	SWE19810212
26	14	MOEN,Johanne	NOR	1:38:22	13:40	NOR19820901
23	15	ANDREASSON,Veronica	SWE	1:38:29	13:47	SWE19810306
27	16	HIBBERD,Katherine	GBR	1:38:31	13:49	GBR19820409
4	17	WARFEL,Alison	USA	1:42:07	17:25	USA19810520
20	18	LUNDSTEAD,Melissa	CAN	1:42:23	17:41	CAN19810612
31	19	ZHANG,Xinhua	CHN	1:43:28	18:46	CHN19810204
12	20	GERMAIN,Emilie	CAN	1:44:39	19:57	CAN19810510
21	21	WILLOCK,Erine	CAN	1:45:30	20:48	CAN19811016
24	22	ANTONOVA,Anna	RUS	1:45:36	20:54	RUS19811205
25	23	LAUNSPACH,Merel	NED	1:45:41	20:59	NED19810625
13	24	FRANK,Evelyn	GER	1:48:56	24:14	GER19820504
10	25	VAN JAARSVELD,Chantal	RSA	1:56:59	32:17	RSA19821022
22	26	DREW,Erica	CAN	2:06:23	41:41	CAN19821210
2	27	HANSEN,Séverinne	FRA		0	FRA19810205
8	27	LUCKINGER,Daniela	AUT		0	AUT19820810
29	27	KALNAES,Maria	NOR		0	NOR19811003