

MTB World Championships – CM

Rotorua, New Zealand, August 22-27, 2006

By Rob Jones in Livigno www.cyclingnews.com

August 27: Elite women cross-country

Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa makes it three from three

Norway's Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa left no doubt that she is still the strongest woman in mountain biking when she won her third straight cross-country title at the Mountain Bike World Championships in Rotorua, New Zealand on Sunday. Dahle Flesjaa rode away from the rest of the women's field on the first lap of the five lap race to win ahead of Irina Kalentieva (Russia) by nearly three minutes. Marie-Helene Premont (Canada) took the bronze medal.

Spain's Marga Fullana, the 2000 world champion, attacked on the first climb, and only Dahle Flesjaa could match her. The two crested the climb with a 15 second gap on Kalentieva and Premont, followed by Alison Sydor (Canada) at 30 seconds. Dahle Flesjaa then dropped Fullana in the descent, while Kalentieva and Premont got caught behind the notoriously cautious Spaniard, losing time on Dahle Flesjaa.

"I did everything perfect for this race, I could tell all week that my legs were good. In the descent I had pretty good control today, so I think that is where I was able to make most of my time."



Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (Norway)
Photo ©: Rob Jones

It probably didn't make any difference in the long run, as Dahle Flesjaa recorded the fastest lap splits on every lap. Kalentieva and Premont rode together until the third lap, when the Russian gapped the Canadian on the descent by some 30 seconds, which Premont could not make up on the climb. Medal hopeful Sabine Spitz (Germany) was knocked out on the first lap with a broken rear derailleur.

"It was a special day for me" commented Kalentieva. "From the beginning I felt good, and every lap I was feeling better and better. In the second and third laps I was fighting with Premont, but I could tell that I was better in the downhill. Conditions were perfect; this was my course, my weather."

The medal positions were decided, however, there was a bit of a battle developing behind, as Sydor and Fullana both faded. Maja Wloszczowska (Poland) moved past Sydor on the third lap and past Fullana on the fourth to take over fourth spot. Fullana managed to hang on to fifth, while Sydor dropped to ninth by the finish, caught by Mary McConneloug (USA), Anna Szafraniec (Poland) and Petra Henzi (Switzerland).



Mary McConneloug (USA)
Photo ©: Rob Jones

Race Notes

- Dahle Flesjaa becomes the second woman to record three consecutive world titles in the cross-country, ten years after Alison Sydor did it (1994-96).

- This is the first time on the podium at the world championships for Marie-Helene Premont, who finished fourth in the last two years after mechanical problems. "It is good to finally get on the podium for the world championships."

- Dahle Flesjaa did a training race with husband Kenneth last Sunday. "She kicked my ass," he admitted, "So I knew that I had done my job."



Marie-Helene Premont
Photo ©: Rob Jones

Results, 29.70 kms

Elite Women

1	Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (Norway)	1.55.20 (15.45 km/h)
2	Irina Kalentieva (Russian Federation)	2.45
3	Marie-Helene Premont (Canada)	4.22
4	Maja Wloszczowska (Poland)	6.30
5	Margarita Fullana Riera (Spain)	7.40
6	Mary Mc Conneloug (United States of America)	10.07
7	Anna Szafraniec (Poland)	10.21
8	Petra Henzi (Switzerland)	10.35
9	Alison Sydor (Canada)	10.52
10	Rosara Joseph (New Zealand)	11.10
11	Jingjing Wang (Peoples Republic of China)	11.42
12	Lene Byberg (Norway)	13.25
13	Ivonne Kraft (Germany)	14.11
14	Kiara Bisaro (Canada)	14.32
15	Blaza Klemencic (Slovenia)	14.55
16	Katerina Nash (Czech Republic)	15.04
17	Willow Koerber (United States of America)	15.20
18	Dara Marks (United States of America)	
19	Daniela Louis (Switzerland)	15.23
20	Georgia Gould (United States of America)	16.01
21	Magdalena Sadlecka (Poland)	16.39
22	Maroussia Rusca (Switzerland)	17.12
23	Heather Irmiger (United States of America)	17.29
24	Cecile Rode (France)	18.17
25	Annika Smail (New Zealand)	18.28
26	Laura Turpijn (Netherlands)	19.09
27	Jennifer Smith (New Zealand)	21.14
28	Robyn Wong (New Zealand)	21.24
29	Arielle Van Meurs (Netherlands)	21.33
30	Sabrina Enaux (France)	22.07
31	Wendy Simms (Canada)	22.22
32	Catherine Pendrel (Canada)	22.40
33	Shonny Vanlandingham (United States of America)	23.15
34	Rie Katayama (Japan)	26.06

One lap behind

35	Pavla Havlikova (Czech Republic)
36	Yolanda Speedy (Republic of South Africa)
37	Severine Hansen (France)
38	Elina Sophokleous (Cypress)
39	Sonia Foote (New Zealand)

Two laps behind

40	Jaqueline Mourao (Brazil)
41	Tania Raats (Republic of South Africa)
42	Brenda Clapp (New Zealand)
43	Roberta Kelly Stopa (Brazil)
44	Erika Gramiselli (Brazil)
45	Genevieve Whitson (New Zealand)
46	Maria Ostergren (Sweden)
47	Erin Greene (New Zealand)
DNF	Sabine Spitz (Germany)
DNF	Susan Haywood (United States of America)
DNF	Amy-Jane Mundy (Republic of South Africa)