

MTB World Championships – CM

Rotorua, New Zealand, August 22-27, 2006

By Rob Jones in Livigno www.cyclingnews.com
August 24: Junior men cross-country

All Switzerland, all the time in junior men's cross-country

Today was Switzerland Day at the Mountain Bike World Championships in Rotorua, New Zealand, with the alpine nation sweeping all three podium spots in the Junior Men's cross-country. Mathias Fluckiger led home countrymen Martin Fanger and Pascal Meyer with an incredible ride of sub-20 minute laps for all four laps of the race.

Once again, rain held off, and early morning sun melted the overnight frost and dried out the circuit, making for a course that was entirely rideable. Fluckiger led Fanger and Meyer in a charge up the first climb, and by the end of the lap the trio had 20 seconds on a chasing group of five, Alexis Vuillermoz (France) and Cristian Cominelli (Italy). Fluckiger then upped the pace on the second lap and rode away to victory.

"I knew that my team mates were behind me" explained Fluckiger. "We kept together at the start; it wasn't our pure, planned strategy, but we tried to get away from the other nations at the beginning, until I attacked on the second lap."

Initially, Fanger held Fluckiger to a handful of seconds, but by the end of the second lap the gap to Fanger was nearly 20 seconds, with Meyer at 25 seconds. Cominelli sat alone in fourth at a minute, with Vuillermoz and a string of riders chasing a few seconds further back. Among those chasing was a new face - Daniel Braunstiens of Australia, who eventually took sixth at his first world championships.

The final lap saw no changes in the medal positions, as Fluckiger pulled away to win by 51 seconds over Fanger and 1:22 ahead of Meyer. Vuillermoz overtook Cominelli for fourth, but was a distant three minutes back of the winner.

All three medalists credited the strong Swiss program for their nation's dominance. "The Swiss Power Cup series is very good preparation. I only did one World Cup and raced the rest of the time in the Swiss Power Cup" commented Fluckiger.

All three also pointed to the the example of Swiss elite riders for their motivation. "I saw Thomas (Frischknecht) before the race, and he told me to have a good day, and to go for it." revealed Fluckiger.

Meyer pointed out that his first mountain bike race was the Thomas Frischknecht Challenge, and Fanger said "Frischknecht, Sauser and Naf ... we have three good examples to follow."

Race Notes

Mathias Fluckiger is the Swiss, European and now World Champion. He is also the younger brother of last year's silver medalist in the Espoir category, Lukas Fluckiger. Lucas will race in Rotorua, although his season has been marred by achilles problems. Staying with Mathias, he is in his first full year of maountain biking, after a career of cyclo-cross thus far. In January he was eighth at the 'Cross Worlds. Asked whether he now considers himself a mountain biker, he said "I'm both; mountain bike, cyclo-cross, it is all good."

Switzerland has two of four world titles awarded thus far at the Worlds, with bronze medals in the other categories. The Juniors' were asked what's in the water in Switzerland, with Fanger replying "a lot less sulphur!"

Ralf Naf, a favourite to medal in the elite category on Sunday, and the new Marathon World Champion, commented from the side of the course. "Maybe I should start to get worried with these young riders coming up, or maybe I should just retire after 2008!"



Mathias Fluckiger (Switzerland)
Photo ©: Rob Jones



Braunstiens puts the boot in
Photo ©: Mikkeli Godfree

Results

1	Mathias Fluckiger (Switzerland)	1.19.37
2	Martin Fanger (Switzerland)	0.52
3	Pascal Meyer (Switzerland)	1.23
4	Alexis Vuillermoz (France)	3.01
5	Cristian Cominelli (Italy)	3.16
6	Daniel Braunsteins (Australia)	3.27
7	Severin Disch (Switzerland)	3.55
8	Freddy Betremieux (France)	4.07
9	Henrique Avancini (Brazil)	4.30
10	Piotr Brzozka (Poland)	4.32
11	Fabien Canal (France)	4.40
12	Tom Meeusen (Belgium)	5.02
13	Simon Scheiber (Austria)	5.10
14	Sebastian Lehr (Germany)	5.20
15	Rob Van Genechten (Belgium)	5.34
16	Niels Wubben (Netherlands)	5.42
17	Patrik Gallati (Switzerland)	5.57
18	David Fletcher (Great Britain)	6.01
19	Luka Mezgec (Slovenia)	6.19
20	Sergey Nikolaev (Russia)	6.57
21	Andy Eyring (Germany)	7.05
22	Castiblanco Cubide J. (Colombia)	7.09
23	Alex Harvey (Canada)	7.10
24	Adrian Dzialakiewicz (Poland)	7.30
25	Dries Govaerts (Belgium)	8.03
26	David Lozano Riba (Spain)	
27	Chris Barton (USA)	8.17
28	Carlos Rodrigo Sigre (Argentina)	8.19
29	Tristen Uhl (USA)	8.43
30	Sebastien Carabin (Belgium)	9.10
31	Francis Morin (Canada)	9.22
32	Carl Jones (New Zealand)	9.34
33	Martin Loo (Estonia)	9.40
34	Paul Vanderploeg (Australia)	9.56
35	Yu Takenouchi (Japan)	10.35
36	Francois Theron (South Africa)	11.14
37	Jamie Paisley (Australia)	11.30
38	Travis Livermon (USA)	11.43
39	Jelmer Jubbega (Netherlands)	11.55
40	Cal Britten (Australia)	12.04
41	Cody Canning (Canada)	13.00
42	Eliseo Narvaez (Argentina)	13.08
43	Vanegas Villarraga H. (Colombia)	13.32
44	Duncan Oregon (New Zealand)	13.49
45	Glenn Stewart (Australia)	14.38
46	Ryk Coetzee (South Africa)	14.57
47	Michael Cummings (USA)	15.16
48	Thomas Reynolds (New Zealand)	15.28
49	Jonathon Coates (New Zealand)	16.04
50	Daniel Hallam (Australia)	16.05
51	Kelvin Drower (New Zealand)	16.20
52	Joelson Schadeck (Brazil)	17.00
53	James Williamson (New Zealand)	19.24
54	Jan Hendrik Verdoes (Namibia)	22.41

One lap behind

55 Nik Ferigo (New Zealand)

Two laps behind

56 Daniel Johnston (Australia)

DNF Paolo Treachi (Italy)

DNS Mattias Wengelin (Sweden)