

MTB World Championships – CM

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By Rob Jones in Livigno www.cyclingnews.com

Junior women cross-country - Tanja Zakelj makes history for Slovenia

Only 24 women took the start for the Junior women's three lap race, but the competition was fierce for the title, with Slovenia's Tanja Zakelj improving on last year's bronze medal to win the first mountain bike world title for her country.

Julie Krasniak (France) went to the front on the climb, and after the first lap held a slim lead over Zakelj, followed by Nadja Roschi (Switzerland), Katarzyna Solus and Marta Sulek (Poland) and Kathrin Stirnemann (Switzerland). The first six riders were within a minute of each other.

Zakelj took over the lead on the second lap, with superior descending skills, and held a 10 second lead at the bottom of the final climb. She extended her lead to 23 seconds by the bottom of the descent, and held it to the finish line. A visibly disappointed Krasniak took the silver, with Roschi giving the Swiss a bronze to go with the world title won yesterday in the Team Relay.



Tanja Zakelj (Slovenia)
Photo ©: Rob Jones

"I didn't start so good" explained Zakelj, "but I was calm and spinning up the climb, so I started to catch up. I think I was better on the downhill, and I didn't have any bad luck or falls. Earlier (in training) I wasn't too sure if I could ride the downhill, because usually I like the uphill, but today it was the downhill that was best."

Krasniak admitted to being upset, "I'm very disappointed, it was my hope to win. I prepared to win, and didn't have any doubts that I could do it. I gave it my all in the last downhill but came up short."

Race Notes

Now that Zakelj has won a world title, she was asked what her next ambition is. "Last year I won Slovenia's first medal, so my goal was to be a world champion. Now I am, so I don't know what my goals are!"

The ground was muddy and slippery in shaded sections, after below freezing weather over night left frost on the ground, but sun and a steady breeze dried the circuit quickly, and by the last lap riders were riding uphill sections that they had to run on the first lap.

Results, 17.9km

1 Tanja Zakelj (Slovenia)	1.18.23 (13.70 km/h)
2 Julie Krasniak (France)	0.23
3 Nadja Roschi (Switzerland)	1.13
4 Katarzyna Solus (Poland)	1.57
5 Kathrin Stirnemann (Switzerland)	2.49
6 Katharina Haase (Germany)	4.29
7 Marta Sulek (Poland)	5.16
8 Amy Thompson (Great Britain)	5.25
9 Alexandra Engen (Sweden)	6.23
10 Ilke Dejongh (Belgium)	7.27
11 Vera Andreeva (Russian Federation)	7.55
12 Janine Droz (Switzerland)	8.17
13 Stefanie Andris (Germany)	11.31
14 Emily Batty (Canada)	12.03
15 Ines Thoma (Germany)	13.09
16 Monique Avery (New Zealand)	14.20
17 Paula Quiroz (Argentina)	14.38
18 Heletje Van Staden (Namibia)	18.23
19 Rachel Throop (United States Of America)	19.41
20 Alexandra Gelinias-Hamelin (Canada)	20.48
21 Danae York (United States Of America)	22.03
22 Stephanie White (United States Of America)	26.51
23 Katherine O'Neil (New Zealand)	31.38



Medal winners
Photo ©: Rob Jones

Two laps behind

24 Hayley Robertson (New Zealand)