

# Van der Ploeg ploughs his way to Eliminator gold

By [Matt](#), September 2, 2013

Australian Paul Van der Ploeg snatched the gold medal in the men's final of the cross country eliminator at the UCI MTB and Trials world Championships with a daring inside move on the first corner, while Swedish rider Alexandra Engen dominated from start to finish to claim the women's title ahead of the Swiss duo of Jolanda Neff and Linda Indergand.



Australian Paul Van der Ploeg is flanked by silver medalist Daniel Federspiel (left) and Castriel Andres Soto (right) after the men's cross country eliminator final at the UCI MTB and Trials World Championships 2013 at Cascades MTB Park in Pietermaritzburg.

**Photo: Darren Goddard/Gameplan Media**

Van der Ploeg, who jetted into South Africa from a road race in Borneo earlier this week came out on top ahead of Daniel Federspiel of Austria and Argentinian Castriel Andres Soto.

The final of the men's eliminator Van der Ploeg jumped from third to first via a brave move on the inside line into the first corner of the course. It was a gutsy strategy that paid off for the Australian and he did not look back from then on and held off a late charge from the chasing pair.

"I know that with cross country eliminator the start is super important," Van der Ploeg said. "Dan (Federspiel) is superfast off the start so I just got into his slipstream up the first hill.

"I found a less ridden line into the first corner in my semi so I used it again in the final and got ahead of the other guys."

The champion's trip to South Africa was threatened by a bout of food poisoning before he flew out and being able to win the World Championship title was a big achievement for the rider.

"I was on the sick bed for a while before coming to South Africa so I'm really happy with the win.

"I rode cross country eliminator for the whole last year and won a World Cup but I chose to ride a road bike for a while so I had to relearn how to ride a mountain bike this week!" he mentioned.



Sweden's Alexandre Engen celebrates winning the women's cross country eliminator title at the UCI MTB and Trials World Championships 2013 at Cascades MTB Park in Pietermaritzburg.

**Photo: Darren Goddard/Gameplan Media**

The women's final pitted the top four qualifiers and it was the defending World Champion who defended her title. Engen gained the early momentum on the twin track at the top of the first climb and despite losing a bit of that momentum on the big second climb she remained calm and held off the chasing riders.

In such a short format being able to adapt to situations unfolding in front of you is vital in avoiding crashing which theoretically rules you out in such a flash-dash race. The Swedish winner understands what it takes to win a huge title like this.

"In a sprint like this the margins are so small," Engen explained. "You have to be prepared for every situation that could rise and remain calm.



**Photo: Larry Bentley/Gameplan Media**

"I am really happy, the friendly Swiss Mafia are great so being able to have beaten them is so great!" said the elated Swede.

After the qualifying rounds there were three South African's that made it through but unfortunately for them, none of them were able to get passed the quarter finals.

Philip Buys and Alan Hatherly qualified for the last 32 riders but Hatherly was unable to get passed this stage ending in fourth in his heat. Buys qualified for the quarter final but on the first corner he was muscled out of the way and could not make up the places to make the semi-final.

The South African heartbreak came when Mariska Strauss was in second place in her quarter-final heading into the final 200 metres and she hit the final jump with a bit too much speed and lost control taking a nasty tumble that ruled her out for what would have been a well deserved semi-final.

## **CROSS COUNTRY ELIMINATOR - MEN XCO ELIMINATOR**

### **Big Final**

- 1 Paul Van Der Ploeg AUS
- 2 Daniel Federspiel AUT
- 3 Catriel Andres Soto ARG
- 4 Elia Silvestri ITA

### **Small Final**

- 5 Andy Eyring GER
- 6 Marcel Wildhaber SUI
- 7 Raphael Gagne CAN
- 8 Titouan Perrin Ganier FRA

## **WOMEN XCO ELIMINATOR**

### **Big Final**

- 1 Alexandra Engen SWE
- 2 Jolanda Neff SUI
- 3 Linda Indergand SUI
- 4 Nadine Rieder GER

### **Small Final**

- 5 Kathrin Stirnemann SUI
- 6 Lena Putz GER
- 7 Helen Grobert GER
- 8 Ingrid Sofie Jacobsen NOR



*Australian Paul Van der Ploeg celebrates as he came over the line in first place of the men's cross country eliminator at the UCI MTB and Trials World Championships 2013 at Cascades MTB Park in Pietermaritzburg.*

**Photo: Darren Goddard/Gameplan Media**