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Press Release

Lenzerheide, July 9, 2017

#FullgasMTB: Last comes first and Schurter wins at home

Holiday region Lenzerheide

Not even 24 hours after the nail-biting downhill action it was up to the cross-country athletes to show their skills and prove their endurance abilities during the UCI Cross-Country Mountain Bike World Cup in Lenzerheide. 20,000 spectators made their way to Lenzerheide this weekend and thousands were spread all around the 4.2 kilometer-long track, in order to support their favorite riders, braving difficult weather conditions. With a number of Swiss athletes racing for the win, a fantastic atmosphere was guaranteed. The fans were not disappointed as at the end of two very exciting races, which each saw multiple lead changes and a downpour of rain between the Women Elite and Men Elite category, Annie Last from Great Britain and local hero Nino Schurter were able to bask in the glory of a World Cup win.

The cross-country athletes had been training in hot, dry and dusty conditions for the most part of the week leading up to the contests. The preparation took a surprising turn due to a big thunderstorm during the night, which not only cooled the alpine air temperature but also gave the track a very different look. All teams were scrambling on the morning of the big day to assess the best race tactics. Would the 4.2-kilometer course dry out by the time the start gun would send them on their way? How had the rain changed the condition of key sections in the woods and on grass? Which tire would be the best choice? All these questions would be answered by race time.

Annie Last secures first British win in 20 years – Jolanda Neff makes the home crowd proud

The Swiss supporters were ecstatic right from the first second of the Women Elite race as Jolanda Neff (SUI) pushed hard out of the second row of the starting grid and joined the top flight with Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa (NOR) and World Cup leader Yana Belomoina (UKR). During the course of the first lap on the highly technical course the trio was joined by one more athlete, Maja Wloszczowska (POL). Shortly after though, Dahle Flesjaa and Belomoina picked up the pace and were able to separate themselves from the rest of the pack.

The following lap saw multiple lead changes between the two. The pursuers tried to keep in touch, however the Swiss hopes for a win took a slight beating when Linda Indergand from Switzerland had to take it down a notch – the result of a nasty cold, which she had been fighting all week. 26-year-old Annie Last kept pushing hard and seemed to be powering through every section of the course. As the race approached its half-way mark, Last was bearing down on the two leading athletes and had a very good chance of having a say about her share of the spoils. After overtaking Dahle Flesjaa in the woods, the Brit then benefitted from Yana Belomoina crashing and went into the lead!

In an impressive demonstration of power and dedication Last managed to separate herself from Belomoina and Dahle Flesjaa and never looked back. The Brit sealed the deal, her first World Cup win and the first win for GB in 20 years! Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjaa and Yana Belomoina followed shortly after. The Swiss fans had reason to be excited when Jolanda Neff cruised over the last bridge feature leading into the final meters of track where the roaring crowd greeted her. Germany's Helen Grobert completed the podium.

Annie Last (GBR):

«It was amazing! The fact I won hasn't sunk in yet. I really like the course and I had a great start to the race. There are so many sections, where you can make little mistakes and I made quite a few myself, but if you make one at the wrong time it can really set you back. So, I just kept riding my race, kept ticking through. I can't believe I have won.»

Jolanda Neff (SUI):

«The crowd has pushed me unbelievably today and the atmosphere was amazing. There were so many fans around the whole track and my entire family and many friends were here to support me. I trained well over the week and I think I have never managed the track this well before. It was great fun today and a really cool week with the whole team.»

Nino Schurter wins fourth World Cup of the season

After daunting dark clouds appeared and a downpour had occurred during the podium ceremony of the Women Elite race, it looked as if the men were in for a very muddy and slippery race. But luckily enough the clouds broke shortly after and the sun started to dry out the drenched track. Nino Schurter shot into the lead right from the get-go and reached the top of the first incline with Mathieu van der Poel (NED) and the French riders Maxime Marotte, Jordan Sarrou and Titouan Carod in hot pursuit. The young Dutchman put a lot of pressure on Schurter, but even though both of them were setting a high pace, the Top 10 were only separated by 30 seconds after three of seven laps on the 4.2 kilometer-long track.

Schurter was doing everything he could to increase his lead and pull away in round four and was finally able to shake van der Poel. Marotte however kept up with the local hero and the Russian Anton Sintsov proved he was a force to be reckoned with by closing in quickly. Sintsov even went into the lead after an impressive charge at the end of the fifth lap, but Schurter bit back on the first incline at the start of the sixth and was able to increase the pace once again. The reigning Olympic gold medalist had a cushion to work with now, but had no time to get complacent.

Jaroslav Kulhavy (CZE) had been ploughing through the field after falling back at the start and clocked astonishing lap times. Kulhavy was 20 seconds faster than Nino Schurter in the fifth and sixth lap and had moved up into fourth place to begin the seventh and final one of the day. The next split showed the Czech already in second place and only lacking 11 seconds. Schurter was able to hold on though and the Swiss supporters went crazy, when he crossed the finish line three seconds ahead of Kulhavy. Anton Sintsov came in third – his best ever XCO World Cup result. Maxime Marotte and David Serrano Valero (ESP) completed the podium. Thanks to his fourth win in the fourth race of the season, Nino Schurter can already seal the deal and become the UCI Cross-Country World Cup Champion at the next stop in Mont-Sainte-Anne, Canada.

Nino Schurter (SUI):

«I don't do so well at muddy races. There were quite a few ruts in the track today, which I don't really like to ride. Mathieu put me under pressure very early in the race so I struggled to find my groove. It was frustrating that I wasn't able to break away earlier. It was a tough fight for the victory today. If the race had lasted half a round longer, I might not have won.»

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Jaroslav Kulhavy (CZE):

«The race was really difficult for me, because I had a really bad start and was way back. There were quite a few crashes, which nearly made it impossible to catch up. Then the field spaced out somewhat and I was able to make up some time. That was perfect, because I like the technical sections over the roots a lot. From the second lap onwards I was enjoying every bit of it. I am very happy to come in second place and achieve my first podium of the year.»

Fans who missed the action of today's races don't have to worry! The replay of the cross-country World Cup in Lenzerheide is available on [Red Bull TV](#).

The cross-country elite will be returning to Lenzerheide next year for the UCI Mountain Bike World Championships from September 4-9, 2018.

+++Media Information+++

Further information: www.mtbworldcup-lenzerheide.ch

Information about the region: www.lenzerheide.com/bike

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