

Press release 4th July 2008

UCI MTB Marathon World Championships in Niederdorf/Villabassa (Suedtirol/Alto World Championships declared open

Today the UCI MTB Marathon World Championships were officially inaugurated in the centre of Niederdorf/Villabassa (Suedtirol/Alto Adige- Italy) at 8pm. The ceremony started with a parade. The traditional brass band of Niederdorf/Villabassa played first, then the representatives of the five tourism associations of Hochpustertal/Alta Pusteria, namely Sexten/Sesto, Toblach/Dobbiaco, Innichen/San Candido, Prags/Braies and Niederdorf/Villabassa entered the proceeding. The representatives of the authorities and the former World Champions were escorted on horse-drawn carriages through the streets and lanes of the WCH location. Then the folk dance ensemble "Außervillgraten" from East Tyrol performed some traditional dances in front of the audience, the athletes and the authority representatives. Next there was the children's appearance on their bikes with the flags of the participating nations. Present at the opening ceremony among others were also the former Marathon World Champions Thomas Frischknecht, Massimo de Bertolis, Ralph Näf and the titleholder Christoph Sauser. In the background their greatest successes were projected onto screen and the organizing committee presented them with a present. Honoured was also Hubert Pallhuber from Antholz/Anterselva (Suedtirol/Alto Adige- Italy), Cross Country World Champion of 1997. The official speeches were held by the vice president of the Italian Cyclist Union Davide D' Alto, by the mayor of Niederdorf/Villabassa Johann Passler as well as by the Chief of OC Kurt Ploner. The opening ceremony was broadcasted on a big screen on site with three TV cameras.

Statements of the Marathon World Champions:

Thomas Frischknecht (2003-05): After nineteen years as professional cyclist this will be my last World Championships and of course I would like to get a good result. Afterwards I am going to spend my holidays in the Toscana (Italy).

Massimo Debertolis (2004): With all the Swiss favourites around me I am still feeling at ease, but tomorrow others can win as well.

Ralph Näf (2006): I was in Pustertal/Alta Pusteria already last week after the Cross Country Worlds Championships in Male'(Italy). I got married last Saturday and for this reason tomorrow I have to reach a good result for my wife, too.

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Christoph Sauser (2007): After the race of my life at the Cross Country World Championships two weeks ago I would like to strike at tomorrow's Marathon World Championships as well. The track is fantastic and the view is simply amazing. I could imagine spending my holidays here, too.

Hubert Pallhuber (Cross Country World Champion in 1997 and sports director of the Italian National Mountain Bike Team): It was very difficult to nominate the cyclists of the National Team. In any case I tried to treat everybody fairly. Tomorrow the one with the most power reserves will be the winner.

Informations UCI MTB Marathon WCH – Saturday, 5th July:

Women: 88 km (2840 vertical drop)

Men: 120 km (3822 vertical drop)

11.30 am: Women's start – finish: approx. 3.30 pm

12.00 am: Men's start – finish: approx. 4.30 pm

Award ceremony after the finish

The programme for Saturday, 5th July:

1 pm: start DSB Junior

6.30 pm: award ceremony DSB Junior

8 pm: presentation of the World Champions and the top athletes

9 pm: night of the World Champions

The programme for Sunday, 6th July:

8 to 8.20 am: start 14th Südtirol Dolomiti Superbike (120 km – 56 km)

9 am: start Special Dolomiti Superbike (bike race for people with special needs)

approx. 11 am: award ceremony Special Dolomiti Superbike

4 pm: award ceremony Südtirol Dolomiti Superbike

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