

BEC HENDERSON

2011 U23 Australian Champion

World Cup 2 Dalby Forest, England



Spirits were high coming into the second World Cup of the season. I have had a 4 week block of racing with some pleasing results and a week in London before travelling up to Yorkshire in England six nights before the race. Dan and I stayed in a small cottage in the centre of Pickering where the short exhibition sprint eliminator would be held on Friday night.

Our weekend kicked off watching the Sprint Eliminator, we walked down the street ready to cheer on our fellow Aussies! Paul Van Der Ploeg, the 'thunder from down under' was cruising through the heats, taking each one out. The excitement was raising as more and more riders were eliminated. Unfortunately Kat O'Shea got knocked out in the quarter finals after winning an earlier heat.

The town was going wild for the races with some big names competing including Nino Shurter, Marco Fontana, Manuel Fumic, Thomas Litscher (last years winner), Brian Lopes – 4X World Champion, Moritz Milatz along with about 70 other riders. Paul was in the final with Marco Fontana, Thomas Litscher and Sepp Freiburghaus. Paul took the whole shot from the start and opened up a gap on the hill out of town and took the win ahead of Thomas Litscher and Marco Fontana – who happened to get 3rd in the World Cup on Sunday.

We couldn't contain our excitement and were given extra motivation for our races on Sunday.

The weather had been average all week but with only a few small over night showers the course remained pretty dry all week. We had our last practice on course on Saturday before watching Paul race into 24th in the Under 23 Men.

I warmed up on the wind trainer (a crucial purchase) as the rain came and went every couple of minutes and two minutes after the Elite Women had taken off we were called to the start line. I snuck onto the front row and was quick off the start when the gun went off. It only took a second or two before I was swamped and into the single track I was sitting in about 15th position. I kept my cool and tried to ride within my limits. The advice I had received from Paul was to conserve. It was going to be a race of tactics and getting as much draft from the riders around you was going to make all the difference. It was a quick four lap race but the last lap was just going to be whoever didn't blow themselves up in the early stages of the race.



I had a slow start but it seemed that the girls at the front of the race had crashed together and I passed the girls ranked first and fourth, who were still on the ground. I moved up a few positions on the first lap and on the second I was caught by one of the girls who had crashed. She was strong on the windy open sections of the course and I hung to her wheel for two laps, making up position after position and catching groups of riders in front.

I was still feeling fairly strong and was starting to think about my position in the race, I was sure I had ridden into the top 10 Under 23's by now, but you never can tell. I was constantly riding with an Italian girl, neither one of us could shake the other but on the last long climb I was still feeling strong and pulled away. I clicked down a few more gears and tried to build my speed, a quick head check at the top of the hill and I couldn't see her. I pushed through the open fire road and all the way home. The last section of the course was on a BMX track and I could see her chasing me down. I kept riding hard but was confident that I had the better of her.

I came around the last berm onto the finish straight and rode to the finish hard, but not sprinting. Less than 10 meters from the line and I hear someone ride up next to me, it was her. I sprint and lunge for the line. I thought I had lost it, shattered. I couldn't believe it!

I had mixed emotions, I had just rode probably the best race, and result of my life so I was stoked, but I had let a position slip, just like that!

I had a little mope then Dan put me into line and I did my warm down. It was only when I had a quick Skype call home – yes, they have internet on the big jobs, that I had first discovered my result in the race. 7th!!! An awesome result and I had won the sprint, and learned a very valuable lesson. I couldn't be happier.

The attention quickly turned to Dan for his start an hour later and after a really, really average start he came through the start loop in 99th position. Throughout the race Dan made his way through the field to finish in 44th position. We were both happy to improve on our results from Pietermaritzburg but with a bit more luck on the start Dan is looking forward to getting into the top 30!

We have now arrived in Offenburg, Germany for the third World Cup this weekend. Hopefully we can keep the good form and look forward to some more good results!

Don't forget to watch freecaster.tv for live footage straight from the World Cup and uci.ch for live timing. Thanks to the support of all of my sponsors and support from Australia and Shimano, Maxxis and Adidas Eyewear for their support at the World Cups. Thanks to Dan for all of his support each and every race, we are looking forward to showing Mum around some of Europe and the races in June!

Stay posted for updates and results

Upcoming Events:

28/29 May – World Cup 3 – Offenburg, Germany

4/5 June – Racer Bikes Cup – Engelberg, Switzerland

11/12 June – Racer Bikes Cup – Granichen, Switzerland

