

# World Championships

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CHASING HIS SHADOW. ROTORUA'S CRAIG PATTLE DEMONSTRATES THE SKILLS FIVE MONTHS OF SOLID RIDING IN EUROPE PROVIDE.



# 2005

Words by Graeme Simpson  
Photography by Victor Lucas

***THERE IS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT BIG RACE DAY MORNINGS – particularly when they are on the other side of the world in Livigno, a beautiful, dramatic, village high in the Northern Italian Alps. Saturday September 3, 2005 was no exception.***

Fine and cool, breath vaporising in the air, the volunteers – marshals, first aid – and officials gathering in the event village, the first downhillers trundling through on the way to the gondola. Always that sense of anticipation – especially with two of the four titles up for grabs being defended by two outstanding Kiwi riders. Vanessa Quin – 2004 Elite Women's champion – was seeded second behind French legend, Anne Caroline Chausson. Scarlett Hagen – 2004 Junior Women's champion – was seeded first in her event.

The 2005 UCI Mountain Bike & Trials Championships were three days old with the team relay, Junior and under-23 XC and downhill and 4X seeding already done and dusted. But Saturday was the first day the mouth really got dry and the heart rate came up. Mind you, it could have also been the altitude...

Livigno seemed full of Kiwis – New Zealand riders, officials, supporters and the team from the 2006 Worlds (in Livigno to promote next year's championships in Rotorua). It was great to see silver ferns on black everywhere. Most of our riders were based in a comfortable hotel above the town (nice one BikeNZ). The Belgium team were also there (and had survived the theft of all their bikes in vans parked tail to tail outside the hotel the previous week), as well as the Aussie downhillers. It was great to see our cross country and downhill riders mingling, helping build a sense of team spirit. They all seemed relaxed and happy to be there. Downhiller Craig Pattle was especially pleased to be getting a big breakfast and dinner every day. Like a lot of the team he is more used to paying his own way. Tom Holland also seemed quietly determined. He and Craig gave us a rundown on the downhill course – basically the same as the 2005 World Cup final, long, very fast. In the steepest sections it was quicker to tuck than pedal – in the thin air aerodynamics ruled over power.



**MARCÓS ROY BATTLED TO A 54TH PLACING IN THE UNDER 23 CLASS AROUND A FEATURELESS CROSS COUNTRY COURSE**



XC rider Sonia Foote was her usual cheerful self. She had arrived just before us but had been doing altitude simulation back in NZ and so wasn't fazed by the thin mountain air. Clinton Avery was also looking in good form. He was still acclimatising though, suffering the occasional headache on the sharp anaerobic climbs on the XC course. Sonia's roomie, downhiller Jenna Makgill, was surprisingly relaxed. A couple of weeks before; at a World Cup round in Pila, Italy her trusted Intense ride had been nicked. Her loaner just 'felt different'. But she wasn't complaining. After months of training and riding in Canada Mike Northcott, who dominated the 2005 New Zealand XC national series, looked fit and healthy. But he was finding the Italian tradition of closing for two hours at lunchtime hard to get used to as he searched for a pharmacy one day and a bike shop the next.

**JUNIOR MEN XC (DISTANCE 30.15KMS;  
WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 18.32KM/HR)**

1. ROBERT GEHBAUER - AUSTRIA - 1.38.45
2. OLIVIER SARRAZIN - FRA - 1.41.56
- . TIM WIJNANTS - BELGIUM - 1.42.00
20. CLINTON AVERY - NZL - 1.50.09
71. CARL JONES - NZL - 2.07.53
84. LUKE MILLS - NZL - 2.10.01.

**JUNIOR WOMEN XC (DISTANCE 17.6KMS;  
WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 14.42KM/HR)**

1. TEREZA HURIKOVA - CZECH REPUBLIC - 1.13.14
2. HANNA KLEIN - GERMANY - 1.14.17
3. TANJA ZAKELJ - SLOVENIA - 1.15.32
27. MICHELLE BELLAMY - NZL - 1.26.48

While training and relaxation and training were the name of the game, there was also a sense that competition couldn't come soon enough. On the first day of official competition – Thursday – it was fine and hot, into the high 20's. It was a tough day at the office for the Junior XC Women and Men.

Clinton Avery was the Kiwi star of the day with a fine ride to 20th

During practice on race day morning the designer of the 2006 DH course in Rotorua, Alden Arden, and I walked the Livigno downhill. On one of the fast bermed sections we had a chat to Mike Rose, editor of DIRT magazine from the UK (Vanessa's sponsor). Mike was raving about the Kiwi Juniors and impressed that New Zealand had such a big team allowing our riders to get valuable international experience.

Alden was upbeat about the Livigno course, but not totally convinced: "They were spoiled by having such a steep hill with lots of jumps and bus stops. However their big jump was too far up the hill for the crowds to get to easily. It was very fast, but not as tight and technical – and interesting - as the Rotorua course." Chairman of the 2006 Rotorua Organising Committee, Dave Donaldson, agreed: "The downhill was a bit long, with no truly death-defying sections," said Dave. "Joe Average would've tackled most of it on a decent freeride bike."

**HEARTBREAK FOR SCARLETT. DEFENDING HER 2004 TITLE SCARLETT WAS A SECOND UP ON HER NEAREST RIVAL AT THE SPLIT, BUT A CRASH WITHIN SIGHT OF THE FINISH LINE LEFT HER WITH THE SILVER. HER RESULTS FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS IN THE JUNIORS ARE 2-1-2 AT THE WORLDS. IN 2006 SHE'LL STEP UP TO THE ELITE CLASS. WE CAN'T WAIT!**





Aaron Tuckerman – 46th in Under 23 and gaining valuable international experience to carry into the National Series.



**UNDER-23 MEN XC (COURSE - 43KM/  
WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED - 18.76KM/HOUR)**  
**1. YURY TROFIMOV - RUSSIAN FEDERATION - 2.17.30**  
**2. LUKAS FLUCKIGER - SWITZERLAND - 2.17.31**  
**3. NINO SCHURTER - SWITZERLAND - 2.19.25**  
**46. AARON TUCKERMAN - NZL - 2.37.30**  
**54. MARCUS ROY - NZL - 2.41.35**

Friday was a big day for the Under-23 cross-country riders and especially Yury Trofimov from the Russian Federation. He won their first ever gold medal at a world mountain biking championships by just one second in a sprint finish with Swiss rider, Lukas Fluckiger. It was great for the Russians but defending champion, Nino Schurter had controlled the race until puncturing twice on the last lap.

The day was also a big one for the team from the 2006 Worlds with a presentation

And it was still morning...next up, Junior Men and some real strength in depth by the Kiwi boys who were getting a taste of racing at this level for the first time.

Top seed Brendan Fairclough couldn't back up his qualifying time. But he'll have a bit of home advantage in Rotorua next year. "My mother's from Waiheke Island," he told me at the press conference later in the day. "I am really looking forward to coming to New Zealand next year – I haven't been there for a long time." Top ten for Sam (a first for a Kiwi Junior), top 20 for Cameron, top 25 for both Kieran (who survived a big off in one of the rooty, forest sections) and Mike. Brilliant.

## JUNIOR MEN DOWNHILL

- 1. AMIEL CAVALIER - AUSTRALIA - S/T: 2.27.94; F/T 4.05.79  
(AVERAGE SPEED 41.74KM/HR)**
- 2. BRENDAN FAIRCLOUGH - GREAT BRITAIN - S/T 2.28.60; F/T 4.07.15**
- 3. LIAM PANOZZO - AUSTRALIA - S/T 2.31.50; F/T 4.11.33**
- 8. SAM BLENKINSOP - NZL - S/T 2.36.80; F/T 4.19.05**
- 19. CAMERON COLE - NZL - S/T 2.39.89; F/T 4.23.85**
- 23. KIERAN BENNETT - NZL - S/T 2.35.70; F/T 4.27.40**
- 24. MIKE SKINNER - NZL - S/T 2.40.28; F/T 4.28.57**

A quick lunch break and it was all on in the Elite Downhill. "The Livigno track was a long one so you needed to conserve energy in practice. Also because we were at 2000 metres the air was thinner – again, energy was the key. The top part was wide open and you just needed to stay off your brakes and on the race line for good average speeds. In the woods, quick, light handling was needed through the tight sections and off the brakes again at the end. I think you had to be on the edge the whole way down this track to win. Because the average speed was so fast there wasn't much room for mistakes as it's hard to make the time back elsewhere. On race day I was too conservative not letting it run enough. But then you always risk crashing (like Scarlett) if you over cook it." Vanessa Quin.

While Vanessa will be racing in Rotorua in 2006, Anne Caro won't. At the evening press conference she announced her retirement. She wanted to retire after the Worlds in France last year. But she had a huge crash in practise, breaking her shoulder and an outstanding sequence of World Championship rainbow jerseys. She is definitely one of the greatest mountain bikers ever with 9 Elite Downhill championships and 13 world championships in total in MTB and BMX. She crashed during her run in Livigno

Coming off a season on the NORBA circuit in the U.S. Des Curry finished a solid 38th in Elite.



**JUNIOR WOMEN DOWNHILL**  
**1. RACHEL ATHERTON - GREAT BRITAIN**  
**- SPLIT TIME: 2.46.44; FINAL TIME 4.39.67**  
**(AVERAGE SPEED 36.69KM/HR)**  
**2. SCARLETT HAGEN - NZL**  
**- S/T: 2.45.50; F/T 4.49.03**  
**3. MICAYLA GATTO - CANADA**  
**- S/T: 3.03.68; F/T 5.11.27**

to 100 plus team managers and UCI officials over breakfast in the morning and then a press conference to the international MTB media in the afternoon. The DVD (produced by Rotorua companies Filteredvision and Blue Dog TV) was well received (and had already played on the big screen at the event village and on high rotate at one of the official bars in town).

Saturday was full of drama and excitement - from the Junior Women and Men's downhill in the morning to the 4X under lights that night there was hardly a moment to draw breath.

"The downhill track was wicked with 15 high speed jumps and fast sweeping corners. I was having the best run I have ever done and then I crashed on the easiest piece of track. I

slid out right under the tape. I loved the whole week till that last few hundred metres from the finish line. I was pretty gutted and sad but it just makes me hungry for Rotorua in 2006. And the New Zealand team support was the best ever." Scarlett Hagen.

So, two top young racers who will move up to the Elite ranks in Rotorua next year and Canada's first DH medal since 1992. Rachel was second to Scarlett in Les Gets last year (and bravely raced full of pain killers in Livigno after tearing her rotator cuff in practice) – this is a rivalry that will run and run.

First time Worlds competitor Carl Jones rode to a 71st place finish in the Junior Men's cross country.





and still won. I told her she had broken Kiwi hearts twice that day. First she'd beaten Vanessa and then she said she wouldn't be racing at the 2006 Worlds in Rotorua. She smiled and said that she would still be on the plane next year. She's contracted to Commencal bikes for the next three

years and will be travelling the world promoting her sponsors and making MTB films. "I have been racing for a long time and there is a lot of stress," she said. "I still

want to ride - but just for fun."

The stats just don't do credit to this event - what a beauty. The Kiwis all rode well, especially Nathan Rankin. He spent the morning supporting the juniors at the finish line. He admitted to being home sick and looking forward to heading back to New Zealand the following week. But he promised to give it everything and he did. He sat on the leader board in second for a long time.

"I did my seeding run slowly because I wanted to start on race day in 20th to 40th place," said Fabien Barel. The Frenchman won the World Championships in Les Gets in 2004. "I didn't want the pressure of running in the top 10." Barel headed off down the mountain 34th to last and absolutely nailed it. Riders before him had stuttered through the two rutted forest sections. Fabien

flowed. He was brilliant all over the hill. But he won it in those technical sections. In France last year Barel had a long wait on the hot seat. He was cheerful to start with again this year. But, just like in 2004, as the top 10 started their runs he edged forward in the seat and his face became a mask of concentration. Last to race was top seed, Aussie Sam Hill. He was as smooth as Barel through the forest and looked as fast. But he ran wide on a berm in the stadium section and just missed the biggest prize by under a second. Fabien Barel is a real poster boy for downhill.

#### ELITE WOMEN DOWNHILL

1. ANNE CAROLINE CHAUSSON - FRA  
- S/T 2.38.91; F/T 4.27.34  
(AVERAGE SPEED 38.38KM/HR)
2. SABRINA JONNIER - FRA  
- S/T 2.39.76; F/T 4.27.71
3. EMMELINE RAGOT - FRA  
- S/T 2.41.05; F/T 4.31.52
4. VANESSA QUIN - NZL  
- S/T 2.45.73; F/T 4.35.98
12. JENNA MAKGILL - NZL  
- S/T 2.54.07; F/T 4.53.09

#### ELITE MEN DOWNHILL

1. FABIEN BAREL - FRA - S/T 2.21.92; F/T 3.54.77  
(AVERAGE SPEED 50KM/HR)
2. SAM HILL - AUSTRALIA - S/T 2.22.51; F/T 3.55.54
3. GREG MINNAAR - SOUTH AFRICA - S/T 2.24.73; F/T 3.57.79
- 9 NATHAN RANKIN - NZL - S/T 2.26.21; F/T 4.03.61
13. JUSTIN LEOV - NZL - S/T 2.27.55; F/T 4.04.51
23. JOHN KIRKCALDIE - NZL - S/T 2.27.87; F/T 4.08.73
30. GLEN HADEN - NZL - S/T 2.31.61; F/T 4.11.63
35. TOM HOLLAND - NZL - S/T 2.31.84; F/T 4.12.65
38. DES CURRY - NZL - S/T 2.31.47; F/T 4.13.24
52. CRAIG PATTLE - NZL - S/T 2.36.75; F/T 4.17.49



HARD WORK PAYS OFF. COMING OFF HIS FIRST FULL WORLD CUP SEASON WHERE HE GRABBED HIS FIRST PODIUM JUSTIN LEOV TOOK 13TH.



I talked to him after the press conference. In heavily accented but perfect English he told me how much he was looking forward to going for three in a row in Rotorua in 2006. He will be very welcome.

That night's 4X was exciting for lots of reasons. The racing was tight and a tribute to course designer Phil Saxena. There was even overtaking. The man is in demand worldwide – no surprises, there.

"I learnt a lot from talking to Phil," said 2006 4X

#### 4X MEN

1. BRIAN LOPES - USA
2. RED GRAVES - AUSTRALIA
3. MICKAEAL DELDYCE - FRA
4. G MINAAR - SOUTH AFRICA
5. CAMERON COLE - NZL

designer and event director, Jeff Carter.

I've got a whole bunch of ideas for the Rotorua 4X from talking to him and World Champions

like Brian Lopes and Eric Carter. I mainly want to add features that will make the racing more exciting by providing multiple lines in corners."

The racing in Livigno was close. But the skill and dominance of USA riders Jill Kintner and Brian Lopes was pretty obvious from the get-go. Total dominance. Lopes even had time to have a

quick glance back in the final. The highlight was Hamilton's Cameron Cole making it through to the quarterfinals and ranked 12th overall. At the end of one of his heats his eyes were as wide as saucers. As he took off his helmet the live TV coverage lingered on his big, delighted grin. "The atmosphere was amazing - the best riders in the world racing each other under lights in front of a huge crowd and on live TV. It doesn't get any better," said Cameron. "In the quarters I was up against Mike King, Greg Minnaar and Kamil Tartakovich. I was out the back with a bad gate but King went down on the doubles straight so I took 3rd for the race. The whole night was a blur - I can only remember snippets of what happened. It was like a dream. All you could see was a wall of people yelling at you the whole way down and the spot lights shining bright on the course."

After the intensity of a long Saturday with the excitement of the downhill and the 4X, Sunday felt like a bit of an anti climax. This wasn't helped by a disappointing cross country course with lengthy, flat grass sections and very few technical challenges. "The XC was very long at over 12km a lap," said Simon Kennett, who

ROSARA JOSEPH HAS PROVEN UNTOUCHABLE IN DOMESTIC COMPETITION THIS YEAR. HER 16TH PLACE FINISH IN THE ELITE WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY EVENT UNDERLINES HER STATUS AS NEW ZEALAND'S TOP FEMALE CROSS COUNTRY RACER RIGHT NOW.





will be XC Event Director at both the Oceania Championships in March and the Worlds in August, in Rotorua next year. "Rick Todd's course on Mount Ngongotaha is about half as long which is better for spectators and officials. It has a decent climb and our first descent is nice and open so there are plenty of opportunities to pass. "There's still work to do on the Rotorua XC course," Simon added, "but, all in all, I'd say it is going to be world class – no problemo." Dave D was blunter: "Livigno was a great event, overall. But the XC course was far too long. It wasn't technical and the grass sections back to the finish line shouldn't have been allowed. It's simply not mountain biking."

#### ELITE WOMEN XC

1. **GUNN-RITA DAHLE – NORWAY - 1.47.19**  
(DISTANCE - 30.45KM;  
AV. SPEED 17.02KM/HR)
2. **MAJA WLOSZCZOWSKA – POLAND - 1.49.28**
3. **PETRA HENRI - SWITZERLAND - 1.50.26**
16. **ROSARA JOSEPH - NZL - 1.57.50**
38. **ROBYN WONG - NZL - 2.05.24**
47. **SONIA FOOTE - NZL - 2.08.16**

2004 titles. Mad Norwegians and very loud French went off

#### ELITE MEN XC

1. **JULIEN ABSALON - FRA - 2.07.34**  
(DISTANCE 43KMS - AVERAGE SPEED - 20.22KM/HR)
2. **CHRISTOPH SAUSER - SWITZERLAND - 2.07.52**
3. **JOSE ANTONIO HERMIDA RAMOS - SPAIN - 2.08.28**
13. **LEUCHS - NZL - 2.14.05**
75. **MIKE NORTHCOTT - NZL - 2.37.23**

Rosara Joseph was absolutely brilliant in scoring a top 20 place in the Women's Elite XC, in her first race at this level and in a very classy field of riders.

Gunn-Rita Dahle dominated the women's event and Julien Absalon did the same in the men's (in spite of flattening on the last lap) – both defending their – encore. For New Zealand, Kashi Leuchs reconfirmed his status as our top XC rider battling to a fine 13th place. And

The Commonwealth Games XC is in mid-March, 2006 just a few weeks after the Oceania Championships on the Worlds courses in Rotorua. Kashi was second Commonwealth rider (behind Oliver Beckingsale of Great Britain). Rosara was third of the Commonwealth women behind Marie-Helene Premont and Alison Sydor of Canada in 4th and 6th.

Also wrapping up on Sunday were the Trials. This is a huge sport in Europe and the skill on show was breathtaking. Some of the obstacles even left 2006 Trials designer, Darcy Belfield, scratching his head.

This event will be a big hit with spectators at the Worlds in Rotorua.

With the sun dancing in and out of thunder clouds as it set to the west of Livigno it was time for the closing ceremony. Almost the final act of this was the passing of the UCI flag from Livigno to the 2006 Rotorua Organising Committee.

And the final act? Lead by a fired up Tom Holland the Kiwi men dressed all in black did a stirring haka that had the big crowd whooping and cheering. Under a year to go...welcome, haere mai to Rotorua and the 2006 UCI Mountain Bike and Trials World Championships... [www.2006rotoruaamt.com](http://www.2006rotoruaamt.com)

The 2006 team travelled to Livigno with the help of Air New Zealand (the official airline of the 2006 Worlds – [www.airnewzealand.co.nz](http://www.airnewzealand.co.nz)) and had some great promotional material funded by Tourism New Zealand- [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com) - Destination Rotorua Tourism and Marketing and Event Venues Rotorua - [www.rotoruaNZ.com](http://www.rotoruaNZ.com)

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**Event Dates:**  
**22-27 August**  
**2006**

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