

# View From The Worlds

One shining moment *Photos by Tom Moran*



**T**he 2006 Mountain Bike World Championships, held in Rotorua, New Zealand, will not go down in American mountain bike history as a memorable event. The American contingent of downhillers, cross-country racers and 4-crossers came back from New Zealand with one gold medal, earned by Jill Kintner in the 4-cross competition, one near miss (Melissa Buhl finished fourth in the downhill) and a number of disappointments.

**Go for a stroll:** The 2006 World Mountain-bike Championships in Rotorua, New Zealand, offered a scenic backdrop for the action. The cross-country course, however, didn't challenge the sport's elite with technical terrain.



**Tacky and technical:** The world championship downhill course was one of the most technical and physically demanding courses of the year. Combined with wet conditions, racers described the terrain as slippery, fast and scary.

## 2006 WORLD CHAMPIONS ONE LONELY AMERICAN

### Cross Country

#### Men

1. Julien Absalon
2. Christoph Sauser
3. Fredrik Kessiakoff

#### Women

1. Gunn-Rita Dahle
2. Irina Kalentieva
3. Marie-Helene Premont

### Downhill

#### Men

1. Sam Hill...3:11.93
2. Greg Minnaar...3:15.2
3. Nathan Rennie...3:17.2

#### Women

1. Sabrina Jonnier ...3:50.3
2. Tracy Moseley...3:53.8
3. Rachel Atherton...3:57.8

### 4-Cross

#### Men

1. Michal Prokop
2. Roger Rinderknecht
3. Guido Tschugg
4. Dan Atherton

#### Women

1. Jill Kintner
2. Anneke Beerten
3. Anita Molick
4. Jan Horakova

### Team Relay

1. Switzerland
2. Italy
3. Poland
4. France

Want blow-by-blow coverage of the events and complete results? They are posted on [www.mbacktion.com](http://www.mbacktion.com).



**Mud match:** Rain battered the cross-country course throughout the night before the race. These conditions created messy ruts and sent many of the world's top riders to the turf.







**Four-cross gauntlet:** Thousands of spectators lined the 4-Cross course, which was much more challenging than most competitors expected. "It took me a while to get comfortable on this course," said newly crowned NORBA mountaincross champion Rich Houseman. "It was certainly tougher than I expected it to be, and that hurt me in qualifying." Rich finished in the 22nd spot in the results.





**Tree top flyer:** The downhill course really tested the world's most elite racers to their fullest ability. The mix of high-speed corners, tight tree lines and gnarly rock gardens didn't leave racers any time to catch their breath before the finish line.



**Wound out:** American Todd Wells charges in the cross-country event to make up time after breaking a chain. Wells finished 65th. You can't have a mechanical at the Worlds without paying a substantial price.



# The Worlds



**Three-peat:** France's Julien Absalon made history, grabbing his third-consecutive world title, besting Sauser by 44 seconds. No one can time their peak performances like Absalon.



**Keep on rolling:** Jeremiah Bishop rode to an impressive eighth place in the cross-country. Coming off a dominating performance at the National Mountain Bike Series finale in Aspen, Colorado, two weeks prior, Bishop was on top of his form and pulled no punches in the sport's most prestigious annual event.



**Domination:** Norwegian Gunn-Rita Dahle-Flesja bagged her third-consecutive cross-country world championship. Gunn-Rita firmly established herself as the best female cross-country racer in the history of the sport.



**All Blacks:** New Zealand hosted this year's world championships, and the consensus was that the spectacular landscape and roaring crowds made for an outstanding event. Here a Kiwi crushes the downhill.





**Go time:** The fastest gated racers gathered in New Zealand for a shot at qualifying for the finals. The best 64 racers made the cut, and the top men's seed went to Czech Michal Prokop. Defending world champion, American Brian Lopes, was a hair slower than Prokop as the number two seed. Lopes was taken out in the semifinals when an erratic Michal Marosi (Italy) crashed into him.



**Good girl:** Jill Kintner of the United States snagged her second consecutive world title. She proved again in 2006 she's the top women's gated racer in the world, capturing the world and national championships. □