



## **--Kona Factory Cyclocross Team wins overall US Gran Prix of Cyclocross for 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year--**

In what could be considered some of the toughest conditions in the history of North American cyclocross the Kona dominance of the US Gran Prix series continued. The Kona Factory Cyclocross team took home the top overall honors for the 2007 US Gran Prix of Cyclocross. Ryan Trebon won his 3<sup>rd</sup> title (2004, 2006, 2007) and kept the consecutive streak alive for the Kona team while his teammate Barry Wicks (USGP winner in 2005) placed 3<sup>rd</sup> overall. Wendy Simms placed 5<sup>th</sup> Overall in the series.

A large and powerful Pacific storm loomed off of the coast of the Pacific Northwest as the race weekend approached. The question was when it would hit, what it would bring and what it would mean for the racing. The storm hit full force early Saturday creating absolutely horrendous conditions for the weekend of racing. The conditions eased slightly for the Elite events later in the day but that made for sticky heavy mud with ruts in the course that hardened up and threw riders off line. Crashes and mechanicals were commonplace.

Day One:



The Elite women took the start just as the weather eased a bit. Wendy Simms was looking for a good race as she typically does well in hard conditions and on technical courses. The race started well for her with a great start in the lead group of five riders but then a series of mishaps derailed her shot at the podium. Lyne Bessette crashed on the first descent and while Simms was able to stay upright she lost precious seconds to the leaders. From there it was playing catch up and pressing the issue to get back into the mix.

But Simms pressed a little too hard and slight bobbles here and there put her off the pace. "Today was a really hard day. The mud was so sticky and it was all power all day. It wasn't a course where you could really make a hard effort and make up time because the only way to ride it was to stay smooth. I felt like I had a chance to be podium. A rut grabbed me on one of the small down and

ups and I crashed in a bad spot because it was a spot if you carried momentum you could get through pretty quick. I lost a lot of time there and just couldn't bring it back," said Simms. Simms finished 6<sup>th</sup> on the day.



The course conditions were much the same for the Elite Men's race. Both Wicks and Trebon uncharacteristically missed their pedals at the start and found themselves having to work through the field early in the race. Tim Johnson who excels in muddy conditions was able to get off the front of the field and the rest were left to chase. Normally the Kona duo of Wicks and Trebon would be able to work together to bring him back. "Ryan and I just didn't have the legs today. No excuses... some days are good and other not so much. Today was not so much," remarked Wicks.

Both riders and the pit crews made valiant efforts so the riders could make contact but today was not the day. Riders were taking fresh bikes on each lap and the Kona-Yourkey.com pit crews had to work fast and furious to keep clean bikes ready for the charging riders. Trebon had to put in a supreme effort to hold off the hard charging Todd Wells on the finish straight away. Trebon took the two man sprint to secure 2<sup>nd</sup> place and keep his series overall hopes all alive. Barry Wicks put in a solid ride and finished 4<sup>th</sup>. Erik Tonkin finished 22<sup>nd</sup>, not bad for a new father of less than a week.

Day two:

The conditions worsened throughout the day as the rain came down in sheets and gale force winds sent team tents flying and blew trees over, one narrowly missing an unsuspecting soul in the port-a-potty. It was so windy that the metal course barricades were blowing over even without the sponsor signs attached. Eventually, race officials laid all the barriers on their side to prevent them from unexpectedly blowing over during the race.

The Elite women were set to do battle just as the full effect of the storm was being felt. Simms was looking to better her result from the day before and was able to do so by one place. "For some reason my legs just shut down when they get cold. It's like I was stuck between gears. I'd stand up, sit down, sit down, stand up but I could never really get comfortable and lost time as the race went on and I got colder," said Simms. "At least today I stayed upright for most of the race but it was hard and cold out there." Conditions forced the withdrawal of two of the top riders Katie Compton and Lyne Bessette who both suffered from near hypothermic conditions. But Simms powered through to the end and dressed smart enough to be able to finish the event in 5<sup>th</sup> place, a small victory in itself. It was enough for Simms to take 5<sup>th</sup> overall in the Series.

The Elite men set for the start in the middle of the absolute worst conditions of the weekend. Winds were gusting at 50mph and the rain was torrential. But in a strange turn of events the huge amounts of rain loosened the mud and bike changes were

sparse. But that did not reduce the pressures on Trebon who had to win the race in order to win the series.

Today was the day for Trebon and he put in one of, if not the finest ride of his career. "In my opinion this was *the* career ride for Trebon," said Kona team manager Mark Peterson. "With the mud and technical nature of the course many thought it was Tim Johnson's day. They were expecting Ryan to fold in the tough conditions and under the pressure of the must win scenario. He silenced the critics and put in a dominant ride in some of the toughest conditions I have ever seen."

Trebon and Wicks had great starts and both were able to get off the front early with Trebon leading the charge. Together they got a 30 second gap before Wicks began to fade. Trebon kept charging harder and harder through the event and grew his lead to one minute 45 seconds. From there he used a bit of his cushion to ride smart and avoid mechanicals or crashes. "I felt good out there today and I really wanted this one. I made some honest comments at the start of the season saying the Kona team would win it's fourth title in a row. I guess some people weren't too stoked on that so I'm a bit relieved to back it up with the win."

Wicks had a good race but similar to Simms has a bit of rough go when the legs get cold. He battle hard for much of the race for the final podium spot. But Johnson and Wells were both able to come through. "I was feeling ok and had one more effort in the tank and was gaining on Wells when I crashed pretty hard and lost time, then Kabush went around me too. One of these years though I'm going to put it all together for the Portland hometown crowd," said Wicks. "I'm happy to have take 3<sup>rd</sup> overall in the series and a second podium spot for Kona but I would have like to ride a bit better this weekend." Erik Tonkin was able to move up to 16<sup>th</sup> place on the day, relishing the "true Portland cyclocross conditions."



When Trebon was asked if he had surpassed the North American Cyclocross scene he disagreed. "I think it's good to support both European and US cross and I got my start cross racing over here so I don't want to totally ditch US cross. Johnson and Powers both rode great all year long. They showed that any win over here is hard earned and can't be taken for granted. It's also good to support my sponsor Kona domestically because they have always have supported me. It's hard racing here for sure and victories here do mean something. Vervecken (current World Champion) came over here and got beat by Wicks. It shows how far US cross has come."

Special thanks to team Kona Team mechanic Mark Matson, who directed the pit crew and kept the bikes in working order. Conditions were hard on the bikes, mechanics and riders. It took a complete team effort to secure the win for Kona.



Photos courtesy of Joe Sales.

UP next for the US Kona-yourkey.com riders US Nationals in Kansas City December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Simms and Trebon will then continue their seasons in Europe in preparation for World Championships.

Till next time,

Marko

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## **Our Equipment:**

- Kona stock Major Jake & Queen Ann Custom butted Scandium frame with forged bottom bracket yoke.
- FSA K Force Light Handlebars, Stem, Seat post, Cranks, Orbit Xtreme Pro Headset-K Force Light 480 Carbon Tubular Wheels
- Alpha Q CX20 Carbon Cross Fork
- Shimano Dura Ace Shifters, Derailleurs and chain.
- KORE KROSS Cantilever brakes
- Swiss Stop Pads
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