



## Czechs Cash In on Day of High Attrition

A hard fought stage win by Tomas Trunschka - his second in three days, ably supported by overall race leader Ondrej Fojtik, solidified the winning position for Czech team VIG+ racing today at the 2008 Crocodile Trophy in Australia's remote Tropical North.

The brutal 122 kilometre mountain stage 3 from the World Heritage rainforest of Koombuloomba Dam to the outback cattle station at Gunnawarra Lagoon took in the greatest variety of terrain and surface conditions likely to be seen at any bike race on the planet.

The attrition rate was understandably high as the protagonists of the Crocodile Trophy fought the elements and their internal demons, with many riders coming to an abrupt realisation of what Australia's outback classic is really all about .



Tomas Trunschka

As expected the Czechs attacked early as the peloton ventured out from Koombuloomba on a picturesque rainforest road and team VIG's Martin Horak launched the first major assault when the lead bunch entered the famed powerline track, which has claimed many victims in this race.

Horak was offered a little breathing space early as the remaining non-Czech contenders in the race, most notably Nic Vermeulen (Team Lingier, Belgium) and Australian solo entrant Craig Gordon kept a close eye on overall leader Ondrej Fojtik. But with so many options at their disposal and four riders at the top of the general classification, the Czechs held the aces.

The technical mountainous section of the powerline track was always destined to produce a "serious sorting out" of the race's "heads of state" and so it was that at the end of the steep rocky climbs and daring descents, that four riders were left in the hunt for the stage -

Gordon, Vermeulen, Fojtik and Trunschka, who led on the road.

A series of attacks followed on the dead straight red dirt road which headed to the outback cattle station at Gunnawarra Lagoon. Gordon fought to stay in contention and Vermeulen gave it everything as Fojtik and Trunschka took turns to launch themselves off the front.

"It was hot, very hot, but nice track, with the Czech team it is difficult," Vermeulen, who finished third at stage end admitted.

"On the technical I'm maybe the best. Then for the finish is one against three Czechs, the Australian was good but he could just follow."

Gordon, whose form appears to be improving with each day also came close. Had the stage finished at the end of the powerline track he would have been a podium contender, but with such a long run into the finish, it was never going to suit a pure mountainbiker.

"A hard day, a little bit disappointing, I got fourth but the Czechs look like they've got this race sewn up," the Australian solo entrant conceded.

“They’ve got a strong time and there’s quite a few guys there working .. Very, very strong. “

For the Czechs it was another case of mission accomplished as they consider the prospect of “world domination” at this truly international event.

“There were three of us and it was very fast at the end of the race,” Trunschka said.

“I am happy to be the winner.”

The question now is who will be “officially” appointed team captain for VIG+ racing, with three riders (at least) in contention for the overall result.

“It’s very special for us because the target for us, for our team our target is to win this race and to have people in the first three places,” Trunschka said.

“We can say after the fifth stage who will be the leader of us three guys, myself, Horak and Fojtik.”



Survival on the powerline track

The real story of stage three was typified by the claret-spattered bodies that made it to the finish line late in the day. Both of the Americans in the race Tim Caulkins and Sean Noonan suffered almost unbearably due to flat tyres, fatigue and heat stress and Austrian Valentin Zeller also gave up due to mechanical failure.

In total four cyclists have withdrawn from the race. One of those, Norbert Heinz can’t wait to get a flight home.

“I will go home because I’m done, I’m tired, I guess I underestimated the challenge,” Heinz said.



Yet another flat tyre on the powerline track

In better spirits is Dutchman Guido DeJong. He was in contention for the masters division until a crash, followed by five flat tyres put an end to his race hopes. Still, he fought on after the worst of bad days.

“Hell yeah, the worst, five flats in one stage, two spare tyres and then waiting for other people to be kind to give me another tyre .. If they had one.

“I got a spare tyre from one of the last guys in the race, it then went pretty well until the last ten k’s and then I had flat again.”

Another masters contender, Australia Reece Stevens also crashed heavily and fought on until the finish. The Melbourne cyclist has severe bruising which may yet end his dream of finish the Crocodile Trophy - he along with many others is having a close eye kept on him by the race doctor.

“It was very tough today, got to the powerlines and we were trying to keep with the lead group and just came into a rut a bit,” Stevens said.

“Head over the handlebars, which made it tough for the rest of the day.

“The event’s certainly taken its toll on everybody.

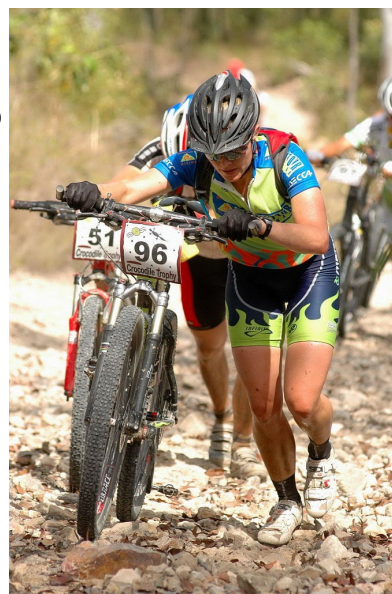
The women’s race continues to be led by Australia’s Jo Bennett of Australia’s Merida Flight Centre team, who enjoyed some help today from Husband Tim, who came to the realisation he couldn’t match it with the Czechs in the men’s event.

It has opened up a husband and wife battle between Australia and Belgium, with Karen Steurs also bringing her partner along for the ride.

Bennett won today’s women’s stage, but the battle is expected to go down to the wire.

“We were together until the finish today and Tim was a big help,” Jo Bennett said.

“Karen and I had a sprint and I managed to get the win, which was great, but there’s still a long way to go and she’s very strong”



Jo Bennet with Karen Steurs behind

**For Further information:**

**John Flynn – Crocodile Trophy Media (+61 [0]410 665 464)**

**Gerhard Schoenbacher – Crocodile Trophy Supremo (+43 6763047584)**

**Website: <http://www.crocodile-trophy.com>**

## Event Partners





## 2008 Crocodile Trophy Stage Plan

### Stage 1.

Mareeba—Irvinebank 86km/1100m Tuesday, 21. October

### Stage 2.

Irvinebank—Koombooloomba 128km/1400m Wednesday, 22. October

### Stage 3.

Koombooloomba-Gunnawarra 122km/2235m Thursday, 23. October

### Stage 4.

Gunnawarra-Chillagoe 130km/900m Friday, 24. October

### Stage 5.

Chillagoe-Chillagoe 120km/850m Saturday, 25. October

### Stage 6.

Chillagoe-Mount Mulgrave 138km/800m Sunday, 26. October

### Stage 7.

Mount Mulgrave-Laura 148km/1100m Monday, 27. October

### Stage 8.

Laura-Cooktown 142km/1050m Tuesday, 28. October

### Stage 9.

Cooktown-Ayton 128km/1900m Wednesday, 29. October

### Stage 10.

Ayton-Cape Tribulation 48km/520m Thursday, 30. October

