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## Huber Wins Crocodile Trophy

Swiss mountainbiker Urs Huber today added his name to the exclusive international list of cyclists who have won Australia's Crocodile Trophy, after enduring an intense nine-day battle with the great Dutchman Bart Brentjens.

A testament to both the talent and mental strength of the 24-year-old World Championship bronze medallist, Huber rode with such power on today's final mountain stage in Australia's Daintree that Brentjens was unable to launch an attack to reel in his 1 minute and 26 second lead.



Urs Huber climbing the CREB Track

Instead, it was Huber who did the attacking today as the race headed off-road onto the CREB Track, a perilous ascent into the rainforest that has become part of the Crocodile Trophy's growing tradition.

"It's very important, it's my first win in a stage race and ten days," an elated Huber said.

"When I can say I win the Crocodile Trophy it's a great thing."

Huber launched his first attack at the base of the CREB where the gradient is close to 20%. Behind him, the former Olympic and World Champion appeared visibly in pain, but Brentjens refused to give in and continually clawed his way back.

"After the second depot I made the pace and Bart cannot come with me," Huber said.

"So I saw that and I thought that I should roll without risk to the finish."

That was easier said than done as the Crocodile Trophy ventured onto the zig-zag track, one of the most technical sections of the race. It was there that Brentjens had planned to attack, near the river crossing at Roaring Meg. Huber and Brentjens had already reeled in an early breakaway containing Slovenian Jure Robic and Belgian Mike Mulkens.

When the riders reached the river, Huber crossed first, the smile on his face obvious as he realised the Crocodile Trophy was his for the taking.

"I was dropped a few times and I came back and I had to follow him," Brentjens said.

"He (Huber) really put the hammer down and all I could do was follow his wheel, actually there was no chance for me to make an attack."

There was a degree of consolation for Brentjens as he won the sprint to the finish in Ayton - his sixth stage victory for the Crocodile Trophy of 2009.

But the ultimate objective proved elusive this time around for 'Sir Bart' who is already plotting a course to Australia in 2010 to make amends.

"It's a really nice stage race, Crocodile Trophy to ride, it's a challenge, an adventure, nice country, nice area, good organisation," Brentjens said.

"I've already spoken with Gerhard (Schoenbacher) about next year.

"I like to come back and try to win, now I know a little bit more about the course, maybe I can win it once."

Belgian Mike Mulkens hung on bravely again to finish third in the stage and third overall, while Robic who attacked bravely today, almost from the gun, had to settle for fourth on both counts.

"Today I try one last time to attack and I felt very strong on the climbs," Robic, the four-time Race Across America winner said.

"I came to this race not prepared after an injury to my ribs and I decide only two days before the race to come, so I have to be pleased."

### **Two Australians in Top Ten**

One of the great surprises to emerge from the 2009 Crocodile Trophy was the performance of Australia's Tropical Tableland Discovery Team that, barring Josh Prete's mishap two days ago, could have placed three riders in the top ten overall.

As it was, Isaac Tonello placed eighth and Steve Rankine 9th, an outstanding effort for a local team cobbled together at the eleventh hour to contest the event.

Tonello, who also claimed the Masters 1 category jersey in his second attempt at the race, remains in awe of the visiting Europeans.

"It was good to see Bart and Urs go for it. On the first climb up the creb track they went super-sonic," Tonello said.



**Brentjens hangs in on the climb**

“I really wanted to get top fifteen overall and I’ve come in eighth, so I’m pretty happy with it.

“Next year it might be a different story.”

Rankine, an experienced ex-pro triathlete, realises now that he came into the race unprepared, but in the process has learned much from his first Crocodile Trophy experience.

“I’ve had a bit of bad luck with flats but I put my head down and basically scraped into the top ten,” Rankine said.

“It’s such a learning experience, I’ve done some good bike races but this race, in one stage you fight the whole way and one minute you feel like throwing the bike away and the next minute you dig deep.

“I can understand now why they say it’s the toughest mountainbike race in the world.”



Czech Milan Spolc at the river crossing

Rankine, a Daintree local, will be heading home tomorrow as the protagonists of the Crocodile Trophy roll together towards the finish line at Cape Tribulation.

According to race tradition, the riders will abandon their race faces and share the incredible experiences that formed the narrative of the 2009 event.

With the general classification decided it will be time for the gladiators of the Crocodile Trophy to finally relax.

### **Zeldenrust Wins Women’s Event, McLennan and Pleyer Share The Experience**

At the end of nine days, it was a foregone conclusion that Dutchwoman Monique Zeldenrust would become the women’s victor of the 2009 Crocodile Trophy.

Zeldenrust, who has been racing the Crocodile Trophy with her father Martin, made easy work of today’s stage, bringing to an end an almost flawless campaign.

However, the battle for the minor placings, intense until this point, took an unusual turn today.

Australia’s Abby McLennan and Austria’s Lisa Pleyer, who continued to fight for supremacy during today’s stage, crossed the finish line together, to signal an official end to on-course hostilities.

“I stuck with Lisa all day and we just kept fighting it out, in the end we decided to cross the line together, as a sporting gesture,” McLennan said.

Pleyer finished the race in second overall, with McLennan an impressive third.

The experience, one that McLennan and her Rattle & Hum team-mates will carry with them.

“Just the achievement that we feel is amazing it’s the best thing we’ve done in our life I think,” McLennan said.

“ I already feel prematurely excited that it’s over and we do have to ride tomorrow.

“We’re going to enjoy the feeling that we have and try to make it last as long as possible.”

#### **For Further information**

**John Flynn – Crocodile Trophy Event Marketing**

**+61 (0)410 665 464**

**+61 (0) 427 638 928 (Telstra Next G - On Course)**

**Office: +61 (0)740 370 574 Website:**

**[http:// www.crocodile-trophy.com](http://www.crocodile-trophy.com)**

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