

Blair and Cuthbert take out stage 5 and capture elite men's and women's Snowies Mountain Bike Festival titles

SNOWY MOUNTAINS, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, February 12, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SNOWY MOUNTAINS, NSW—Former 2-time national XCM champion, Commonwealth Games representative, and winner of the inaugural Snowies MTB Festival in 2015, Andy Blair (The Cyclery- Specialized) has won a hard fought battle across five stages to reclaim his Snowy Mountains crown in 2018 while Zoe Cuthbert (Trek Shimano Australia) at just 17 years of age, has taken out the Elite Women's Crown. The [Snowies Mountain Bike Festival](#) hosted at Lake Crackenback Resort & Spa & Thredbo Resort in the iconic Snowy Mountains of New South Wales challenged riders with five stages across three-days with some of the most challenging and diverse riding found anywhere in Australia. With two stage wins each under their belt it was Blair and young gun Jayden Ward (Stelf Cycling Team) who came into Stage 5 with everything to race for in the men's GC. Ward held a 40sec lead over Blair with Toby Stewart (Phoenix Cycling) in third 6:35 off the pace. With that scenario it was always going to be a battle of the titans in Stage 5 'Release the Cracken Marathon'. With riders neck and neck on laps 1 and 2, Blair had to dig deep in the final lap to take the stage win in 1:51:34, 1:29 ahead of Ward with Stewart in third.

Catching up with Blair after the race his philosophy as he headed into stage 5 was "Don't give up til it's over. I had 40 secs to find somewhere, I wasn't super confident but I've done enough races to know that anything can happen. I just put my head down on the last lap and just left it all out there and finished completely empty."

Blair was "very happy to take out the win. It was a tough battle with Jayden and Toby that ended up coming down to the last stage so I definitely had to work hard for it but it is all the more satisfying. I'm looking forward to coming back again next year."



Blair and Cuthbert



Top 3 Men and Women

In the female GC race Peta Mullens (Focus Attaquer) came into the race carrying a heavy cold and heading into stage 5 it was anybody's title with Cuthbert and Mullens each having two stage wins under their belt. There was just 4 seconds separating the two and Swiss legend Renata Bucher (Aloha Racing) was not far behind in third. Bucher demonstrated some of the hard grit and determination that she is famous for in stage 5 and pulled back a mighty win, 5 seconds ahead of Cuthbert. Despite the second place, Cuthbert's time of 2:07:57, which was 11 seconds ahead of closest rival Mullens, was enough to hold onto the overall win in the GC with a lead of 15 seconds.

"This is my first elite win, so it's pretty special and memorable," said Cuthbert. "Coming into the race I had no idea, I really surprised myself. It's been a wonderful experience. I tried my hardest and it worked."

Cuthbert topped general classification (GC) 15 seconds over her nearest rival – road, mtb and cx superstar Mullens – who's focus has been on the tarmac this year with Swiss legend Bucher finishing third edging out Briony Mattocks (Cyclery Northside) only on the final stage.

After the race Mullens, racing for the first time at the Snowies MTB Festival, said that "I might just have found a new favourite cross country stage race. [this is] a race I'll just HAVE to bring my Focus Attaquer CX Team to next year."

She went on to add, "finally a stage race that offers more descending than climbing, an extra 6km thanks to a serene chairlift ride it offers achievable climbs, flowing descents and endless single track that I fell in love with even in my current state of health."

This year's race featured an Alpine start line at 1,260 metres in elevation, as well just under 100 kilometres of rugged mountain terrain, technical single track, monstrous ascents, daring descents and, of course, a \$5,000 cash prize pool.

Elite and amateur riders alike faced a barrage of mountain biking disciplines, including a 5.5km time trial, 19.5km Thredbo Summit Smash, 5.8km Thredbo All Mountain Descent, the 18.5k Gravity Check and 45k Release The Cracken marathon.

One of the event hubs, Lake Crackenback Resort & Spa offered competitors and spectators use of the resort with properties from studios to three bedroom apartments covering all budgets and tastes. And the other, Thredbo Resort also has a wide range of accommodation and activities, giving visitors a perfect base to explore this spectacular part of NSW.

The Snowies Mountain Bike Festival is proudly supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency Destination NSW.

STAGE 5 RESULTS | TOP 3

Elite Men

1. Andrew Blair, ACT, 1:51:34
2. Jayden Ward, NSW, 1:53:04
3. Toby Stewart, NSW, 1:56:47

Elite Women

1. Renata Bucher, SUI, 2:07:51
2. Zoe Cuthbert, ACT, 2:07:57
3. Peta Mullens, VIC, 2:08:08

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION (FINAL)

Elite Men

1. Andrew Blair, ACT, 3:56:56
2. Jayden Ward, NSW, 3:57:45
3. Toby Stewart, NSW, 4:08:03
4. Daniel Bonello, NSW, 4:10:24
5. Jarrod Moroni, VIC, 4:10:34

Elite Women

1. Zoe Cuthbert, ACT, 4:31:01
2. Peta Mullens, VIC, 4:31:17
3. Renata Bucher, SUI, 4:32:17
4. Briony Mattocks, NSW, 4:35:08
5. Kristy Henderson, ACT, 4:43:44

[UPCOMING EVENTS](#) | 2018

- [TreX](#) Australian Cross Triathlon Championships (2018 Worlds Qualifier) | Snowy Mtns, NSW | 24 Feb 2018
- [TreX](#) Australian Aquathlon Championships (2018 Worlds Qualifier) | Snowy Mtns, NSW | 24 Feb 2018
- Snowies Trail Run Festival | Snowy Mountains, NSW | 25 Feb 2018
- Queensland Cross Triathlon Championships | Moreton Bay Region, QLD | 24/25 Mar 2018
- [TreX](#) National Cross Triathlon Championships | Sunshine Coast, Qld | 28 Apr 2018
- Sunshine Coast Trail Run Festival | Sunshine Coast, Qld | 28 Apr 2018
- Sunshine Coast MTB Festival | Sunshine Coast, Qld | 29 Apr 2018

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