

# Felix Forissier & Solenne Billouin Win Stop #1 of XTERRA World Cup [Live Replay]

KENTING, TAIWAN, March 23, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Felix Forissier (FRA) and Solenne Billouin (FRA) stood atop the podium, earning 100 points each by winning Stop #1 of the 2024 XTERRA World Cup at the main event of the XTERRA Asia-Pacific Championship that aired live from Taiwan on March 23.

At 6AM dawn broke on Little Bay Beach in Kenting, Taiwan with indigenous drummers and enigmatic chanting signaling the end of a rainy night with a ceremonious commencement of the

[2024 XTERRA World Cup](#). Under cloudy skies with temperatures rising from 23°C, 91% humidity, and 11 km/h winds, conditions were set for a brutally challenging day of off-road triathlon.



Felix Forissier / 2024 XTERRA World Cup / Taiwan

“

The most difficult bike segment of XTERRA World Cup is here in Taiwan. You have to push all the time.”

*Felix Forissier*

## Course Description

The Full Distance Race covered a 42.5-kilometer stretch, starting with a 1.5K swim, featuring two laps and a challenging dash to the first transition where the world’s top elite off-road triathletes tackled a rigorous 29K mountain bike course, filled with challenging climbs, descents, and technical obstacles.

The race concluded with a 12K trail run through varied terrain, updated this year into a two-loop format for a quicker pace, testing endurance and agility on what many considered to be the toughest event in the 7-stop, 11 race calendar for the 2024 XTERRA World Cup.

## The Men’s Race

Runner-up in the men’s race, Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK), compared this daunting challenge to

a sweet beginning, likening his favored bike section to "eating dessert first" at the inaugural stop. Kieran McPherson (NZL) returned to defend his 2023 title of Asia-Pacific Champion and did just that, finding the course's technical demands playing to his strengths, by balancing risk and reward crucial for another victory amongst competitors from this region.

It was Felix Forissier (FRA) who sought redemption aiming to overturn last year's results where he suffered a tire puncture causing him to drop crucial points necessary for the overall 2023 XTERRA World Cup total where he eventually finished 2nd to Arthur Serrières at the Stop #7 in Trentino, Italy. Revenge was sweet for Felix who took the lead on the bike and never looked back for a dominant win.

Meanwhile, his brother Arthur Forissier (FRA), the defending 2023 XTERRA Taiwan champion rounded out the top 3 and graciously stated his indifference to which Forissier won by declaring the day before at the press conference that, "The XTERRA Taiwan title has to stay in the family."

### Action In the Water

As the men plunged into the Pacific Ocean, the group quickly spread out. Among the leaders were seasoned XTERRA veteran Ben Allen (AUS) showcasing his dominance in the water, emerging at the front with a time of 19:12 followed closely behind by Nathan F Cohen (USA) a mere 3 seconds behind and Frederico



Solenne Billouin (FRA) / 2024 World Cup / Taiwan



Solenne Billouin (FRA) / 2024 World Cup / Taiwan



Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK) / 2024 World Cup / Taiwan



Spinazze in 3rd with a time of 19:42. The chase pack just behind the top 3 consisted of Felix and Arthur Forissier, Maxim Chané (FRA) and Scott Anderson (GER).

### Mountain Bike Mastery

The 29K mountain bike section was where the drama unfolded. This punishing part of the course, filled with climbs, descents, and technical single-track trails, was a true test of stamina and skill. After the first bike split, Felix surged ahead with a 1:15 gap over his brother Arthur followed by Chané in 3rd with Sloth Nielsen in 7th hunting down the chase pack. The Danish "Overtaker" began "hunting them down" until 1 hour 27 minutes into the overall race where he was spotted on the livestream cameras joining the chase group making up over 2 minutes to pass Arthur F. and Chané.



Marta Menditto (ITA) / 2024 World Cup / Taiwan

Arthur Forissier chose to keep a steady pace in third position, while Sloth Nielsen pushed ahead, clocking the day's quickest bike time at 1:24:43. This strategic move kept Felix Forissier within striking distance as the competitors transitioned to T2 to take on the trail run.

### Trail Running Triumph

The final 12K run featured the redesigned two-loop course where Felix Forissier solidified his lead, his exceptional running ability allowing him to stay away from the pack with a masterful time of 49:38.

However, it was Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen, the self-proclaimed "super biker" who used his newfound training regimen after relocating to France in the off-season demonstrating exemplary improvements to capture another fastest segment time of 49:22 in an all-out sprint to the finish.

### Key Quotes and Notable Highlights

Arthur Forissier, reflecting on securing third place, remarked, "It's not a surprise for me. We know that Felix is strong. The only plan was to adapt to every situation." He admitted to an aggressive start and a consistent pace, noting, "I tried to push hard in the beginning. I think I had a good pace all along the race." Forissier conceded a minor oversight, "Maybe I forgot to drink a little bit more on the bike," but felt content with his performance, especially on the run. "I'm quite happy with the race. It was really technical."

Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen reflected on his second-place finish with enthusiasm, stating, "It was a day on the hunt and I executed it as I should. It was so much fun and I loved it." He highlighted a strategic moment in the race, "The deciding moment was when I made it to Maxim [Chané] and Arthur together [on the bike]. I took a small gap on Arthur, kept it on the run and extended the gap." Despite not seeing Felix after the start, Sloth Nielsen remarked, "I really wanted to win, but I had an amazing race." He praised the fairness and competitiveness of the event, "Great that the top 5 guys didn't have any mechanical issues. It was a fair race and we all raced hard."

Felix Forissier, the victor, succinctly summarized his race, "It was a really difficult race because of the humidity. I think I pushed a little too much on the bike, so during the run, it was really difficult on the 2nd loop where I lost some time to Jens Emil." He viewed his performance as a form of redemption, "I think it's a good revenge for last year. I'm in shape and my preparation for this race was great, but I can come back stronger." He also acknowledged the challenge of the terrain, stating, "The most difficult bike segment of XTERRA World Cup is here in Taiwan. You have to push all the time."

A notable exclusion from the race was Michele "The Shark" Bonacina (ITA) who fractured his left wrist on his bike during windy conditions on Wednesday leading up to the race. Although he was missed on the course, he found a second calling as a guest announcer with a keen eye to spot the finer details during the livestream broadcast.

One of the highlights of the race could be seen by 5th place Sebastien Carabin (BEL) at the 55 minute mark of the race where he was caught navigating and weaving his bike through wild buffalo.

#### Top 10 Men Finishers:

- 1st - Felix Forissier (FRA) - 2:38:31
- 2nd - Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK) - 2:39:52
- 3rd - Arthur Forissier (FRA) - 2:41:44
- 4th - Maxim Chané (FRA) - 2:45:12
- 5th - Sebastien Carabin (BEL) - 2:46:55
- 6th - Sebastian Neef (GER) - 2:47:58
- 7th - Kieran McPherson (NZL) - 2:50:18
- 8th - Scott Anderson (GER) - 2:54:05
- 9th - Federico Spinazze (ITA) - 2:54:49
- 10th - Ben Allen (AUS) - 2:56:05

#### The Women's Race

The strategy going into the race was as varied as the athletes themselves. While most opted for a cautious outlook, acknowledging the long series ahead and the lingering uncertainties of a post-

off-season, the reigning back-to-back winner of the XTERRA World Championship, Solenne Billouin (FRA) and the 2023 XTERRA World Cup Champion Alizée Paties (FRA) shared their distinct ambitions.

Billouin entered with a "race to win" mentality which may have catapulted her into a first place result, whereas Paties finished second as she aims for strategic improvements throughout the series to also secure the World Championship title that slipped away last season.

The competition was fierce and unpredictable. Last season's cat-and-mouse game between Solenne Billouin and Alizée Paties left fans on the edge of their seats, with neither having shown their full potential this season as yet. However, Italy's Marta Menditto entered the scene with momentum, capturing the final spot on the podium.

### Swim Challenge

The 1.5-kilometer swim saw an aggressive Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) gain a significant advantage getting out of the water with a time of 21:51 followed by Anna Zehnder (SUI) emerging at 22:32. It was XTERRA newcomer Cheri Cho (HKG) who rounded out the top 3 with a time of 22:35. The chase pack ended up being the top overall finishers with Solenne Billouin (FRA) and Alizée Paties (FRA) recording the same exit time of 23:19 followed 4 seconds behind by Marta Menditto (ITA).

### Mountain Bike Mayhem

Transitioning to the 29K mountain bike segment, Grabmüller (CZE) fought heroically to maintain her lead, but eventually had to give up positions to Billouin and Paties while losing time in T2 with Menditto catching her at this critical moment for a neck and neck entrance into the run segment.

Billouin, known for her mountain biking skills, started making significant gains on Paties by reaching T2 with the fastest bike time of 1:43:12 compared to Paties' second overall time of 1:46:21. This segment was crucial, shaking up the leaderboard and showcasing the strategy and strength necessary to conquer the mighty XTERRA Taiwan course.

### Run to Glory

Entering the final 12K trail run was where Menditto made up a nearly 2 minute gap on Grabmüller. This was redemption for the Italian who vowed to make up for the mental strain of the punishing climb where a new memory was forged through her triumph to capture a much deserved 3rd place.

### Top Quotes and Must-See Moments

Marta Menditto, securing third in the women's race, acknowledged the tough conditions, "It was really humid and the hills were steep." Menditto, aware of the course's mismatch with her

strengths, remains optimistic, "I think I can do better in the other stops." She concluded with pride, "Happy to start the World Cup with 3rd place. I worked hard this winter for this."

Alizée Paties, who finished second, reflected on her performance, "It was difficult, painful. Not my best day, but I put in long hours this winter with more intensity later in my training." Despite the challenges, her spirits remained high, "I'm feeling happy to be back at racing." She also shed light on a recent setback, "February was difficult because I had some trouble with [nerve pain in] my foot; I didn't know if I was in shape or not." Yet, she praised the course, "I love the technical bike course, but it was so hard with the humidity and hot weather."

Solenne Billouin, clinching first place, shared her journey to victory, "I was feeling very strong in January, but February was challenging with an injury and a long sickness, alongside stress before the year's first event." She described her mixed feelings, "I was in between being confident and recognizing areas for improvement." On the course, she noted, "On the bike, my legs felt very heavy, yet steep climbs are really my strength." Reflecting on her progress, she added, "I never won the World Cup last year, so I'm very happy to be the leader now." Looking ahead, she emphasized strategy, "Most of the training is done, so it's about being smart from here on out."

Hannah Lee Young (AUS) demonstrated that patience pays off in a long and arduous race where she was pitted against Cheri Cho (HKG) for a matchup to determine the women's Asia-Pacific Champion. Although Cho was 3rd overall out of the water, it was the experienced pace of Lee Young that earned her this title for 2024. Her excellence will be rewarded at the evening's Awards Ceremony and dinner along with etching her name in the XTERRA history books.

A masterful performance by Aneta Grabmüller should be considered when weighing the candidates for the triathlete of the day as the new mother was greeted by her infant daughter and husband at the finish in a heartwarming moment where spectators around the world viewing and commenting in the livestream chat were applauding her groundbreaking achievement to grab 75 World Cup points with a 4th place finish.

Top 10 Women Finishers:

- 1st - Solenne Billouin (FRA) - 3:10:02
- 2nd - Alizee Paties (FRA) - 3:13:13
- 3rd - Marta Menditto (ITA) - 3:16:51
- 4th - Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) - 3:23:09
- 5th - Anna Zehnder (SUI) - 3:27:46
- 6th - Jacqui Allen (GBR) - 3:30:52
- 7th - Carina Wasle (AUT) - 3:38:40
- 8th - Hannah Lee Young (AUS) - 3:45:59
- 9th - Lorena Erl (GER) - 3:58:23
- 10th - Cheri Cho (HKG) - 4:40:12

With the dust settling after a hot, humid and heated contest for Stop #1 in Taiwan, further feats of endurance and skill are in store for 6 additional global destinations and 10 more races. Stay tuned as the 2024 XTERRA World Cup series progresses, highlighting the relentless pursuit of off-road triathlon excellence.

## 2024 XTERRA World Cup Standings

### ELITE MEN

1. Felix Forissier (FRA) - 100 points
2. Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK) - 90 points
3. Arthur Forissier (FRA) - 82 points
4. Maxim Chané (FRA) - 75 points
5. Sebastien Carabin (BEL) - 69 points
6. Sebastian Neef (GER) - 63 points
7. Kieran McPherson (NZL) - 58 points
8. Scott Anderson (GER) - 53 points
9. Federico Spinazze (ITA) - 49 points
10. Ben Allen (AUS) - 45 points
11. Tom Fisher (AUS) - 41 points
12. Dominik Wychera (AUT) - 37 points
13. Ben Forbes (AUS) - 34 points
14. Nathan F Cohen (USA) - 31 points
15. Sam Teller (USA) - 28 points
16. Takehiro Irokawa (JPN) - 25 points
17. Paris Fellmann (LUX) - 21 points
18. Yuan Keng Hsu (TWN) - 19 points
19. Yen Ching Chiang (TWN) - 17 points

### ELITE WOMEN

1. Solenne Billouin (FRA) - 100 points
2. Alizée Paties (FRA) - 90 points
3. Marta Menditto (ITA) - 82 points
4. Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) - 75 points
5. Anna Zehnder (SUI) - 69 points
6. Jacqueline Ann Allen (GBR) - 63 points
7. Carina Wasle (AUT) - 58 points
8. Hannah Lee Young (AUS) - 53 points
9. Lorena Erl (GER) - 49 points
10. Cheri Cho (HKG) - 45 points

Relive the 2024 XTERRA World Cup Stop #1 in Taiwan with a [full replay of the 2024 Asia-Pacific](#)

[Championship here.](#)

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