

Showdown in Alabama: XTERRA World Cup Intensifies the NA Champs at Oak Mountain

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Key Points

- World Cup Stop #3 debuts the 2024 XTERRA North American Championship, featuring Full Distance and Short Track races.

- Elite athletes will vie for 175 total series points, with livestreaming of the Short Track race at 10:00 am EST on Sunday.

- Forissier brothers set to battle Serrières and Lagerstrom with Billouin aiming to maintain her dominance.



Suzie Snyder (USA)

The 2024 XTERRA World Cup progresses to its third stop, doubling as the inaugural XTERRA North American Championship and featuring the season's first Short Track race. This major event is set to unfold over the weekend of May 18-19, 2024, on the award-winning trails of Oak Mountain State Park.

“

I'm feeling excited to race in Oak Mountain. It's by far my favorite course on the XTERRA circuit.”

Eric Lagerstrom

Elite athletes are set to compete for a \$30,000 prize purse across the Full Distance and Short Track races, with 175 total series points on the line. The professional field of elite

competitors is stacked, including big local names like US road triathlon star Eric Lagerstrom and returning USA Champ, Sullivan Middaugh for the Full Distance contest on May 18 and the Short Track event on May 19, which will be broadcast live to a global audience.

Qualification for the Short Track race is highly competitive, as only the top 25 male and female finishers from the Full Distance race qualify, along with five wild card entries, making up the 30 starters in this fast-paced, made-for-TV format. The action will be available for fans worldwide, with a live stream scheduled to start at 10:00am EST.

Full Distance Course Layout

The course at Oak Mountain State Park is set to challenge over 50 professional athletes as they vie for positioning and points. Last year's tight finish between Arthur Serrières (FRA) and Eric Lagerstrom (USA), which saw Serrières win by a mere 22 seconds, sets the stage for this year's rematch. The women's race with 2023 XTERRA World Cup Champion Alizée Paties (FRA) aims to reclaim her standing against current leader Solenne Billouin (FRA) and strong contenders like Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) and Sandra Mairhofer (ITA).

Swim (1.5K): The competition launches athletes into a 1.5-kilometer swim through Double Oak Lake, consisting of two 750-meter laps with an Australian exit on the beach in between loops.

Bike (33K): Following the swim, athletes transition to a 33-kilometer MTB course that traverses the park's extensive trail network. This single-loop course is renowned for its blend of technical difficulty and scenic routes. It features 1,650 feet of elevation gain, incorporating well-established trails that demand both speed and technical skill, making it a favorite among both professional and amateur mountain bikers.

Run (10K): The run segment covers a 10-kilometer circuit around Double Oak Lake. It takes runners on hard-packed, tight, and twisty trails, offering scenic views throughout. The course eventually leads into the more challenging terrains of



Alizée Paties (FRA)



Felix Forissier (FRA)



Eric Lagerstrom (USA)

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Rattlesnake Ridge and the flowy Family Trail, concluding with a sprint on pavement back to the bustling race village and the finish line.

Elite Course Insights

Here's what several elite athletes have to say about the course:

Sullivan Middaugh (USA): "The bike course is pretty technical and helps sharpen mountain bike skills early in the season."



Solenne Billouin (FRA)

Eric Lagerstrom (USA): "The style of trail in Oak Mountain is very similar to the style that I've always ridden in Oregon. Purpose-built for mountain biking, some flowing descents, some roots, I just love it."

Suzie Snyder (USA): "I love the (usually) non-wetsuit swim, and the mountain bike course is the most natural singletrack we race on which is fun and challenging and very different from the rest of the World Cup."

Alizée Paties (FRA): "The tracks here make me feel like a kid in Disneyland riding Space Mountain during the bike course."

Jens Emil Sloth Nielson (DNK): "The course is fun and fast, yet very different from the courses in Europe as we mainly thrive through shaped singletrack."

Elite Men's and Women's Start List available [here](#).

Key Elites in the Men's Race

(Name, Country, World Cup Points)

Felix Forissier, FRA, 190 pts

Felix "The Silent Assassin," Forissier (FRA), known for his consistent performances across all three disciplines, expressed confidence ahead of the upcoming challenge. "At this stage of the season, I feel good and focused," he stated. "My competitors will be numerous." The 2023 XTERRA World Cup runner-up and current leader with a win at Stop #1 in Taiwan and a near-perfect performance thwarted only by a late error at Stop #2 in Greece, a double win at Oak Mountain appears within reach for the Frenchman.

Arthur Forissier, FRA, 182 pts

Arthur Forissier (FRA), known for his precise approach to race preparation, has strategically calculated his approach for the upcoming double-feature weekend at Oak Mountain. With an 8-point gap to close between himself and his younger brother in the series standings, the older Forissier is focused on leveraging both races to potentially take the lead. Fresh from a victory in Stop #2 in Greece, he is intent on securing another win. Reflecting on the adaptability required for success, Forissier notes, "Adaptation is the most beautiful of all the qualities, and adapting to different terrain, weather, and duration of effort is a demonstration of performance."

Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen, DNK, 165 pts

Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK), securing second in Taiwan and fourth in Greece, remains a standout contender. Notably victorious over Arthur Serrières in last year's World Championship Short Track in Italy, he's poised for another strong performance in Oak Mountain. He reflects, "It's my second time here; last year I didn't gain much on the bike, so I need to be more aggressive." With improvements in his running and strategic use of Short Track races, he adds, "They are definitely a big part of my tactics to snatch some World Cup points. Great racing to come."

Arthur Serrières, FRA, 82 pts

Arthur Serrières (FRA) enters XTERRA Oak Mountain as a top contender with an impressive record. As the reigning World Cup Champion, Serrières is favored to excel, clinching both the Full Distance and Short Track races at Oak Mountain last year. Familiar with the course and adept across both race formats, Serrières is in rhythm and well-prepared to maximize his standings after skipping the first stop to focus on training. Returning fresh from a third-place finish in Greece and a victory at XTERRA Nouvelle Aquitaine the following week, he commented, "I feel great to be back here! This place is special because that's where I won twice last year. I'm hoping for a big battle and to be more ready than in Greece."

Eric Lagerstrom, USA, N/R

Eric Lagerstrom (USA), a distinguished on-road triathlete from the USA, is set to make his 2024 XTERRA debut at Oak Mountain, where he secured a second-place finish in 2023. Transitioning smoothly into off-road racing, Lagerstrom employs a strategy of staying off the radar, remarking, "Ideally they won't take me seriously for as long as possible! I have a ton of respect for these guys and how they're 100% dedicated to this discipline." He also shares his enthusiasm for the upcoming event, saying, "I'm feeling excited to race in Oak Mountain. It's by far my favorite course on the XTERRA circuit, and I hope I can have a similarly strong race to last year."

Sullivan Middaugh, USA, N/R

Sullivan Middaugh (USA), son of former XTERRA World Champion Josiah Middaugh, is the returning USA Champion, making his 2024 XTERRA World Cup debut at the North American Championship in Oak Mountain. Coming off strong performances at last year's XTERRA World Championship where he secured third in the Short Track and fifth in the Full Distance, Middaugh is ready to defend his title and claim the North American crown. Aiming to secure a spot in the Short Track race to maximize his points early in the season, Middaugh stated, "The XTERRA World Cup is bringing a high level of competition to each stop on the tour. I'm very excited to race Oak Mountain for my second time."

□Key Elites in the Women's Race

□□(Name, Country, World Cup Points)

Solenne Billouin, FRA, 200 pts.

Solenne Billouin (FRA) has dominated the 2024 XTERRA World Cup thus far with victories at the first two stops in Taiwan and Greece. As the reigning two-time XTERRA World Champion, Billouin has maintained an exceptional record, finishing in the top five in 25 of her last 27 races and claiming 11 victories. Her strengths in both Full Distance races and 2023 Short Track wins in Italy and the Czech Republic, underscores her versatility. On a mission for a potential first World Cup title and a third consecutive World Championship, Billouin continues to cement her legacy in the sport.

Alizée Paties, FRA, 165 pts

Alizée Paties (FRA) currently tied with Aneta Grabmüller at 165 points, stands second in the series rankings despite a slightly subdued performance so far compared to last year. Having finished second in Taiwan and fourth in Greece, Paties remains a threat as the 2023 XTERRA World Cup Champion. With an impressive streak of top-five finishes in 27 of her last 28 races, she views the upcoming stop as a crucial chance to solidify her position and prepare for the World Championship. Reflecting on recent challenges, Paties shared, "I'm getting better week after week, even if I had a bad day in Greece with stomach problems. I did some exams to understand my body and to know what I have to do for the next ones."

Aneta Grabmüller, CZE, 165 pts

Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) has quickly emerged as a standout in the 2024 XTERRA World Cup, securing fourth in Taiwan and an unexpected second in Greece. Known for leading early, especially in swimming, she is gearing up for her first race at Oak Mountain. Grabmüller sees potential in the course, noting, "It looks like a course that could suit me with smooth fast single tracks. I think everyone should watch out for me in the water, and I hope there will be someone who can keep up so we can work together on the bike to keep the strong runners behind for as

long as possible." Despite not anticipating her current success, she's embracing her position as a serious contender, "I didn't expect to be a podium contender, but here I am. It's a dream coming true and I am truly enjoying it."

Sandra Mairhofer, FRA, 82 pts

Sandra Mairhofer (ITA), currently seventh in the XTERRA World Cup series, is expected for a strong showing despite having raced one less event than many of her competitors. The Italian athlete, known for her exceptional biking skills, has consistently been a top contender with 20 top-five finishes in her last 22 races, including a third-place finish in Stop #2 in Greece this year. Mairhofer is strategic about her opportunities, aware of the 175 points available across the two races which could boost her into the top 5. She shared her expectations, stating, "I think it will be a close race, the best five girls will be together for a long time I think and we will fight it out on the run at the end. It is quite early in the season so I still have a fresh body and mind. I did some MTB races but this is just the second triathlon for me so I am excited to push hard."

Suzie Snyder, USA, N/R

Suzie Snyder (USA), an experienced former champion on home soil, boasts an impressive 17 year off-road resume including two XTERRA Pan Am Tour Champion titles and five XTERRA USA Championship wins along with a 2024 win at XTERRA Puerto Rico. Snyder can potentially add the title of first-ever XTERRA North American Champion to her accolades at Oak Mountain against her challengers from this region. Reflecting on her connection to the sport and the significance of this race, Snyder shared, "I'm really focused on doing the events I love and I'm excited about this year. I'm [also] excited to return to Oak Mountain as it's my favorite race on the XTERRA schedule."

Full Distance Elite Women's Start List available [here](#).

Aside from the implications of the XTERRA North American Championship and 2024 XTERRA World Cup series standings, Oak Mountain will provide a full festival atmosphere with activities ranging from a Kids Sprint and Bike Race to a Sprint Triathlon, ensuring additional opportunities for younger athletes to shine through the inaugural [XTERRA Youth Tour](#).

Weekend attractions include free yoga sessions, professional Q&As, a battle of the bands, and a variety of local vendors. The event culminates with the live-streamed Short Track race on Sunday at 10 am EST, offering a full schedule of intense competition and community engagement, both on-site and for a worldwide audience.

Next Stops on the 2024 XTERRA World Cup Series

Stop #4: Belgium

Jun 8: Full Distance

Stop #5: Quebec
Jul 12: Short Track
Jul 14: Full Distance

Stop #6: Czech
Aug 10: Full Distance
Aug 11: Short Track [▯ LIVE]
Livestream start: 13:00 GMT +1

Stop #7: Trentino
Sep 26: Short Track [▯ LIVE]
Livestream start: 14:00 GMT +2
Sep 28: Full Distance [▯ LIVE]
Livestream start: 09:45 GMT +2

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XTERRA is a global lifestyle brand that champions the outdoor enthusiast in their pursuit of relentless adventure. From pioneering the sport of cross-triathlon in 1996, XTERRA has grown to become a leading brand in off-road adventure through the XTERRA World Tour, XTERRA Trail Run World Series and the XTERRA World Cup, connecting an eco-aware community of worldwide explorers that seek to protect the places where they play. For more information, visit xterraplanet.com.

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