

Mairhofer and Forissier Top Oak Mountain at 2024 XTERRA World Cup

Felder and Middaugh Crowned Inaugural XTERRA North American Champions

PELHAM, ALABAMA, USA, May 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 2024 XTERRA World Cup progressed to its third stop, doubling as the inaugural XTERRA North American Championship and featuring the season's first Short Track race over the weekend of May 18-19, 2024, on the award-winning trails of Oak Mountain State Park.

Sandra Mairhofer (ITA) clinched victory in the Full Distance race, securing the

maximum 100 points and advancing in the overall standings. In the men's race, Felix Forissier (FRA) notched his second victory of the 2024 XTERRA World Cup. Additionally, the event featured the inauguration of the XTERRA North American Championship, with Sullivan Middaugh (USA) and Amanda Felder (USA) emerging as the first-ever titleholders. This race served dual purposes, allocating World Cup points for elites and deciding regional championship titles for both elite professionals and age-group competitors from the region.

“

Getting that experience and seeing that level of competition early in the season excites me for what's to come.”

*Sullivan Middaugh (USA):
2024 XTERRA North American
Champion*

The First Short Track race of the 2024 XTERRA World Cup was highly competitive making up the fast-paced, made-for-TV format that was available live and [currently on replay](#) for a worldwide viewing audience. Solenne Billouin (FRA) claimed Short Track victory in the women's contest

while Arthur Serrières (FRA) won in the men's race.

Course Breakdown

The Full Distance race commenced with a 1.5K swim in Double Oak Lake, split into two 750-



Sandra Mairhofer (ITA)

meter loops featuring an Australian exit. The event continued under warm, calm weather conditions with temperatures peaking in the high 20s Celsius (68-86°F). Athletes transitioned to a 33K mountain bike route through Oak Mountain State Park's diverse trail network, which is renowned for its blend of scenic vistas and technical demands, including 1,650 feet of elevation gain. The race concluded with a 10K run around the lake on tight, hard-packed trails, culminating in a sprint to the finish line at the race village.

American athletes offered insights into the course's unique challenges. Sullivan Middaugh (USA) remarked, "The bike course is pretty technical and helps sharpen mountain bike skills early in the season." Eric Lagerstrom (USA) shared, "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) added to the overall experience, "I love the non-wetsuit swim, and the mountain bike course is the most natural singletrack we race on which is fun and challenging."

Women's Race Recap

Swim Segment

Aneta Grabmüller (CZE) and Kamille Larocque (CAN) led the charge out of the water side by side, effectively setting a brisk pace for the start of the race on land. Amanda Felder (USA) strategically positioned herself just behind them, conserving



Arthur Serrieres (FRA), Felix Forissier (FRA)



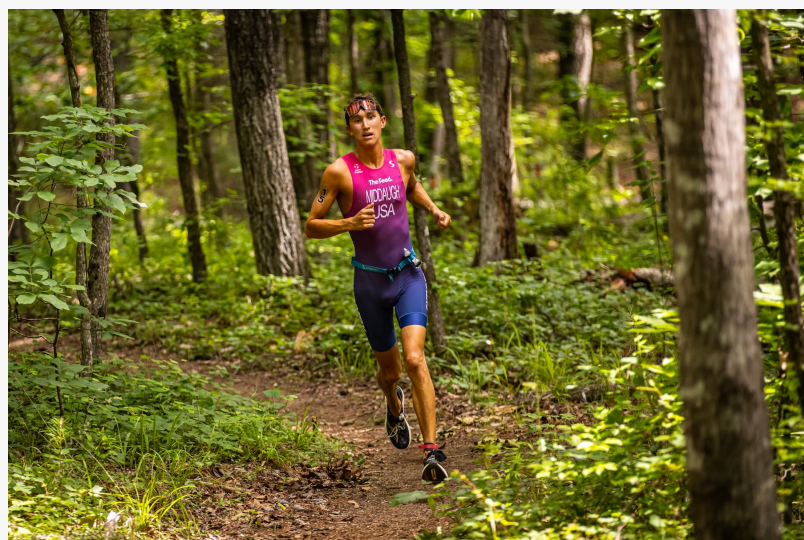
Amanda Felder (USA) and Sullivan Middaugh (USA)



Sandra Mairhofer (ITA) chases Solenne Billouin (FRA)

energy for the final sprint. The race was a thrilling competition, with Amanda Felder (USA) ultimately emerging as the winner.

energy while keeping the leaders within reach. Following closely, a small chase pack led by Emma Ducreux (FRA) emerged approximately 55 seconds behind the leaders. Not far behind, a critical group containing some of the World Cup's top contenders—including Sandra Mairhofer (ITA), Solenne Billouin (FRA), and Marta Menditto (ITA)—made their exit, closely tailed by the 2023 World Cup winner, Alizée Paties (FRA), who clung to the rear of this group, signaling a potentially dramatic bike segment to come.



Sullivan Middaugh (USA)

Bold Breakaways in the Bike Segment

Aneta Grabmüller and Amanda Felder held the lead up to the 5K mark, distancing themselves from Kamille Larocque, who fell back into a substantial chase group driven by Suzie Snyder. Sandra Mairhofer and Solenne Billouin, not far behind, closed the gap significantly through the challenging, twisty singletrack. Meanwhile, Alizée Paties struggled initially due to traffic from her slower swim but began to find her rhythm as the race progressed.

Disaster struck for Billouin when she punctured her tire at the same spot as the previous year. Despite the setback, she managed to continue riding on a foam insert. Doug Hall, former XTERRA elite, livestream commentator and XTERRA EMEA General Manager, remarked, "This was seriously impressive, inserts are really meant for emergencies and may get you home, riding this course on just the insert is a serious move and amazing that she held it upright and together." This incident opened the door for Mairhofer, who seized the opportunity to dominate the technical segments of the course, building a nearly three-minute lead by the 25K mark.

At the same checkpoint, Billouin barely maintained a 10-second lead over Paties, who used her superior technical skills to climb into third place. Grabmüller and Felder, now working together, followed closely, navigating the downhill sections adeptly. As the course straightened out, Billouin faced the task of securing her position with Paties close behind. Mairhofer reached Transition 2 first, with Paties overtaking Billouin but only managing to extend her lead to 10 seconds as they switched to running shoes.

Relentless Run Segment

Mairhofer surged ahead with a substantial lead, maintaining a fierce pace initially unaware of the developments behind her. Midway through the run, upon seeing her competitors during an out-and-back section, Mairhofer adjusted her strategy. Realizing the significant gap she had created,

she slightly eased her pace, conserving energy for the upcoming Short Track race on Sunday while still managing to finish the race looking fresh after 2 hours and 43 minutes.

Billouin, freed from the constraints of her damaged bike, caught up to and passed Paties, who was visibly struggling with the heat and humidity. Billouin's strong performance not only secured her second place, finishing nearly 2 minutes and 30 seconds behind Mairhofer, but also placed her 43 seconds ahead of Paties who finished third.

Meanwhile, Marta Menditto (ITA) emerged as a standout performer on the run, rapidly moving up the ranks. Her aggressive pace in the first 5 kilometers allowed her to overtake several competitors including Aneta Grabmüller, Amanda Felder, and Suzie Snyder, ultimately earning her a commendable fourth place. American Amanda Felder, despite the competition, did enough during the run to clinch the North American title.

The Battle of Billouin vs. Mairhofer

Billouin's tire puncture dramatically shifted the dynamics of the race, providing Mairhofer with a significant advantage. Despite the setback, Billouin managed to maintain competitiveness, which may have crucially saved her World Cup overall campaign.

Billouin reflected on the day, noting, "The race didn't really go to plan. I wasn't afraid to push at first in the swim, and I'm happy about that." Despite the puncture on the bike that made it "very tough for the legs," she stayed in the race, covering 15 to 20 kilometers in that condition. "It was difficult to stay focused," she admitted. Even when caught by Alizee Paties, she tried to "stay focused and in my own headspace." Her philosophy of racing shone through in her determination to finish and collect as many points as possible, stating, "You have to finish anyway and take all the points you can. It's part of what keeps me focused on racing."

On the other side, Mairhofer shared her experience, "We did the swim together, and I had a strong bike. It's not really my kind of course here, but I'm happy to take the win." Her aggressive strategy on the course was evident as she recounted, "I was able to push hard on the uphill and downhill. After I passed Solenne on the downhill, I pushed hard to extend the gap between us." Her efforts to secure the lead were relentless, "Me and Solenne were riding together, but once I passed her, I pushed really hard to maintain my lead."

The battle between Billouin and Mairhofer promises to be a captivating saga in the races to come. Billouin's ability to overcome challenges and Mairhofer's strength on the course suggest that when both athletes are fit and free of mechanicals, it will indeed be a battle for the ages.

Top 10 Women's Full Distance Results

1. Sandra Mairhofer, ITA: 2:43:57
2. Solenne Billouin, FRA: 2:46:31

3. Alizée Paties, FRA: 2:47:12
4. Marta Menditto, ITA: 2:50:26
5. Amanda Felder, USA: 2:52:08
6. Aneta Grabmüller, CZE: 2:52:42
7. Suzie Snyder, USA: 2:53:14
8. Anna Zehnder, CHE: 2:55:18
9. Elizabeth Orchard, NZL: 2:59:27
10. Emma Ducreux, FRA: 3:02:04

[Full Results Available Here](#)

Men's Race Recap

Swim Segment Surge

The men's race saw Nicholas Harvey (CAN) and Eric Lagerstrom (USA) leading the pack out of the water, showcasing a narrow lead over the competition. A significant chase group, led by Steve Croucher (USA) and including notables like Maxim Chané (FRA), Felix Forissier (FRA), Michele Bonacina (ITA), and Arthur Serrières (FRA), followed closely. Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen (DNK), performing better than usual, was just 90 seconds behind.

Blazing Bike Segment

Lagerstrom initially took the lead during the transition, but Felix Forissier quickly closed the gap. By the 5K mark, the race's favorites, including Lagerstrom, Harvey, Felix Forissier, Bonacina, and Serrières, had moved to the front. The dynamic on the trails changed as Théo Dupras (FRA) and Sloth Nielsen aggressively ascended the first major climb, joining forces and catching up to Sullivan Middaugh (USA) and Chané. This group surged across the course, eventually overtaking earlier leaders and setting a blistering pace. The battle intensified on the last downhill, with Théo Dupras leading into T2.

Fierce Trail Run Finale

The run segment turned into a battlefield with Felix Forissier pushing hard right out of T2 to regain the lead from Dupras. Sloth Nielsen gave chase but had to moderate his pace to avoid burnout. By the 5K mark, Forissier maintained a 30 second lead over Sloth Nielsen. Arthur Serrières, not far behind, closed the gap to just 4 seconds from Sloth Nielsen at the midpoint. A slip in the last 2K caused Sloth Nielsen to fall, allowing Serrières to move into second place. With reduced pressure, Felix Forissier extended his lead to 50 seconds by the finish line, with Serrières and Sloth Nielsen following.

Top 10 Men's Full Distance Results

1. Felix Forissier, FRA: 2:20:59
2. Arthur Serrières, FRA: 2:21:49
3. Jens Emil Sloth Nielsen, DNK: 2:22:32
4. Sullivan Middaugh, USA: 2:23:36
5. Maxim Chané, FRA: 2:25:00
6. Arthur Forissier, FRA: 2:26:49
7. Théo Dupras, FRA: 2:26:55
8. Kieran McPherson, NZL: 2:27:08
9. Eric Lagerstrom, USA: 2:28:12
10. Michele Bonacina, ITA: 2:29:28

Felder and Middaugh Become Inaugural XTERRA North American Champions

Amanda Felder (USA) and Sullivan Middaugh (USA) emerged as the inaugural XTERRA North American Championship Full Distance race winners.

Felder returned to XTERRA after a hiatus with a cautious yet determined approach. "I've been away from XTERRA for a year, so I played it a bit more conservatively than usual," she began, detailing her tactical start. As the race progressed, she found herself in a promising position, "I paced the bike conservatively to start, then Sandra [Mairhofer] and Solenne [Billouin] came by and I tried to stay with them." The run was where Felder truly excelled, feeling empowered to control her own pace, "It was great to run within myself and in control, being able to run my own race. Being in that position was fantastic." Her season's philosophy was clear as she aimed to enjoy the process more than before, "I'm trying to have fun this season, taking things less seriously than in the past. It was kind of unexpected, but I knew I was in good shape. I've done some mountain bike races this season, and having a championship at sea level really played to my favor."

Sullivan Middaugh reveled in the challenge saying, "Off-road is my home, so I had tons of fun. We had a really good front group, but the front three gapped me by the end. I gave it my all on the downhill of the singletrack, but I knew the Europeans are really good at descending." As the race transitioned from bike to run, Middaugh acknowledged the intensity of his competitors, "They went out super hard. I tried to go with them but couldn't keep up. By the time we hit the transition, the front three were already 15 seconds ahead." Reflecting on his overall performance, Middaugh expressed satisfaction and anticipation for future competitions, "I was actually pretty happy with my effort over the run and felt that it was solid for me today. It's amazing to have World Championship competition here. Getting that experience and seeing that level of competition early in the season excites me for what's to come."

Billouin and Serrières Win First Short Track Race of the 2024 XTERRA World Cup

In addition to the XTERRA North American Championship and the 2024 XTERRA World Cup Full Distance Race, the action-packed weekend concluded with the live-streamed Short Track race on

Sunday at 9 am local time. Solenne Billouin (FRA) and Arthur Serrières (FRA) emerged victorious.

About XTERRA

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.

[High resolution images available for use here.](#)

XTERRA Content Team

XTERRA

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)

[TikTok](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/712985531>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.