

'Blistering pace' launches Ultra 100

Shauna Farnell - Vail Daily

July 30, 2005 BEAVER CREEK - A bike race that covers 100 miles and gains more than 14,000 feet of elevation isn't the ideal setting in which to set a mean pace off of the starting line.

But that's how things went in the Ultra 100 at Beaver Creek Saturday. Mike Janelle was the culprit. He shot out of the start, up Beaver Creek Mountain with Jimi Mortenson and Jay Henry wincing, but in tow - nobody wanting to lose the lead pace right off of the start. Although Janelle continued to push it for about the first six hours of the ride, he finally lost steam on the grueling, 3,500-plus climb up Muddy Pass, and Mortenson passed him and never looked back. "Once we got going, Janelle was just setting this really hard pace. I just figured I'd try to hang on as long as I could," said Mortenson, who won Saturday, in a course record time of 7 hours, 30 minutes and 23 seconds - more than a half-hour faster than Jay Henry's winning time last year.

"Right about halfway, Jay started not feeling good," Mortenson said. "I was like, We'll, Jay's probably going to catch back up. For now, it's me and Mike.' I had no expectations to be able to even ride with those guys today. The course pretty much decides everything. On Muddy Pass and on the last little

singletrack section, I was hurting. I definitely would have put money against me today. "Janelle crossed the finish line about three minutes later, and Henry pedaled onto the podium in 7:39.00.

The course began at Beaver Creek with a climb up the mountain and a traverse and descent down Arrowhead. It crossed U.S. Highway 6 and went under Interstate 70, up Berry Creek and June Creek trails, across Red and White Mountain Road to a turnaround point at Piney River Ranch, over to Muddy Pass, down Muddy Pass to 4 Eagle Ranch, back up the pass, down June Creek, across the two highways, back up Arrowhead and finishing in Beaver Creek. "These two set a blistering pace right from the beginning," said Henry of Janelle and Mortenson. "We took off so fast. We were the only three silly enough to go out at that pace. It was a little risky. It was a steady pace the whole time. I was just struggling. Finally I was like, 'OK, I'll race my own race,' thinking they would fade. But they didn't fade." In last year's race, Janelle gave up on Muddy Pass and rode a singletrack home to his house in Wildridge. This time, however, he just needed a breather along the worst climb - riders gain almost 4,000 feet of elevation from 4 Eagle Ranch to the summit of Muddy Pass - and a Coke at the top. "My back was bugging me. I stopped once to stretch. It was just so hot," Janelle said. "And my feet - They just hurt from pressing on them all day. I was pouring cold water on them. I drank a Coke. I just slammed one. It was so good. It was about the best thing I could have ... except for a beer. A beer would have been awesome.

Janelle and Henry raced three times last week, including two national races in Idaho and Snowmass, both of which Henry won to qualify him for the U.S. team in the Marathon World Championship event Aug. 20 in Norway. Janelle also earned a spot through discretionary qualifying. Henry is the No. 2 mountain biker in the country, and Janelle is No. 3. All three podium finishers in Saturday's Ultra are also planning on competing in today's adventure race at Beaver Creek.

One close call in the race came for Mike Kloser, who was holding his own near the lead pack until a series of untimely bumps and flats plagued his race. His first big shake up came on his way down Piney Road when he hit a berm at high speed, launched into the landing on his front wheel and came very close to losing all of his teeth. "I'd hate to see what I would have looked like," said Kloser, who still managed to finish in about eight and a half hours despite two flat tires following his near-disaster. "I did a nose wheelie going about 30 mph. I started to go sideways. Thankfully, I got into the ditch. It was pretty scary. I thought it was over. I had a flat right at the top of Muddy Pass. I put a tube in, but it busted the valve stem off. I put my next tube in, and I flatted about a mile later. I did about eight or nine miles of Muddy Pass on a flat tire. But I'm just happy I didn't buy the farm.

Louisville couple wins respective categories in 100K
In the 100-kilometer version of the Ultra

Mike and Karen Hogan of Louisville took unprecedented wins in their respective men's and women's races. While the 100K course shaved off the portion of the full course to Piney Lake and back and also the Muddy Pass stretch to 4 Eagle Ranch, the 100K riders still had 9,000 feet of elevation to climb and the other prolonged sections of uphill in the 100-mile course. "The last climb up Arrowhead was the worst part for me," Mike Hogan said. "You figure you're on your way home when you hit 1-70, but you're not." At least 1,000 feet of climbing remained for riders in the last 10 miles of the race, and, after seven hours, their legs were wobbly. "When I turned up the road, I thought, 'There's no way I'm supposed to be going this high,'" said Karen Hogan, who finished in 6 hours and 37 minutes. "Then I saw the marker, and knew I was on the right course. It was a great course." Beaver Creek Resort Company director Tony O'Rourke had his best finish ever, completing the 100K in 7:04, but agreed the final climb was the part that hit him hardest. "Maybe just because it's at the end," he said. "It's hot, and coming down (June Creek), you get spoiled because you almost think it's over." Sports Writer Shauna Farnell can be reached at 949-0555, ext. 610, or sfarnell@vaildaily.com. Vail, Colorado