



Czechs Win Fifth Consecutive Stage

Australian and Austrian Make The Podium

Czech team VIG+ racing made it five straight stage victories from five attempts today as Ivan Rybarik scored his second stage win at the Crocodile Trophy of 2008.

With the leaders in the general classification taking it easy during today's 99 kilometre "out and back" stage from Chillagoe, VIG+ racing showed its incredible depth at this year's outback classic by stealing a stage victory with two of its domestiques.



The leaders cross an outback cattle grid

Things didn't exactly go to plan for the Czechs, when the man chosen to storm to a stage victory, Kejval Lubos, failed to deliver on a course suited to pure time trialists. Instead it was left to his helper Ivan Rybarik, to blow away the opposition.

"I was supposed to be here as the domestique for Lubos, but now you see the result," Rybarik said.

"I am so happy that I have won the boomerang (the prize for the stage winner) here today."

There was good news also for Australia and Austria with Merida Flight Centre's Adrian Jackson fighting his way into second place and Austrian Alfred Schabauer third.

Rybarik, Jackson, Lubos and Schabauer were all part of a seven man breakaway which went up the road at the ten kilometre mark of today's stage. The first to drop away as the pace lifted was Darren O'Grady of the Coopers Shimano Dream, but the other six held on until the last twenty kilometres.

"You wouldn't believe how fast the pace was," O'Grady commented at stage end.

"The Czechs wanted the stage win and I was trying to hang on."

One by one, the group dwindled until just Rybarik, Jackson and Schabauer were left in the hunt for the stage. It seemed almost inevitable that an attack would come from Rybarik and when it did, as has been the case for every day of this race, there was no answer to the Czech dominance.

"Three kilometres before the finish, Rybarik attacked, it split up and then we rode alone," Schabauer recounted.

"It was hard this stage and I'm very, very lucky to be third in the finish.

Jackson's second place was about the only joy so-far for the Australian men racing in the elite division of the Crocodile Trophy. At this level, the man who won this year's Wildside and Central Australian Mountainbike Challenge, is on a steep learning curve.

"I rested up yesterday and rode with our women's leader Jo Bennett," Jackson said of his tactics.

“Today the plan was for myself or Nick Both to get into the breakaway and I managed to get into the breakaway, which was great.”

There was no change to the general classification today as the Crocodile Trophy’s leaders saved their best efforts for tomorrow’s blisteringly hard stage to Mount Mulgrave.

VIG+ racing’s Ondrej Fojtik still leads the race from two of his team-mates, Martin Horak and Tomas Trunschka, with the nearest threat coming from Belgian Nicolas Vermeulen who is more than eleven minutes behind on G.C. in fourth place.

Steurs Pulls Back Time

Although the race was travelling through cattle country, the protagonists in the women’s race were “playing for sheep stations” today, to use the Australian vernacular.

Second-placed Belgian Karen Steurs (Team Ride For The Stars) tried on several occasions to attack her rival Jo Bennett of the Merida Flight Centre Team and finally succeeded as Bennett felt the heat for the first time in this year’s Trophy.

“It was very hard in the heat,” a beaming Steurs said after getting the stage win and pulling back two minutes on G.C.

“I tried two times to attack and then came back to the group.

“Then Christophe (Steurs husband and domestique) attacked and I got on his wheel and Jo behind me but Jo broke.”

An exhausted Bennett, who now leads the women’s event by just 1 minute and 1 second, admitted the stage was much harder than it looked on paper.



Naomi Hansen

“From what the guys said from last year it was supposed to be an easier stage, but it was hard,” Bennett said.

“I really felt it today.”

All three women’s entrants in this year’s Crocodile Trophy have, so-far, performed at a high level. Naomi Hansen, who is riding with the Coopers-Shimano Dream Team has been sharing much of her time on the road with Belgian legend Eric Vanderaerden.

Well back on G.C., but still a contender for stage honours, Hansen certainly isn’t giving up.

“It’s great, I’m loving it,” the effervescent Hansen said of her Crocodile Trophy experience.

“It’s great riding with people like Eric, what a legend.”



Karen Steurs exhausted at race end



Riding through the Aussie Outback, near Chillagoe

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Event Partners





2008 Crocodile Trophy Stage Plan

Stage 1.

Mareeba—Irvinebank 86km/1100m Tuesday, 21. October

Stage 2.

Irvinebank—Koombooloomba 128km/1400m Wednesday, 22. October

Stage 3.

Koombooloomba-Gunnawarra 122km/2235m Thursday, 23. October

Stage 4.

Gunnawarra-Chillagoe 130km/900m Friday, 24. October

Stage 5.

Chillagoe-Chillagoe 120km/850m Saturday, 25. October

Stage 6.

Chillagoe-Mount Mulgrave 138km/800m Sunday, 26. October

Stage 7.

Mount Mulgrave-Laura 148km/1100m Monday, 27. October

Stage 8.

Laura-Cooktown 142km/1050m Tuesday, 28. October

Stage 9.

Cooktown-Ayton 128km/1900m Wednesday, 29. October

Stage 10.

Ayton-Cape Tribulation 48km/520m Thursday, 30. October

