



Czech Six-Pack as Trophy Reaches Mount Mulgrave

The Czech Republic made it a six-pack of stage victories at Australia's Crocodile Trophy today as VIG+ Racing's Kejval Lubos delivered on the promise he showed during yesterday's stage at Chillagoe.

This time there was no blowing up at the death as Lubos and breakaway partner Tomas Kozak made it another "Czech-one-two" when the race reached its annual stop-over at Mount Mulgrave Station, a cattle grazing property almost as large as some European principalities.



The "real" Australian Outback

The pancake flat parcours along the dusty gravel roads of outback Tropical North Queensland perfectly suited the Czech strongman, who had always been singled out for a tilt at this stage. In years past, this, the flattest stage of the Crocodile Trophy has been won by big-gear grinders.

"Yes, today I am very happy that everything went to plan," Lubos said.

"Yesterday I was supposed to be the winner, but twenty kilometres from the finish I had a problem.

"Today I try again and I am the winner, it's great."

The Czech pair broke away three kilometres into today's stage and with the group of G.C. leader Ondrej Fojtik taking a measured approach, the move was always destined to succeed.

"Everyone was just watching each other," Australia's fifth placed rider Craig Gordon said of the tactical battle in the G.C. group.

"It's just out in the open and for me, like, a smaller guy it's just the element and the wind and it's difficult when the big Czechs get out the front."

Both Gordon and Belgian Nic Vermeulen will need to find something special to challenge the Czechs as they cling to slim hopes of standing on the final podium. The G.C. has changed little over the past two days, with Vermeulen 11.04 behind Fojtik and Gordon at 18.33.

The Australian, racing with out the help of a team, who declared at the start of the race he would "show the Euro's how it's done" is at least talking confidently after suffering an intestinal upset.

"I saw the doctor and I've had some Imodium for the last couple of days and I'm feeling good, a lot better," Gordon said.

It appears the Czech weapons cache of Fojtik, Martin Horak and Tomas Trunschka will save its next explosive effort for tomorrow's signature stage from Mount Mulgrave to Laura, where VIG+ racing will have no choice but to play its hand and reveal which rider it really intends to support for the overall victory.

Rumours flooded the Crocodile Trophy camp kitchen at this evening's presentation that the Czechs would be splitting into two groups, with one team supporting Fojtik and another supporting either Horak or Trunschka.

But the G.C. Leader, the man who has fought harder than any of his countrymen to make himself a Crocodile Trophy contender, was quick to douse the flames of speculation.

“The tactic is that I am the leader, I am the leader,” Fojtik affirmed.

“I want to keep first place and it will be three days until the finish and I hope to be the leader of this great race in Cape Tribulation.

Fojtik’s great advantage is that he knows only too well what the protagonists face tomorrow on the road from Mount Mulgrave to Laura. It’s a stage of close to 150 kilometres, across some of the deepest corrugations the riders will experience and is traditionally one of the two stages riders rate as the hardest of the race.

For the elite protagonists, the road to the deeply spiritual Quinkan country of Laura is about survival of the fittest.

“Yeah of course it will be a hard day and we will see what happens,” Fojtik said.

Merida-Flight Centre’s Tim Bennett, a Crocodile Trophy veteran, made perhaps the most important observation of Fojtik’s race tactics.

“Ondrej knows what’s ahead of him, that’s why he hasn’t been smashing himself the past two days.” Bennett said.

In the women’s event, G.C. rivals Jo Bennett of Australia’s Merida Flight Centre Team and Karen Steurs of Belgian team Ride For The Stars rolled into Mount Mulgrave together, with Steurs claiming the sprint victory.



Karen Steurs

Bennett still holds onto the race lead by more than one minute, but will have to survive two incredibly hard days as the race heads towards Laura and Cooktown.

““Yeah today was much better a bit of a cruiser pace until the last fifteen k and we picked it up a little because we knew it was coming towards the finish,” Bennett said.

“I held my time so that was the main thing.”

“I guess I can admit now that I blew up yesterday.”

Each day the peloton supporting the Bennett/Steurs battle is growing as more of the Australian and Belgian men join the effort. Bennett now has in her corner Australians Matt Powell (Velo Cycles) and Isaac Tonello, along with the resources of the Merida Flight Centre men’s team

It’ll take a special effort tomorrow to hold off another surge from the Belgian brigade supporting Steurs.



The Czechs in hot form

“I take it easy today, being in the big group and recover from yesterday,” Steurs said.

“I think it will be three very tough days but I’m feeling fine.

Steurs domestique, her husband Christophe Huybrighs, is also captivated by the battle which is being played out in the best of spirits.

“Every day is a war and we are lucky that all the girls are very sympathetic and after the race we are friends and before the start also,” Huybrighs said.

“From the moment the start is given it’s a war between everybody.”



The Aussie Outback at 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

