

World Cup Final



The MTBO World Cup final was held in Italy from 17th to 20th September, adjacent to the terrain which will be used for the 2011 World Championships. Teolo can be found in the Colli Euganei - a collection of hills rising 600m in the middle of the Milan-Venice plain, and is surrounded by the cities of Padova, Vicenza and Bologna. The hills, perfect for road and mountain biking, are also home to the vineyards of Colli Euganei which at this time of year are bursting with grapes ready to be picked. It was in this complex and challenging extensive network of vineyards that the World Cup races were held.

The Weather Gods decided to be cruel and subject the athletes to the viscous clay mud which always appears during periods of heavy rain.

Needless to say, it rained heavily throughout Saturday, most prominently prior to the competition! As more and more athletes rode the tracks in the sprint race, everything became muddier and muddier, until the later riders were running in places due to their wheels clogging and stopping from the mud.

I was fortunate to be one of the earlier starters, one of the rare occasions where this is a good thing! From the beginning of my race I realised that navigation was crucial and it would be very easy to get lost and confused in the vineyards with every corner and every straight looking identical. Riding slower but finding every control accurately and smoothly was the key to a good race. I finished in seventh place, adding to my collection of top ten results for 2010. With very few mistakes, I was pleased with my race, beating many of the people ranked in the top ten.

Sunday dawned bright and sunny with temperatures reaching 26°, and once again with the courses mostly in the vineyards, it was going to be a hot race. On this occasion my early start was a slight disadvantage since the drying mud was becoming thicker and thicker, making any movement - on bike or foot - impossible on some of the steeper hills. Due to the conditions drying quickly, later starters were able to ride much faster, but the results were close packed with only a minute separating 5th place from 11th. I was on the wrong end of the minute and finished in 10th place.

I rounded off my season with four World Cup and two World Ranking top ten results and a World Cup and World Ranking of 11th, a mere two points from 10th. With more winter training and more top ten results next year I can begin my crusade to being world number one!!!

