

2002 NZ MTB Championships Race Report by Robyn Wong

2002 has to be remembered as one of the wettest New Zealand National series ever!!!!

First up was Nelson on January 18. The theme of the day was mud, mud and more mud. So much mud that the Pro race got shortened during the event with the ever changing technical gully section proving to lengthen lap times and make conditions treacherous.

Unfortunately I missed race 2 in Wanaka – I must've known it would be the only dry course. I heard the course rocked – a short loop but fast and technical.

During February the series headed to Napier. Yet again wet so a crucial decision was what tyres to run. Despite the slick uphill switchbacks the downhills were fast and flowing.

Race 4 was an untraditional national course but the decision to utilize the longstanding, classical one 50km loop Karapoti definitely made the series very interesting. The 2 favourites Suzy Pryde and Kashi Leuchs cleaned up but unfortunately didn't set any new records due to the rain a few days prior making a sticky course.

The final race was held in one of the finest Mountain Biking spots in New Zealand, good old Rotorua. Yet again, racers ditched the semi slicks as the rain bucketed down on the Saturday night and still continued during some of the Sport race on Sunday morning. Thankfully the sport and expert riders nicely cleared the tracks to provide awesome riding for the Pro Elite field. Stuart Houltram raced strong to take the win and the series title, with Tim Vincent in 2nd overall and Jeremy Houtham 3rd. I was totally stoked to finish 2nd behind the young Australian Lisa Mathison and gain series points for 1st giving me the series win. In the series Sadie Parker-Wynard was 2nd and Lisa Savage 3rd. An extremely tight series amongst the women with only 1 point separating the top 3.

Nathan Rankin had a successful series taking the Men's Downhill title, followed in 2nd by Glenn Hayden and Cheyne Beaver in 3rd. John Kirkcaldie broke his bike during the first Nelson race but successfully won the last 2 events and finished 8th overall in the series. There was carnage in the Women's racing when US rider April Lawyer broke her hand and returned home after the first race. The series was wrapped up by Vanessa Quin, with Lisa Horlor in 2nd and Sheryl Mcleod in 3rd.

Congratulations to the NZMBA, Hamish Seaton and all the clubs for a very well organised series and to all those competitors that took part. See you all in 2003.

