Kiwi wins gold in groundbreaking women's event

Theme:
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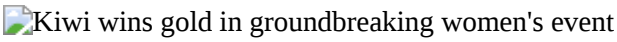

Co-authored by Sunlive

The big 10-year anniversary of Crankworx Rotorua culminated in an extraordinary milestone for Slopestyle Mountain Biking, marking the first-time female athletes competed in a Crankworx FMBA Slopestyle World Championship event.

This occasion was sweetened, as Kiwi Robin Goomes ascended to the top podium spot grabbing a $ 16,000 NZD cheque, followed closely by Harriet Burbidge-Smith and Caroline Buchanan, igniting pride and celebration among fans from Aotearoa and beyond.

In this Diamond Level Event, the female athletes were not just participants, but they captivated the audience with a dazzling array of tricks and airtime, cementing their place at the pinnacle of Slopestyle Mountain Biking while competing for a total of $ 41,000 NZD.

The excitement among fans on site was palpable as Caroline Buchanan dropped in first, kicking off the Maxxis Slopestyle in Memory of McGazza with an electrifying run.

Caroline reflected on her journey in Freeride Mountain Biking and the evolution of women in Slopestyle.

“One of those things I remember, two years ago sitting in the booth here when the men were on and I said, you know, it would be unreal to see women," says Caroline.

"And fast forward to two years later, now I see the top six ladies in the world who are completely ready for this course and this experience, to just all shine.”

The athlete embodies the progress and potential of women in the sport.

“There were so many little girls in the stands, there were so many spectators, so many people cheering," says Caroline.

"For me, growing up in BMX since the age of five, it’s really hard to be what you can’t see, so being seen I think is the most important thing right now for the future of Women’s Slopestyle, and yeah, to be one of the older girls in the class at 33, still throwing down, this is probably one of my career highlights today.”

Dropping in last in the first run, Robin Goomes came out on top of the field with an outstanding 90.75-point run, with Harriet ‘Haz’ Burbidge-Smith hot on her trails with 85.5 points.

After the other riders finished their second runs, the two athletes, who are good friends and have been training together in the lead-up to the event, opted for a ‘party train’ led by Harriet on their final run, representing the camaraderie and joy at the heart of the competition.

“The plan for run 2 was just to clean that [first] ride up, but instead, Haz and I stayed in our positions, and Haz was saying that if she stayed in second, she was happy to just party train down,” says Robin.

“Honestly, that’s the dream - having fun with your friends. It’s been a good week!”

After a week filled with good-weather days for training, Rotorua woke up to a cloudy morning after last night’s showers.

The vibe remained high as conditions cleared, seemingly in favour of the groundbreaking competition.

Robin reflected on the conditions, attributing the turn in weather to a timely Karakia, a testament to the deep cultural roots and communal spirit that pervaded the whole Crankworx Rotorua festival.

“We were really lucky to have super good riding every other day, which in a way, made it quite hard today when we had rain overnight and then windy conditions this morning," says Robin.

"We did a nice little Karakia this morning and somehow, in the moment, the weather just turned itself on. So, I can’t help but feel like it was just meant to be."

Karakias are Māori prayers used to invoke spiritual guidance and protection.

Runner-up Harriet Burbgidge-Smith reflected on her first run and the decision to celebrate with her mate Robin Goomes by running a party train.

“I think the first run was definitely something I knew I could do consistently, which is what I wanted to do. And I was really happy with it. So stoked! " says Harriet.

"And after that, it was just like, I don’t think I had the next five points in me after this week. I had a couple of crashes and I kind of talked to Robin up top.”

Despite a close call, young Natasha Miller, only 17 years old, missed the podium by only a mere 0.75 points, showcasing the fierce competition and incredible talent pool within the women’s Slopestyle scene.

Shealen Reno came in fifth with two amazing runs that put her at 74.50 points.

Patricia Druwen, the 2023 Female Red Bull Rookie of the Year, had to pull out shortly before the event started due to health reasons, narrowing the start field down to the world’s best five female athletes.

Reflecting on this groundbreaking day using three words, the women say it best:
(1) Robin Goomes (NZL): Crazy, Emotional Rollercoaster
(2) Harriet Burbidge-Smith (AUS): Nervewracking, Exciting, Fun
(3) Caroline Buchanan (AUS): Iconic, HERstory, Progression
(4) Natasha Miller (CAN): Electric, Insane, Fun
(5) Shealen Reno (USA): Stunning, Groundbreaking, Successful

The 2024 Maxxis Slopestyle in Memory of McGazza not only celebrated women ascending in the sport but also honoured the legacy of Kelly “McGazza” McGarry with a ‘McGazza Train’.

After withdrawing from the competition yesterday, the male athletes joined the female riders and other members of the mountain bike community to remember the great mountain bike legend.

The organisers say the "spirit of Crankworx Rotorua shines brighter than ever, heralding a new era of inclusivity, excellence, and shared joy in mountain biking".

All events of the big 10-year Crankworx Rotorua anniversary can be watched on demand on Red Bull TV.

Full results: crankworx.com/results/

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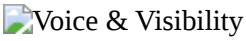

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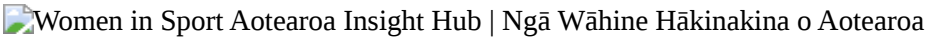
Close panel 

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