

World Champion, Jason English wins the 8 Hr Shimano MTB Grand Prix near Newcastle



**World Champion too strong.
Fatherhood keeps English in the lead.**

This weekend's SHIMANO MTB Grand Prix events on Saturday attracted 400 mountain bike riders competing in the 4 hr and 8 hr endurance races. On Sunday an extra 100 riders in the BANZAI Fitness Challenge headed out on a time trail course at the Awaba Mountain Bike Park, just south of Newcastle.

The 24 hour World Champion, Jason English from Port Macquarie, showed he was still in good form despite becoming a dad for the first time only one week prior.

The Merida JetBlack rider completed 12 laps of the 11.2 km circuit to win the 8 hour race despite being challenged by Rockstar Racing pair of Troy Glennan and Dwight Woodforth early on in the race. Glennan and Woodforth kept English in sight for the first six hours until English forged ahead to become the outright winner.

"Troy (Glennan) really hurt me," admitted English who also suffered without his wife, Jen, as support on the sidelines.

Jen was busy with their newborn boy, Archie James.

Despite threatening rain, riders were treated to near perfect conditions on the home track of local club HMBA (Hunter MTB Association).

"It was a perfect day. I had two bikes there just in case," said English.
"The course was fantastic."



Second in the solo 8 hour race was defending overall series champion, Marty Strozik from Lake Macquarie. Strozik found his home track at Awaba to his liking.

"It was grippy," he said.

For competing riders, English was the stand out favourite.

"As soon as I saw Jason (English) at the start line I knew we were all racing for second place," admitted Strozik. "I tried to hang on when he passed me after five hours but only managed for 20 metres or so.

"I went into it to go out and ride as hard as I can and for as long as I can. I'm happy with that."

Third place in the 8 hour solo ride was another Port Macquarie rider, Greg Porter. Sarah Neumann from Sydney won the solo women's 8 hour event with a respectable 9 laps.

In the masters 8 hour Hugh Stodart completed 11 laps while his female counterpart, Wendy Stevenson completed 9 laps.

Eventual winners in the pairs and second overall were Ashfield Cycles riders Olivier Vallee and Mark Griffin finishing on equal laps with second place in their category going to Glennan and Woodforth.

The Porter family had a double celebration with wife, Belinda, the 30+ World Champion 24 hour rider, winning the SHIMANO four hour in convincing style.

Jon Odams from Sydney won the men's solo four hour by completing seven laps. Last year's winner James Lamb and Tristan Gribble also finished on seven laps and placed second and third respectively.

New time trial MTB challenge

With the Banzai MTB Fitness Challenge on Sunday, organisers Rocky Trail Entertainment attracted a wide range of riders such as local rider Robbie McNaughton with the fastest lap time to Laura Renshaw, the sister of Tour De France rider, Mark Renshaw, who participated in her first ever MTB race.

The time trial style race had riders complete the lap and distance challenges from 10 to 40 km and commencing their race against the clock within a starting window between 9 am and midday.

According to race director, Martin Wisata, this event is being taken up by a growing number of participants.

"This race has proved to be favourable to a lot of different lifestyles," Wisata said. "From families with young children to competitive racers who prefer a Sunday event with a flexible race schedule. We pick tracks that are fun and challenging for the BANZAI LifeCycle and like to offer our riders different racing options that fit into their busy family and work commitments."

Rocky Trail races coming up

The third round of the SHIMANO MTB Grand Prix will be held at Dargle Farm on 14 August with the final round on the 24 September being held at Stromlo Forest Park, where Rocky Trail will host a whole MTB "Über Weekend", combining the endurance race on the Saturday with the next round of the BANZAI LifeCycle Fitness challenge on Sunday, as well as the Pedal4Pierce Charity Ride and 4X and DS State Series gravity races. The final round of the BANZAI time trial races for 2011 will take place in November at Ourimbah State Forest near Gosford.

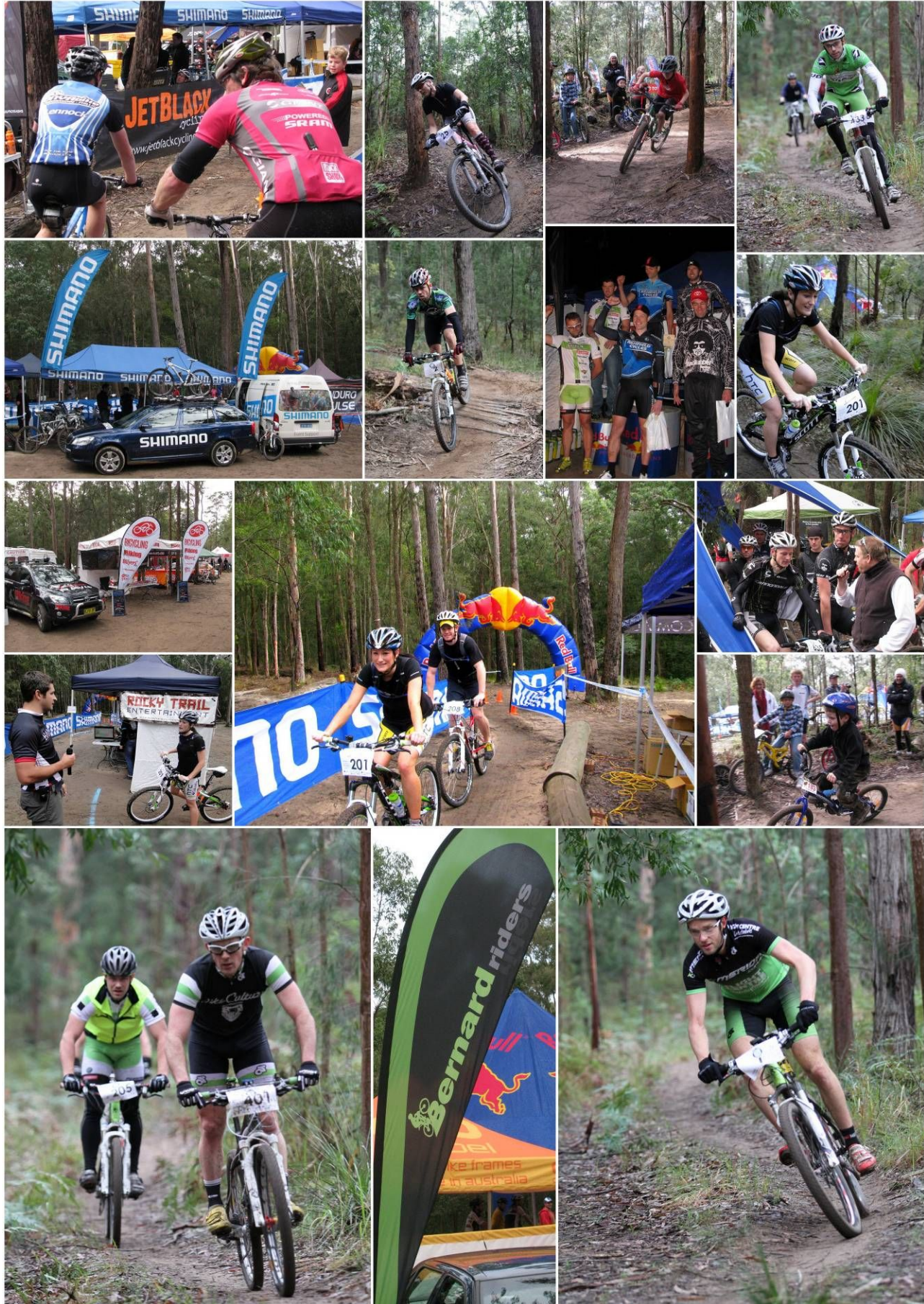
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