

XTERRA KEYSTONE

Stoltz and Whitmore top field in Colorado.

BY DAVID SCHRADER

Jamie Whitmore, standing on the awards stage after Xterra Keystone, thanked her husband for being her main sponsor. He's been working two jobs so that she could pursue her dream of racing professionally, a dream that is now coming true. Whitmore won Xterra Saipan earlier this year and now, along with South African Conrad Stoltz, she has the 2002 Xterra Keystone crown.

"I really always hoped I would find some sport that I could really excel in," Whitmore said before the race. "I just never realized it could really happen."

At Xterra Keystone, the conditions were as tough as her competition. The 1k swim was warmer than past years but still a brisk 64 degrees. The 26k mountain bike wound through the pines and spruce of this Colorado mountain town, climbed from 9,200 feet to 11,640 feet, and then plunged down some of the Xterra series' most white-knuckled single-track, including the infamous Wild Thing. By the 10k trail run, lungs were screaming and legs were burning, but there were

still rickety bridges and a frigid river to cross before the reprieve of the finish line.

Whitmore came out of the water three minutes behind swim leader Raeleigh Tennant, who split a 13:59. Former Keystone winners Kerstin Weule and Anke Erlank were already up the road, as Whitmore settled in for the chase. By the top of the climb, Whitmore had moved into first place. Pro mountain biker Melanie McQuaid was now second, 15 seconds back, with Weule another 30 seconds behind. Erlank was having an off-day and finish 14th.

What goes up must come down, and at Keystone the riders come down fast, even if, as Whitmore did, you ride conservatively. "I'm a good descender, but yesterday I crashed on my head [pre-riding the downhill] and snapped my helmet in two pieces," said Whitmore. "It messed up my neck and back, so I was being a little cautious." Despite Whitmore's injuries and apprehension, McQuaid was only able to put 15 seconds on her by the bottom of the hill. Weule held steady in third.



Spousal support helped Whitmore to the race crown.

Whitmore would net the women's fastest bike split in 1:25:54, and then the women's second-fastest run split (47:58), finishing in victory in 2:30:55. McQuaid struggled in for second, and Weule, who was hampered by a shin injury, took third in 2:35:20.

In the men's race, Seth Wealing set the pace in the swim in 13:20, but then Stoltz, Kerry Classen, 2001 Keystone winner Mike Vine, Jason Chalker and Bevan Docherty took charge. Stoltz led the posse while 47-year-old Ned Overend hunted them down. Stoltz, who was fifth over the top last year, was proud to be first to the summit this time around. Overend was next by 40 seconds, then Vine and Classen 40 seconds back. The plummet through Wild Thing did little to change the order or, with the exception of Classen losing 50 seconds to

Vine, change the times separating the top four.

The 10k run, however, would cause all but the first-place position to change. Stoltz, like Whitmore, turned in the second-fastest run split (40:30) to finish first in 2:06:40. Classen also blasted the run to finish second a little over two minutes back. Nicolas LeBrun, the 2002 Xterra Richmond winner, used the day's fastest run, 39:50, to move from seventh to third. Overend faded to fifth, while Vine pattered out in seventh.

"I'm looking forward to a very exciting season," said Stoltz after his victory. "I think it's going to be good because I'm behind in the [Xterra pro points] series (due to missing the first race). I have to win some more races so the pressure is really on. But that's good because I perform well under pressure." ▲

NISSAN XTERRA CENTRAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

July 28, 2002

Keystone, Colo.

1k swim, 26k mountain bike, 10k trail run

Men	Swim	Bike	Run	Total
1. Conrad Stoltz	13:33	1:12:37	44:30	2:06:40
2. Kerry Classen	13:34	1:14:54	40:43	2:09:11
3. Nicolas LeBrun	16:15	1:13:40	39:50	2:09:45
4. Jason Chalker	13:34	1:15:55	40:49	2:10:18
5. Ned Overend	15:43	1:11:06	43:50	2:10:39
Women				
1. Jamie Whitmore	17:03	1:25:54	47:58	2:30:55
2. Melanie McQuaid	16:06	1:26:37	51:51	2:34:34
3. Kerstin Weule	14:56	1:31:59	48:25	2:35:20
4. Kerry Barnholt	17:37	1:27:38	50:40	2:35:55
5. Raeleigh Tennant	13:59	1:34:27	50:20	2:38:46