



UCI BMX WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS AUCKLAND 2013 | NEW ZEALAND

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Attention Sports Editors

World champions set to defend BMX titles in Auckland



CAPTION: Australian Sam Willoughby will defend his title at the UCI BMX World Championships in Auckland this month. (Credit: Craig Dutton)

Defending champions Sam Willoughby and Connor Fields will defend their titles at the UCI BMX World Championships in Auckland later this month.

Willoughby (Australia) won the overall title in Birmingham last year while Fields (USA) earned the rainbow jersey in the Super Time Trial. Both stars today confirmed that they will head to New Zealand, joining double Olympic gold medallist Maris Strombergs who announced his entry last week for the UCI BMX World Championships at the Vector Arena in Auckland on July 24-28.

The 21-year-old Willoughby is the hottest rider on the planet this year, with 13 straight wins on the USA BMX Nationals circuit while 20 year old Fields has four World Cup Supercross wins to his credit and was the USA National Champion last year.

Willoughby, the Californian-based South

Australian, does not believe his success last year adds extra pressure in Auckland.

“It always puts a bit of a target on your back coming in as the defending champion and people want to take the crown. I just want to keep that rainbow jersey,” Willoughby said.

He is buoyed after his record-setting form this year, although he will bypass the opportunity to extend his winning run in Pittsburgh this weekend as he heads to Canada for final preparations.

“I have had a really good year, actually since before the Grand Nationals last year. Any time you are winning it is good for your confidence,” Willoughby said.

“I will come in to the worlds with the knowledge that I know how to win a race. That’s always a positive. I just want to do the same thing I have been doing in these races and try to put another one together.”

A key to his improvement has been his move to Australian coach Sean Dwight.

“For the last two years I’ve been floating along on my own trying to figure things out and it just got me by. We have pretty much flipped everything since I started working with him last September. It is definitely working. The biggest thing is to have someone to chat with when I need.”

Fields has raced around the globe this year, currently second with one round remaining in the UCI Supercross World Cup.

“I like the Supercross style of track than the traditional USA BMX track. I think it is more fun,” Fields said. “It has made it better by being able to showcase what we can do. With the tracks bigger and faster not only has it improved our skills as riders, we are able to show the world just what we are capable of.”

The Las Vegas rider, who swapped a promising career in football for BMX, has never looked back.

“I like the individualism of BMX. If I do well or not, then it is on me and I don’t have to rely on a teammate. I like that it is different every single time. If you are doing stick or ball sport, or swimming or track and field, it is the same every time. You never get two tracks the same in BMX so it always keeps it fresh.”

The pair agrees on what it will take to win at this month’s world championships at Vector Arena.

“The holeshot is huge. It is the most important thing by far. And the smaller the track the more important and it is a lot easier to win from the front that it is to pass people especially on a smaller and tighter track,” Fields said.

Willoughby agrees.

“The biggest thing is going to be to get to the first corner first. That is always the goal in all BMX races but when it is in a tight indoor arena it is pretty much the race. That will be the main thing to execute.

“The big plus is that it will be a great atmosphere and a really great vibe. New Zealand is like Australia and they get behind their sport. I’d like to think there will be plenty of Australians heading over to watch and support us.”

Organisers expect more than 2000 riders from 30 countries for the Championships, although entries to not close until 12 July.

The Championships begin with the Challenge class (age group) on Wednesday 24 July and Thursday 25 July, with elite practice on Friday ahead of the time trial world title decided on Saturday 27 July and finals on Sunday 28 July.

The event is supported by Major Events, Sport New Zealand, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED), Telecom, Avanti Bikes, Avanti Finance, Pub Charity, Lion Foundation, Anchor, The Radio Network, Pullman Hotels, Tissot Timing and Santini.