2026 Ride Joburg – Press Release
Women's Race Report

Headline: Queen Preen Powers to Ride Joburg Crown

Hayley Preen put in a commanding, controlled and confident performance as she raced to her maiden Ride Joburg crown on Sunday, 22 November 2026. The ChemChamp Honeycomb star bridged across to an attack by Tshenolo Women's Pro Cycling's Taneal Otto, held a powerful chase group containing three of Otto's teammates, as well as Magda Niewoudt and Kelsey van Schoor at bay, then sprinted to victory. Preen's win caps a stellar season in which she won two national titles and a continental title off-road.

Coming into the 29th edition of Ride Joburg, she was clear about her goal of winning and cognisant of the manner in which she would have to race to do so. The switch in course orientation, with the finish line moving to the Kyalami Grand Prix circuit, meant that the most significant climbs would fall within the first 45 kilometres.

"The change in the course was really exciting," Preen's fellow 2026 protagonist, Otto, praised after securing second. "We know the race always blows up, but we didn't realise that it would blow up that soon this year."

Otto was in fact the rider who blew the women's race apart. The Tshenolo Women's Pro Cycling rider attacked with the first 5 kilometres and built a handy 54-second lead by the first time-check, 14 kilometres in. Cycle Nation Enza Construction's Rachel Seaman and Marzaan Mellett initially looked to control Otto's breakaway, but were unable to reel her all the way in.

Once they and African Continental Champion, Nieuwoudt, reduced Otto's advantage, Preen seized the initiative. "We went super hard up the first climbs, and Taneal [Otto] actually had a little break," the 2026 champion explained. "I went across to her, and a few others caught me, and then we just kept it hard all the way to the top of Jan Smuts."

Preen's companions in that move were Otto, whom she had bridged across to, along with Nieuwoudt and Van Scoor, as well as Tshenolo Women's Pro Cycling's Sonica Klopper, Lucy Young, and Maude [Maddie] Le Roux. "Of the seven of us in the group, there were four Tshenolo [Women's Pro Cycling] riders, and three of us, individuals," Preen noted. "They had us outnumbered and kept attacking!"

Despite attacks from Klopper, Young, and Le Roux, it was Preen who claimed the Queen of the Mountain hotspot atop Jan Smuts Avenue. Nieuwoudt and Van Schoor were instrumental in helping the ChemChamp Honeycomb rider control the repeated accelerations, but it seemed inevitable that eventually the aggression from the Tshenolo Women's Pro Cycling team would pay off.

Shortly after the half-way point in the 97-kilometre-long route, Otto attacked once more. Preen watched Otto establish a slight advantage, then struck out in pursuit. For the only time in the race, Nieuwoudt, Van Schoor, Klopper, Young, and Le Roux hesitated; either unwilling or unable to follow.

Collaborating well, Preen and Otto worked to turn a 14-second advantage into a 1-minute and 44-second buffer within 10 kilometres. "After Taneal [Otto]'s attack, when I bridged across to her, I decided to go all in," Preen smiled. "Taneal was working for most of the break, but she stopped in the final 10 kilometres because she was riding to team orders."

Exhibiting her growing maturity, Preen did not allow the lack of assistance from Otto to affect her composure. “I sprint better when I have a little fatigue, so I knew it wouldn’t affect me too much in the finale. I tried to make it hard once we got onto the Kyalami Grand Prix circuit by going super hard up the Mineshaft climb, but it’s so short that I didn’t expect to get away,” she said.

Coming into the final 500 metres, Otto was glued to Preen’s wheel. “I started my sprint early. I went hard, sat up a bit and then went again,” the newly crowned queen of Ride Joburg noted. “I could see her shadow disappearing in the last couple of meters, and that’s when I knew I had it.”

“This is my first big road race win in South Africa, apart from road nationals, so I’m really happy! I’m always up there, but I have never seemed to get it right until now. “I’m also proud to have ended my time with Honeycomb off with a victory. They’re stepping away from sponsoring a team next year, so this is a great thank you to Honeycomb for all their support.”

Otto was magnanimous in defeat: “There was a chance that some of the Tshenolo [Women’s Pro Cycling] riders could come across and help me with the sprint. Because of that, Hayley did all the work [in the front group] for the last 10-15 kilometres. So well done to Hayley for finishing it off today. It was an awesome ride.”

“I’m happy with second, but to be that close this year is emotional in a sense,” Otto allowed. “It is really good for the team to finish off the year with two riders on the podium.”

As Otto alluded, her teammate, Klopper, sealed third. As the group pursuing Preen and Otto fractured, Young and Le Roux slipped from contention for a podium place. Van Schoor and Nieuwoudt kept fighting, going to the line with Klopper. Klopper and Van Schoor galloped up the finishing straight shoulder-to-shoulder. In a bike throw, the Tshenolo Women’s Pro Cycling rider edged out her Customized Cycling Pirtek rival. Klopper was also the first Under-23 age category racer home. Nieuwoudt had to settle for fifth.

Mellett had soloed into contention for a top ten place with a strong final 30 kilometres, crossing the line in sixth. Young and Le Roux were seventh and eighth, with Anri Greef finishing just ahead of a chase group in ninth. Carla Oberholzer won the sprint from that chase group to complete the top ten places at Ride Joburg 2026.

2026 Ride Joburg Women’s Results

1. Hayley Preen: ChemChamp Honeycomb (2:29:35)
2. Taneal Otto: Tshenolo Women’s Pro Cycling (2:29:37 | +2)
3. Sonica Klopper: Tshenolo Women’s Pro Cycling (2:31:48 | +2:13 | U23)
4. Kelsey Jade van Schoor: Customized Cycling Pirtek (2:31:48 | +2:13)
5. Magda Nieuwoudt: WeBuyCars Actop Beefcor (2:31:52 | +2:17)
6. Marzaan Mellett: Cycle Nation Enza Construction (2:33:12 | +3:37 | U23)
7. Lucy Young: Tshenolo Women’s Pro Cycling (2:33:14 | +3:39)
8. Maude le Roux: Tshenolo Women’s Pro Cycling (2:35:03 | +5:28)
9. Anri Greeff: Customized Cycling Pirtek (2:38:01 | +8:26)
10. Carla Oberholzer: Cycle Nation Enza Construction (2:38:04 | +8:29)

To view the full results from the 2026 Ride Joburg, click here.

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Photo Captions and Credits:

1. Hayley Preen won her maiden Ride Joburg title with a commanding performance during which she drove a two-rider breakaway, featuring Taneal Otto, to the Kyalami finish line. Photo by Dom Barnardt.
2. Tshenolo Women's Pro Cycling had four riders in the seven-woman move, including Lucy Young (leading), Taneal Otto (second), and Sonica Klopper (third), but could not prevent Hayley Preen (fourth) from winning the 2026 Ride Joburg title. Photo by Michael Nieuwoudt.
3. Taneal Otto (leading) launched the move that drew herself and Haley Preen (second) clear. Photo by Michael Nieuwoudt.
4. Magda Nieuwoudt (leading), Kelsey van Schoor (second), Lucy Young (third), Sonica Klopper (fourth), and Maddie le Roux (unpictured) could not reel Hayley Preen and Taneal Otto in once the pair had established a 30-second advantage. Photo by Michael Nieuwoudt.
5. Taneal Otto and Hayley Preen collaborated for nearly 30 kilometres before Otto's team orders stopped her from helping the ChemChamp Honeycomb rider any further. Photo by Michael Nieuwoudt.
6. Hayley Preen en route to victory at Ride Joburg 2026. Photo by Michael Nieuwoudt.
7. Hayley Preen started her sprint early, then kicked again to distance Taneal Otto in the closing metres. Photo by Dom Barnardt.
8. The 2026 Ride Joburg Women's Podium (from left to right): Taneal Otto, Hayley Preen, and Sonica Klopper. Photo by Diwan Krige.
9. Podium selfies for Taneal Otto (left), Hayley Preen (centre), and Sonica Klopper (right). Photo by Diwan Krige.

To download the high-resolution versions of these images, please click here.

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