

GIRLS LEAD LEAGUE GROWTH

2008 NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing Series

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Contact: Paul Skilbeck pskilbeck@o2sm.com Tel: (415) 516-1444 www.norcalmtb.org

(See below for photo and video highlights.)

OAKLAND, Calif. – In a shift that bucks the trend in sports participation statistics, girl participation in the Northern California High School Mountain Bike Racing League (NorCal League) has increased 50% over last year, compared to a 10% increase in boys, who's participation underwent a growth spurt several years ago.

The League's executive director, Matt Fritzingler is delighted by the growth. "I'm totally in awe of this phenomenon and can't fully assume credit for this. I think the girls are just catching onto something. I know that every step of the way, our assistant director, Nadine Budbill, has ensured our programs are attractive to girls, nevertheless, I'm amazed by this rate of growth," he said.

Fritzingler paid tribute, too, to the work of coaches, parents, and partners such as the Luna Chix Ambassadors and the Subaru Gary Fisher Pro Team, all of whom have been supporting the female league membership.

Nicola Cranmer, of Fairfax, California, general manager of the PROMAN Women's Cycling Team, is clear about the benefits of competitive cycling to young women. "Participating in cycling and racing at an early age helps young women develop not only riding skills but self confidence, focus, team work and camaraderie. The NorCal League is a necessary organization to nurture the competitive spirit at an early age, and is encouraging many young women into the sport."

Participation rose this year from 50 to 80 girls on high school mountain bike teams in the NorCal League. Feedback from these girls suggests that the reasons for joining in include new opportunities, confidence enhancement, sisterhood, and desire for a healthy outdoor hobby.

It even effects women who have come to the league from outside the school system. Katie DeClercq, who works for the League, says: "The NorCal League is what got me into mountain biking. I'd probably still be out there riding solo on my road bike without it. This community has made a huge difference in my life – I really feel I should let other women know about this good thing going here," said Katie.

Aviva Prager of Albany High remarked, "I think it is excellent that girls are now starting to invade mountain biking and are creating a space for themselves in the sports world."

Laurn Catlin of Drake High said, "The NorCal League has changed my life by providing an opportunity that is virtually nonexistent elsewhere. I was not a biker before I entered high school, and I didn't even know that

biking could be considered a sport. Without my school's team and its part in the League, I never would have picked up such a great sport."

Another method for increasing participation has been girls-only camps, which prepare students for what to expect during the course of a mountain bike race or recreational ride, thereby removing some considerable obstacles to participation. The anecdotes of attendees suggest that they have been popular.

Teammate Lauren Freudman reports as well, "The girls skills camp, before the racing season started, was the highlight for me this year. It really helped me learn the basic skills I needed, especially because it was my first year. At the camp, the coaches taught me that biking is not just about winning, it's about pushing yourself, but also making sure it's fun."

"The League hopes to see an even greater increase in girl riders for the 2009 season. Right now we are also focused on restructuring, as Nadine has moved to Vermont to build on her Dirt Divas girl's mountain bike camp program she started their year's ago. We are looking for a full time assistant director to help fill these immense shoes." said Fritzingler.

The PROMAN Women's Cycling Team, which includes four U.S. national team members, will play an ambassadorial role at the Chileno Valley Cycling Classic, September 28th, a benefit ride for 100 youths and adults. More info about the ride is available at <http://www.norcalmtb.org/events/chileno/index.htm>.

2008 girls photo highlights: http://www.norcalmtb.org/img/2008_Girl_Highlights/index.html

Video footage from 2008 Toro Park girl's race: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=0nwO5U580jc>

About the NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing League

The NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing League is a non-profit organization open to students from both public and private schools. The League exists because of generous donors and sponsors such as Clif Bar, Inc., CamelBak, Fox Racing Shox, Gary Fisher Bikes, Ritchey Bicycle Components, Creation Engine, Galaxy Granola, Mike's Bikes, The Pedaler, Paradigm Cycles, HappyGoFun, REI, Mountain Hardwear, WTB, Tecnu Extreme, Touchstone Climbing Gyms, Vanderkitten, Whole Athlete, Maxxis, BTC, Dream Works, and NCNCA. The League provides coaching and camaraderie to help students achieve both competitive and non-competitive cross-country mountain biking goals in a safe and enjoyable manner. Each season includes a Coaches Training Conference, winter riding camps, the six-race series, and a variety of summer camps. For more information visit www.norcalmtb.org or call (510) 653-2453.