

RACE 1 HIGHLIGHTS – 2008 NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing Series

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Full results are available at www.norcalmtb.org.

Oakland, CA – The NorCal High School Mountain Bike League held it's season opener this past weekend in sunny, beautiful Fort Ord. Riders from 35 teams gathered to race the 6 mile loop from 2 to 4 laps to test their skills, fitness and endurance. Mary Lyn Bondlow (Drake High), just one of many excited coaches stated, "I'm so proud of my first timers who can't believe what they've accomplished."

The first wave set off at 10 AM with a rush of cheers as the varsity girls took off towards the start of the single track. Five minutes later, the JV girls set out to race the course as well. In the heat of the start, two riders entangled, resulting in an unfortunate crash for Candice Dickerson of Woodcreek High, who was having her first race. Woodcreek coaches are relieved to report that Candice is on her way to recovery with a chipped tooth, a few bumps and bruises, and a determination to come back and race again.

Division I and Division II competition was snagged by Sir Francis Drake High School and Salinas High, respectively, with San Rafael High and Marin Catholic both coming in close seconds for overall team standings. Salinas High is new to the League this year and has already had some great showings, including Tylor Gigor who took first place in the JV boys category. San Rafael High took three of the top 4 JV spots in Division I, with Niko Kaplanis leading the group. Daniel Rotheram of Woodcreek high, split up the trio by taking 3rd place. Marin Catholic swept the Freshman boys category (Division II) by finishing first, second, and third, with Tony Smith riding in as the leader

Individual results showed true character and athleticism amongst some of our first time racers. Ryan Potter, one of three that makes up the newly formed Oakland composite team, took the lead spot for the Sophomore boys category (Division II). Susanna Nordrum, Redwood high, came in first place for the JV girls, and stated at the end of the race, "I feel psyched! I've never raced before and it's totally an adrenaline rush! I wish I got into biking earlier."

Christine Wier, Nevada Union, proved that age isn't a factor as the sophomore took a clean sweep of the Varsity girls by giving herself a lead of over 4 minutes. Her little brother Jimmy reported that this is nothing new to him. "Christine took first place for every other race so it's not that different." Make sure to keep an eye out for Lainey Aldridge (Harbor High) next week, who came in second place with a look of sheer determination to close the gap in the future.

The racing ended with a wave of some of the best competition to date. The varsity boys raced their four laps with a pack of die-hards leading the group. For three laps, the pack mostly stayed together, while the fans anxiously waited to see it all play out. Amongst the strong competition, it was Jon Bennett of El Cerrito that made the right moves to push through the finish line as the first place winner. Nate Byrom, Nevada Union, crossed the finish line a mere 17 seconds later. Obviously a little shaken up from the intense riding, Nate said, "I wanted to win real bad. The traffic in the burms just killed me." A stunned Bennett reported, "I was surprised. I didn't think I was going to win." Yuri Hauswald, coach of Casa Grande and pro rider for Marin Bikes, rode just ahead of the pack to catch some video footage. At the finish line, an out of breath Yuri exclaimed, "Those guys are awesome! It was fun riding with them. I recognize many from the NorCal camps."

With the Granite Bay Invitational in Folsom coming up this weekend on March 9th, just one week after the first race, riders are now preparing for what's ahead. They've had a chance to see what the competition is like, and are ready to hit the trails with a race under their belts. Mike Cerna, a coach for Salinas High, while watching all the competition unfold stated, "It's good to see how far they've all come in such a short time."

The Nor Cal High School Mountain Bike 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, Trek Bicycles, Ritchey Bicycle Components, Creation Engine, Galaxy Granola, Mike's Bikes, The Pedaler, Paradigm Cycles, HappyGoFun, REI, Mountain Hardwear, WTB, Tecnu Extreme, 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.

Full resolution photos available.



Frosh/Soph girls riding together midway through the race – by Robert Lowe.



Varsity Boys riding tight – by Robert Lowe,



Division II JV Boys moments after start – Robert Lowe.



Varsity Winner Christine Wier – by John Mallery.



JV Girls Podium – by Robert Lowe.