

RACE 5 HIGHLIGHTS – 2008 NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing Series

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Oakland, CA – Racers from the NorCal High School Mountain Bike League were greeted with a cold and foggy wind this past Sunday in Toro Park, Salinas. However, with 800 feet of climbing per lap riders warmed up quickly as the race got underway. The large climb was followed by a roller-coaster single track with off-camber turns and challenging drops, but ultimately it was a race that favored climbers.

In Freshman boys (Division II), Tony Smith of Marin Catholic beat out his competition to take first place once again. Teammate Max Rehkopf took third place, while Andrew Taylor (Contra Costa) split up the boys to take second. In Division I, Jimmy Winne of Woodcreek had a strong finish, beating out Chris Bennet (El Cerrito) who took second, to regain his leaders jersey. Matthew Koenig (Independent) took third place.

Victoria Yoham of Marin Catholic seems to be unstoppable as she soloed into the finish line well ahead of her competitors to take the gold yet again. Katherine Pollard (Roseville) came in second place, while Mary Brosnan (San Rafael) improved to 3rd place, just two seconds ahead of teammate Lauren Freudman.

In Division II Sophomore Boys, Will Patterson of Branson High had an impressive finish as he beat out Ryan Potter (Oakland Comp) in the final sprint to the finish line. Jonathan Weeks (Marin Catholic) took the third place spot. In Division I, San Rafael's new rider Quinlan Brow continues to surprise the crowd. In only his second race, Brow gapped the other Sophomore boys by an impressive 1:20 margin. Colby Pastore of Casa Grande had his best finish this season by taking second place. "Jack Ketcham put up a good fight at the end with me and we battled to the finish. As for Quinlan Brow, that kid is a good rider. We stuck together the first lap and then in the second lap he got away from me," reported Pastore. Jack Ketchum's (Drake) third place finish gave him the edge he needed to take hold of the leaders jersey.

Carolina Gomez-Villafane of Los Gatos and Lauren Catlin of Drake took first and second (respectively) in JV girls yet again. No one has been able to break these two from their rightful spots, but Charlotte Perry-Houts (Albany) is moving up quick as she took third place, which is her best finish yet.

In JV boys Division II, Ben Sukys attacked right away on the first lap on the hill climb. Luckily for him, this separated him enough from his competitors to give him the lead the race. Marcelo Quiroz (Independent) didn't let a crash slow him down too much as he powered through to take second place. Matt Dion (Foothill) followed closely behind Quiroz to take third. In Division I, Clayton Herrick (SanRafael) was able to stay close enough to teammate Niko Kaplanis to regain the leaders jersey with a solid second place finish. "We had planned to cross the finish line together, but then I decided to take off on the last lap," reported Kaplanis, who took first place. Herrick reported the same unraveled plan, but seemed to be okay with it since he did admit that he was drafting off of Kaplanis for part of the race. Riley Howard of Casa Grande worked hard to make his way back to top three again. "The first lap was a little grueling, but the second and third laps felt great. I just powered up the climbs. Daniel Rotheram (Woodcreek, 4th place) and I were riding together, but on the third lap on the climb I started to pull away as I made my final move right before the downhill," reported Howard.

Christine Weir (Nevada Union) took first place in Varsity girls again, but this win came with a little more of a price as Lainey Aldridge followed closely for most of it. "I was so worried since Lainey is such a good

downhiller. I kept looking back to see if she was there, and for most of the race she was,” reported Weir. Aldridge (Harbor High) was very pleased with her second place finish and her skills throughout the race. “I had the best downhill ride ever. It was crazy, but super fun.” Susanna Nordrum (Redwood) took third place.

Competition amongst Varsity boy riders is becoming fiercer than ever. It is truly testing the will and determination of these young boys who all want to do their best and accomplish their goals set out for the season. The usual pack of 10 lead riders after lap one was not the case at this race. Right away, top riders Jon Bennett (El Cerrito), Nate Byrom (Nevada Union), Will Curtis (San Rafael), and Daniel Boyes (Marin Academy) split off to make up the lead pack. After lap two, Byrom had gained himself a good lead from the other three on the descent. The pack of four came in together again after lap three. In the last lap, Bennett’s tactics played out well for him to give him the first place finish. Bennett reports, “The finish played out well for me. My plan was to put a large gap between myself and the rest of the pack coming up to the last descent. Since Nate is a talented descender, and the fastest in the leading pack, I knew I needed more time to get down the hill. I think if Nate had not crashed on his final descent, the race could have come down to a sprint finish. I’m really happy for Will and I know that he’s happy with his finish. I’m glad he did so well this race. He’s been working hard and it shows.” Even with Byrom’s unfortunate crash, he still managed to take an impressive second place. Curtis had a remarkable race that led him into third place, his best finish yet. Daniel Boyes followed closely for fourth place.

The San Rafael High School mountain bike team took first place at race 5 to extend their lead in Division 1. An overall win for the race series is looking good for the Bulldogs if they can keep the momentum at the State Champs. Drake took second place, which keeps them as a good contender for the overall series. Both schools need to keep an eye out for Nevada Union, who took third this past Sunday, and is not far behind in points in the overall total.

Marin Catholic Mountain Bike Club is leading the pack in Division II team results. Their win at race 5 has put them almost out of reach from their two main competitors, Contra Costa Composite and Salinas High School. However, Contra Costa’s second place finish on Sunday will be keeping other schools on their toes. Tamalpais High had impressive finishes this race by their riders to give them the third place trophy.

The sixth and final race of the League’s series is just around the corner. The State Championship race will be held on May 18th at Bogg’s Mountain (near Calistoga). Anticipation will be hovering all around that day as results pour in through the finish line, as this race could be the make or break for many riders in their overall series standings.

The NorCal 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, 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.