

SEA OTTER HIGHLIGHTS – 2008 NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing Series

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Oakland, CA – The Sea Otter kept with tradition once again by providing racers and spectators with gale wind storms and bone chilling temperatures. However, NorCal riders that attended the four-day event showed up in top form and with spirits high to show that the League has some of the fastest riders in the U.S., and also in international competition. This “Celebration of Sport” is considered the world’s largest cycling festival, which attracts nearly 10,000 professional and amateur athletes and 50,000 fans. This year it attracted a number of NorCal riders, many of which had top placings in their category. The prestigious event has always been a part of many League rider’s race aspirations. When these top riders go to the Sea Otter, they represent not only their high school teams, but also Northern California.

NorCal was well represented at the Sea Otter in the Junior Expert male category, with five of the top ten coming from the League. The 38.4-mile race put the boys to the test as the field featured both the United States and Canadian National Champions. In the second lap just after the feed zone, it was Daniel Boyes (Marin Academy) that got out of his saddle to attack, winning by two minutes. Nobody could answer, but John Bennet (El Cerrito) hung onto the Canadian's wheel and passed him on the final fire road climb to take third. Nate Byrom (Nevada Union) rode in to take fifth place after a leg cramp forced him to get off his bike and walk a stretch of the course. Will Curtis (San Rafael) bonked at the 35-mile mark, and spun in his granny gear for the rest of the way to take eighth place, and Ben Sukys (Contra Costa) came in 1:50 behind Will, for a great ninth finish by a JV rider. Christine Weir represented for the NorCal girls in the Junior Expert category. The very start of the race panned out well for Weir as she slid herself into a third place position in the pack. However, in the first sandy single track Weir overshot a corner and slid off course. By the time Weir was able to get back onto her, the girls that were ahead of her were long gone. She was happy with a podium spot after a crash like that, but was even more pleased with her first place super-D finish in the 18 and under open category.

Many other categories were sprinkled with NorCal riders as well. In the 16 and under sport male category, League riders swept the top five podium spots, which includes Niko Kaplanis (San Rafael), Chris Bennett (El Cerrito), Bjorn Fox (Redwood High), Gavin Albertoli (San Rafael), and Daniel Rotheram (Woodcreek High), respectively. Male sport 17-18 had NorCal riders in the top five as well, including Nico Cerna (Salinas), Ben Karin (Los Gatos), Tylor Gigor (Salinas), Marcelo Quiroz (Independent), and Chris Convis (Nevada Union), respectively. Carolina Gomez-Villafane (Los Gatos), Erin Rakoczy (Calvary Christian), and Katherine Pollard (Roseville High) took second, third, and fourth place (respectively) in the female sport 18 and under category. League riders also participated in other events such as the Super D and Downhill races, where many came out with solid top finishes. All results can be seen at <http://www.seaotterclassic.com/raceresults/index.cfm>

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.