

## **PREVIEW – 2008 NORCAL HIGH SCHOOL MOUNTAIN BIKE RACE SEASON**

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Contact: Matt Fritzinger [fritz@norcalmtb.org](mailto:fritz@norcalmtb.org) Tel: (510) 653-2453 [www.norcalmtb.org](http://www.norcalmtb.org)

*Release followed by team reports submitted by coaches.*

**Oakland, California**—The NorCal High School Mountain Bike Racing League is kicking off their 2008 racing season this coming Sunday. League members have been training hard for months in preparation for the 8<sup>th</sup> annual racing series for high school students. The six race series begins with the highly anticipated Central Coast Invitational at Fort Ord in Monterey and runs through May 18<sup>th</sup> – closing with the State Championships at Bogg's Mountain, north of Calistoga.

The League season got off to an early start this year with the First Annual Chileno Valley Cycling Classic ride last October, soon followed by November's sold-out CycleFest dinner, with Bob Roll. These essential events support the League unprecedented growth; this season there are 40 registered teams that will bring 450 racers, along with 200 coaches, to each race.

Completing League races reveals great strength of character amongst all participants and competition for the podium is stiff. Traci Kroll (Berkeley High) returns as the top ranked returning Varsity rider where she will be joined by Christine Weir (Nevada Union) who last season dominated in the girls Freshman/Sophomore category and Laney Aldridge (Harbor High) last year's top ranked JV girl.

In the Varsity boys' category is top ranked Daniel Boyes (Marin Academy), along with Tylor Brandt (Drake High). Nate Byrom (Nevada Union) is another Varsity rider to watch out for, as last year he had a strong showing as one of the first sophomores competing in Varsity. Also keep a close eye on top ranked Jon Bennett (El Cerrito High) who will be making his Varsity debut in this field of 50 riders. Last year's three "Freshman phenoms," Will Curtis, Jeremy Blalock, and Davis Bentley, will also be in the mix after outstanding JV results in 2007.

The weather forecast is looking superb for this season opener for racers and spectators alike. The second race is the following Sunday at Granite Bay near Folsom. This will be an exciting season to watch unfold, with top riders vying for the leader's jersey and others just having a great time completing these epic events and building life-long skills.

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, 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](http://www.norcalmtb.org) or call (510) 653-2453.

### **Team Reports submitted by Coaches**

#### **Albany High**

Albany Cougars are back for their third season of fun rides on the trails of Tilden, Wildcat, Chabot, China Camp, Mt. Diablo, Tamarancho, and Joaquin Miller Park, as well as some technique practice on the Bay Trail and in a weekly spin class. We have 4 female riders and 11 male riders, one coach, and a team mechanic!

Starting in November with bike/helmet inspections and basic bike fit donated by local professionals, we began endurance paced fun rides every weekend, until January where we added spin class, and February where we added a faster skills practice ride to complete the profile. Everyone has flourished at each practice and developed a strong sense of team comradery, despite coming from different levels of experience and backgrounds. The team's goals are to ride in new places, develop lasting relationships, and learn new leadership skills. One of our team requirements is to perform 2 hours of volunteer trailwork or other environmental charity, to complete the experience. We appreciate all the volunteer work provided from the parents of our riders, as well as our collective sponsors - they provide the foundation for the team to happen.

### **Amador Valley High**

Amador Valley High School of Pleasanton will field its first NorCal MTB team in 2008. Organized training began in December with weekday rides at Shadow Cliffs Recreation Area and weekend riding at the Pleasanton Ridge. With the team roster rounding out to eight, Amador will be lead by highly motivated sophomores Andrew Oefelein, Will Meyer and Kevin Wake, and junior Benjamin Chang. Amador intends to be represented at each of the six League events.

### **Berkeley High**

The Berkeley High School Mountain Bike Team is celebrating our 10th year. The Yellowjackets have 32 riders this year, with 8 girls. A group of 8 dedicated coaches lead rides around Tilden Park and Wildcat Canyon, as well as put the hurt on at spin class. This year our group of new riders are out to impress; all arrived at the first practice with great skills and surprising fitness. Head Coach, Jared Prolo, steps in new hoping to continue the great tradition of the team.

### **Branson High**

The Branson Bulls from Ross begin their second year in the NorCal League with three boys and two girls. The team has three new promising members: two freshman boys and one junior girl. The returning members include Hannah Louis and Will Patterson who raced in the team's inaugural season last year. This year the team is accompanied by Alumni Head Coach Alexander Price as well as three other coaches. The team has been training in their back yard at the foot of Mt. Tam, Marin's highest peak 5 days a week. While the team is small they are still ready to bull their way through the first race and have a goal of finishing in the top five.

### **Calvary Christian High**

Calvary Christian High (and homeschool) returns for it's fifth League season with five new freshman and four seasoned varsity vets. Four girls are on the 2008 roster, and out of nine total riders, five are either siblings, cousins, or coach's kids. The team has been training consistently in all weather since October, and coaches Mark and Patty with the help of ride leaders Tom and Henri are enjoying "starting fresh" with so many new faces and families. The local Monterey County CCCX racing series is already underway, and with a few of these practice races behind them, the team is eager to make a good showing in Division - II at the League opener on its home course.

### **Casa Grande High**

The Casa Grande High School gauchos from Petaluma are loving the start of our 2008 season! We have enjoyed a great pre-season of training, riding, stretching and just generally having a blast on our bikes. This is our second year as a competetive team and we are excited that this experience has allowed us to refine and hone our skills as cyclists, coaches, campers, communicators and athletes. We are lucky to have a dozen racers and two coaches in addition to a few strong co-coaches and ride leaders-some of whom are accomplished racers themselves! Our goals this year are for 100% of our team to finish 100% of all the races they enter, in addition to gaining better technical skills and meeting new people who like to ride. Look out for returning champs Devin Masterson, Riley Howard and the rest of our team this year!

### **Contra Costa Composite**

CCC is newly formed for the 2008 Nor Cal race season. Under the leadership of head coach Lesley Jensen, the riders come together from East Bay High schools including College Park, PHAA, Miramonte, and Clayton Valley as well as home schooling. They are getting expert advice from assistant coaches Alex Smith, Craig Stowers, Steve Fong and Becky Brain. The riders have braved the winter weather for regular midweek training at Redwood and Joaquin Miller plus awesome Sunday rides on all of the best trails from Napa to Woodside. This team loves to get out and ride -- they'll be taking it to the limit every time.

### **Del Mar High**

The Del Mar Dons of Campbell have begun turning their cranks. This brand spanking new team of 4 Freshmen, 2 juniors and 1 senior started in training in January. Staying close to home during the week, they have traveled to Ft Ord, ECDM and Soquel Demonstration Forest on the weekends. Sheldon Pauley has set the standard by not missing one practice. The team goal for the first race is to learn the layout, finish and attract girls to the team with the stories that are sure to follow.

### **Drake High**

The Drake Pirates in San Anselmo are looking at their biggest season ever this year with a Club Membership of over fifty riders. With an expanded Coaching staff of 6 and a Volunteer Ride Leader program, managing the Team has worked well. This year's group of 13 Girls (5 of whom are Freshman) and 44 Boys, the Pirates have grown to be the largest Team in the League. With many enthusiastic returning riders from last year's 2<sup>nd</sup> place Team, they are determined to claim a Championship for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in their 6 years with the League. Look for Senior Varsity rider Tyler Brandt to finish out his High School career at the top as well as sophomore riders Dylan Redford and Nick Newcomb who will be riding JV this year. Returning riders Haley Woodruff, Varsity Girls, and Lauren Catlin, JV Girls, will be strong and Freshman Sofia Hamilton has had a great preseason. Compared to last year, this year's Team is completing what are typically mid-season training rides of 20-25+ miles and are looking forward to a successful and winning season.

### **El Cerrito High**

El Cerrito Racing enters its 6th Norcal Division 1 season with a diverse group of 16 Boys, 4 Girls, and dozen Coaches from our urban community. Early season training focused on trail running, core workouts, and spinning, with team rides along the Bay Trail and in the Berkeley Hills. Look for John & Chris Bennett, Miho Groves, Captain Michael Barragan and David Miller to lead the charge of a Team primed to compete with grace, camaraderie, and tenacity. We're easy to find. You can't miss El Cerrito's distinctive green, white and black jerseys and the Big Green Tent at the races!

### **Folsom High**

The Folsom High Cycling Bulldogs are chomping at the bit to start the 2008 NorCal season. Long base miles in December and January have paid dividends in February for the team of 11 strong from beautiful Folsom, California. Riding rain or shine the last month has tempered this new team and it has already tasted success in the TBF Challenge Series with 6 podiums in three races so far in 2008. A strong showing from the three girl team members led by sophomore Karli Haugen, Team Captain, freshman Shasta McMillen and Most Improved Rider, Kayla Bruce will help bolster a talented boys lineup with freshman Justin Stofan leading the way. Junior Varsity riders Robert Fulton and Matthew Cartin Morose show their leadership on a daily basis mentoring younger riders like Sheridan Reed, Ajinkya Bagde, Tyler Attebery, Ethan Cook and surprise sophomore Carl Graffenstatter as they try to knock Justin out of the top spot in the team time trial this Friday. Team Director Jason McMillen hopes these intra-team competitions help get the riders psyched to finish in the top of the Division II standings. Go Bulldogs!!!

### **Harbor High**

The Santa Cruz Harbor Pirates are a small Division #1 team with 12 racers heading out for our third season. We are small, but we are a little power house team with 5 Coaches. Santa Cruz is a place where extreme

sports can be common place with sports like motocross, surfing and skateboarding. Our riders lean towards being a little more edgy and technical. Most of our riders are using cross country mt. biking to cross train for their other bicycle sports. We ride hard and have fun railing the loamy berms under the redwood canopy. Our Motto: Peace, Love and Hippy Birkenstocks.

### **Los Gatos High**

Los Gatos High School is looking forward to a great 2008 mountain bike season. In their fourth season, the team has three girls and 12 boys that started training in December. With 14 racers returning from last season, Christian Fernandez and Jordan Kestler lead a stronger team from last year. Despite the bad weather in January, the Los Gatos Wildcats manage to train well in the Santa Cruz mountains and the Open Space district, which conveniently feeds into the high school's campus. With many racers returning from the 2007 podium, the Wildcats look for continued success in 2008.

### **Luther Burbank**

The Luther Burbank Titans are from Sacramento, and are in their second season. Currently they have 7 riders, with one very motivated female racer, Brittany Weidner. They are being coached by members of the Sacramento Police Department with help from the GREAT (Gang Resistance Education And Training) program. They have a strong freshman class, led by Yamile Guzman, that raced in some local Sacramento races as 8th graders at Goethe Middle School. The team is looking GREAT, and all of the riders are looking forward to improving their rank in the standings.

### **Marin Catholic**

The newly-formed Marin Catholic Mountain Bike Club has been training under head coach John Vipiana since early December. It is affiliated with ZTeam, a non-profit professional and amateur racing team centered in Marin County. The racers - seven Freshman and Sophomore boys, and a Freshman girl - have been training several times a week at Tamarancho and China Camp, and on the trails of Mount Tam and Western Marin. We are building fitness and skills, and we are eager for the challenge of competition.

### **Redwood High**

The Redwood High School mountain bike team has been training hard for a great season this year. This team, which started in 2001 with six members, has now grown to almost thirty dedicated riders. Every Sunday and Wednesday the team heads out to Mt. Tam and Tamarancho in Fairfax to build endurance and strength that will be greatly needed for the races in March and April, and the League Championship in May. Coaches Ken White and Julia Violich (and lots of ride leaders and supporters) put in many hours of hard work each week to give us training tips and they also lead the team rides. Everyone seems to be sharing high goals for the season, scoring extra points in the NorCal league and enjoying great times on the trails.

### **San Marin High**

The eight boys and one girl of the San Marin High School Cycling Club Mustangs from the town of Novato are feeling good about their preparation for the 2008 season after riding three times a week fairly consistently since Dec. 1st. Their five coaches trade off leading rides and keep them rolling forward toward their team goal of top three in Division two competition where they placed fourth last year in their first year out. All of San Marin's riders are inspired and motivated to train hard and do well in the Leagues six races and it is a goal to finish every race entered and compete fiercely while practicing exemplary sportsmanship towards fellow racers. Sponsors Sierra Electric, Counterforce Engineering inc., Summit bicycles, WTB, Mckell Perry DDS, BTC of Marin, Rosenbach Construction, CSW/ST2, Dent Pro, Able Tire and Brake, TenLinks.com, HartMarin, Nine Corners, The Loop, Mark Weir, YMCA have all made the teams existence possible and their help is appreciated.

### **San Rafael High**

This will be the second season for San Rafael High, their first in Division I. The Bulldogs hope to build upon their successful inaugural season, expanding from seven returning freshman to 17 riders total. San Rafael is particularly optimistic about the addition of their five highly-motivated girls. With riders in nearly every classification, San Rafael's goal is to be more competitively balanced as a team this year. The Dawgs look to be competitive in JV Boys, with sophomore standouts Niko Kaplanis, Clayton Herrick and Gavin Albertoli all having finished on the podium as freshman last year. Nationally-ranked Will Curtis, also a sophomore coming off a 2nd place JV finish, will have his hands full racing Varsity this year in a strong field that looks experienced and deep. The San Rafael Team remains young, learning as they go, with an eye towards building the program for the future.

### **Sierra Foothill Composite Racing Team**

The Division II Sierra Foothill Composite Racing Team is looking forward to a fun and competitive season with the NorCal HS MTB League! With riders from Colfax High and Bear River High Schools, the 6 rider team has a squad of 4 seniors, 1 junior and 1 freshman. Training for the races has been a challenge with all the rainfall/some snow, but has proven to increase the determination of the riders. They are looking forward to the first event of the season at Fort Ord!

### **Vacaville High**

The Vacaville High Trail Dogs are excited and looking forward to great 1st season. The team is made up of 1 sophomore and 2 freshman boys. All have great bike skills from other biking disciplines and are ready to test their endurance with some XC. The team was sparked by Charlie DiMichele, a downhill rider who also has great climbing potential. The Dogs training has been ramping up in February after the January deluge ceased. The Vacaville Trail Dogs are hoping to get their feet/tires wet this year and grow into a full division 2 team next year.

### **Vintage High**

The Vintage High Crushers in Napa are eager to start their 3rd season as a club and racing with the league. The team is made up of two Seniors and one Junior, all racing in Division I, J.V. Boys. Senior Jimmy Vietor has been with the team since its' inception in 2005/2006 with senior Julio Soriano in his 2nd year and Junior, Tyler Lamb racing with the team for the first time this year. The team has had some great training at Skyline Park and on the roads among the wineries in Napa.

### **Woodcreek High School Timberwolves.**

In our second year of league competition we have grown to 22 riders and moved to division 1. Returning standout riders Annette Cardenas, Daniel Rotheram, and Brandyn Moulten will be joined by first year top level racers Johnny and Candice Dickerson, Jimmy Winne, AJ Bechler and Matt Mazzuca. Directors Jim Winne and Phil Rotheram are joined by a group of six volunteer coaches and ride leaders. The team has been training since September and working toward our goal of steadily improved race results, building on the successes of our inaugural season.

This year we have emphasized skills and fundamentals for all of our riders in order to insure a safe trail riding experience. This has been a highly successful program marked by an injury-free pre-season. We will work to continue this trend throughout the 2008 racing season.

### **Woodside High School**

The Woodside High School Wildcats are proud to join the NorCal HS MTB League with a new team of enthusiastic riders this season. Two of our experienced senior riders, Ryan Heywood and Jeff Mize, have been teaching skills to newer riders Mac Hart, CJ Cockrum, and Daniel Constanz, as we go out and train on the beautiful Open Space trails of the Mid-Peninsula. Sophomore Mac Hart has been instrumental in securing sponsors and pulling the team together with his enthusiasm and leadership. We appreciate the support of our local sponsors and look forward to a great first season!