



A SEASON FULL OF VICTORIES, BUT YOUTH MOUNTAIN BIKING IS NOT JUST ABOUT RACE RESULTS

[Waterloo, WI October 29, 2019] Moments and memories. What a weekend! The final race of the season in Waterloo, WI delivered many memories. Memories that will stick with our athletes, families, and coaches for years to come. The moments from this weekend touched each person in different ways... the triumph of victory, the agony of defeat, the pain of a fall, or the disappointment of a season that didn't end the way some had hoped. The unique privilege of living in the same state as one of the world's largest bicycle manufacturers, TREK, is getting to ride on their private trails - talk about memories in the making!

These moments reach far and wide. The awesome thing about this team, this league, this national organization is the vision and mission to have fun, create strong minds, strong bodies, strong character and strong community. These weekends are so much more than just jumping on a bike and going fast. Kids practice together, strategize together, eat together, and cheer each other on. They celebrate together and comfort each other.

The vibe at mountain bike races is different than other sports. It is in the woods. It involves camping together. Kids get muddy. Kids are challenged with endurance and obstacles different than playing fields or court sports. When was the last time you rode through a rock garden, down a descent, over a root, up a shifty slippery hill to the open spot leading to the finish for an all out sprint? The combination of bike handling skills combined with physical endurance and the insane demand of speed are what make this sport different. It's different and totally cool!

Some kids found their groove in race five despite last minute changes on the course due to the skies letting loose with rain. The Saturday pre-ride was completely different than what the actual course was on Sunday. They were riding blind, but they had trained. They were prepared. They knew how to handle their bikes, they knew how to get up and keep going even when they were taken down. Not just once or twice, but four times through the race. These kids are tough!!!! This sport is not for the faint of heart. Determination, grit, and perseverance is not for the faint of heart. But, oh these moments..... they are so important in molding these kids for more than just a race in the future.

Part of that preparation is from their head coach, Dave Bender, who was recognized nationally as SRAM's NICA Coach of the Year. He rides with these kids three to four times a week throughout the season prepping them for all kinds of conditions. Part of the preparation is the availability of support and equipment at their disposal thanks to sponsors such as BRP, 75th Street Inn, Zion Cyclery, Lang Tools, Digital Graffiti Treadheads Cycling and several others that can be found on the www.slsmtb.com. The last piece of the preparation is from the support they receive from family, team mates, and friends. It takes a village.

One of the moments that resonated most is when a senior came across the finish line with disappointment that was palpable. As you watched their mother approach the bike, it could move any parent to tears to know they didn't come in where they wanted. Their hard work..... the emotions of the last race... but they rose. They are a shining example of cumulative hard work - that student was on the podium as an overall race leader for the year. A tremendous accomplishment to be proud of.

We are a community that oozes pride. It is not just about the kids on the podium. It is about kids having fun. It is about kids getting to participate every time - because there is no bench to sit on in mountain bike racing. If you show up and work hard - you race! Each step up the rankings - it matters! Each personal victory, it matters! Each time they fall and get up, it matters! Each time they discover their own internal motivation, it matters. Each time they show kindness to a teammate, take care of the trail, respect a competitor, it matters. This SLS community is proud of all these moments.

One team mother captured this pride by sharing her feelings on Facebook, "I'm so proud of my boy, but not just because he won. I'm proud of the confident young man that he has become since starting this sport three years ago. I'm grateful to the coaches, volunteers, and parents of this team who dedicate so much time and effort into shaping these young men and women into good people, on and off their bikes. I had no idea the power of the bike."

The seniors that have participated on this team are like family. We will feel the void, but we are so happy for the next step they will each take in life. Nino Breeden, Kevin Urban, Mia Scarleto, Katelyn Vasovsky, Rider Rainer, Joe Banish, Alex Gordon, Chase Vandeursen, Josh Brey, and Carter Kasianowicz each contributed to such an important piece of the synchronicity of the team. They are examples to all the younger students aspiring to reach goals. Mia Scarleto is an accomplished rider in multiple cycling disciplines and celebrated a 3rd place finish at Trek Trails this weekend. Rider Rainer achieved success throughout the season with a 4th place finish overall for the season. Joe Banish captured a podium spot for the first time ever at this race. Alex competed in his first ever NICA event this season and had the opportunity to experience how demanding the competition can be. Chase put in a tremendous effort all season to reach the podium but came up just shy with two 6th place finishes throughout the season. Nino, Carter, and Kevin all ride on multiple cycling teams across different disciplines as well. Spinning their legs is in their future as they explore life beyond high school. Katelyn Vasovsky demonstrated leadership throughout the year as she climbed the leaderboard, demonstrated hard work, and oozed positive team spirit. She was recognized for these strong characteristics by being named team captain. Some of these young adults are being recruited and considering collegiate cycling programs. Mountain biking is the real deal. It is a lifelong passion that will keep a focus on outdoor recreation and wellness throughout their lifetimes.

While the seniors pulled on our heart strings, there are several other tremendous victories noteworthy of recognition. The SLSMTB community had five students on the podium for race five along with a team win. The JV3 race was heated again this year as the boys battled it out on The Trek Farm. Connor retained his white leader jersey with a third place finish. Joe Banish set his eye on the prize and pulled off a fourth place finish, his first time on the podium this year. Ryan Paupore darted out in front and held his lead to grab another first place finish this year in the JV2 race. Mia Scarleto found her rhythm and kept pace with the leaders to cinch a 3rd place victory in the JV3 girls race. Rounding out the podium for middle school racing was Natalie Gowe, She excelled in her race and also captured a podium position for the first time this year with a fourth place finish in the 8th grade girls race.

Connor Buchanan	10th grade	Lakeview Tech	D2 JV3	3 laps	1:07:50.59	3rd place
Joe Banish	12th grade	Wilmot High School	D2 JV3	3 laps	1:07:56.65	4th place
Ryan Paupore	10th grade	St. Joe's Catholic Academy	D2 JV2	2 laps	47:24.41	1st place
Mia Scarleto	12th grade	Bradford High School	JV3 Girls	3 laps	1:28:15.49	3rd place
Natalie Gowe	8th grade	Viking Middle School	8th grade girls	1 lap	29:50.34	4th place

In addition, we are thrilled to announce the following students who were recognized for excelling in their category throughout the year. These students are ranked statewide for the 2019 season. The SLSMTB Illinois North team finished 2nd runner up in the Division 2 statewide team standings. A great accomplishment with 52 teams putting in hard efforts each week.

Connor Buchanan	10th grade	Lakeview Tech	D2 JV3	1st place
Nathan Gowe	10th grade	Warren Township High School	D2 JV3	2nd place
Rider Rainer	12th grade	Burlington High School	D2 JV3	3rd place
Paula Urban	11th grade	Grayslake Central High School	JV3 girls	3rd place
Ryan Paupore	10th grade	St. Joe's Catholic Academy	D2 JV2	3rd place
Samantha Brooks	10th grade	Wilmot High School	Jv2 girls	3rd place

Complete race results can be found at <http://www.wisconsinmtb.org/race-5-trek-trails-race-results/>

The SLSMTB association will celebrate their athletes at their year end recognition banquet on November 13th. The team is proud of each and every athlete of the 64 member roster. Everyone tackled a personal goal this year. We would also like to thank all the adults who volunteer their time as coaches, committee members, and board members to help these students achieve their goals. And, last but not least, a big shout out to our corporate sponsors. Their support enables the team to provide equipment, support, and scholarships for athletes. A complete list of sponsors can be found at <https://www.slsmtb.com/sponsors>.

We can't wait for next season! If you know a student who would be interested in riding with SLSMTB visit our website to see updates on the 2020 season. Our teams are open to boys and girls in grades 6-12. We believe financial ability should not hinder anyone from participating, and scholarships are available for those who may need additional support.

NICA, the National Interscholastic Cycling Association has been committed to developing interscholastic mountain biking programs across the United States since 2009. There are currently 26 states with active leagues throughout the United States. The momentum and interest in the sport is undeniable, as teams continue forming and growing throughout the United States. Racing in Wisconsin is run by the Wisconsin High School Cycling League. Local teams in SE Wisconsin and Illinois are run by SLSMTB (Southeastern Lakes Scholastic Mountain Bike Association) with head coach Dave Bender and Board President Julie Lang overseeing team activities for local youth interested in mountain biking.

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