



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THEY CAME TO RACE

[Mt. Morris, WI, September 29, 2019] - And race they did!!! As teams began arriving at Nordic Mountain just outside Wild Rose, WI on Saturday to pre-ride the race course, the weather couldn't have been more picturesque. The team staged photos, completed a pre-ride practice of the course, ate a team dinner, and had a team strategy meeting with their head coach Dave Bender. Athletes were allowed some free time to revel in the fresh air and enjoy friends. After all, this team isn't just about racing. This team is about community, and these kids love it. After lights out, things would begin taking a turn from that ideal Saturday. The clouds rolled in and the skies quickly began to douse the course with a slow, consistent rain. The chill in the air would leave each and every racer feeling challenged and some defeated before they ever approached the start line. The mud, oh the mud. The conditions were simply - just gross. As the day wore on, the conditions continued to deteriorate.

On a good day, this course is tough. It is filled with difficult climbs, downhill switchbacks, and single track filled with trees, roots, rocks, and bridges. Most of us would have taken one look at the conditions, packed our bags and said "peace out," as we drove away in our warm dry cars for a lazy Sunday afternoon at home. These kids, these 628 kids from around Wisconsin and Illinois, were ready. They came to race! Nothing was going to deter these kids from doing what they have been training to do; to ride, to work hard, to overcome obstacles, to push themselves to do their best, to rally together, to support one another, to laugh, to cry, to celebrate. And, TO GET MUDDY. They had to dig deep. Racing in the mud is not for the faint of heart. It requires a different type of determination, modifications to the bike, and extreme attention to navigating the course and handling your ride with extreme skill and care, all while going fast.

While there are notable winners in each category, this week, everyone that started WON. It was a roller coaster of a day. They discovered a different strength they didn't know they had. They realized how important the training and bicycle handling skills are. They felt exhaustion and exhilaration. They discovered who they were. They were never so thankful for a warm shower as the grunge, sweat, and mildewy mud stink permeated every crevice of their body and equipment.

The core values of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association): developing strong body, strong mind, strong character, and strong communities were tested this weekend. The sparkle and excitement in David Wurl's sixth grade eyes as he completed the race exuded joy showing just how proud he was to finish. Coaches cheered, held their hands up for a high five, and hugged so many kids as they came across that line. Some were pedaling... and some, like Ted Zinox, covered in mud, were walking their bike because their equipment was too compromised by the wet muddy conditions to be ridden. Despite the disappointment, Ted still came across the line with a positive finish, earning points for himself and his team in 22nd place. Some were disappointed. Some, like Logan Powers (7th grade Starbuck Middle School), Nino Breedan (12th grade, Lakeview Academy), and Christian Randolph (10th grade, Wilmot High School) were victorious, somehow finding their stride in the mud to finish ahead of their previous standing. Some were hurt and injured. But all achieved something far greater - testing their skill and willpower in times of extreme challenge, knowing they COULD do it! It's not just about winning the race, it's about strength, perseverance, bravery, grit, zest and a little adrenaline. Their ability to overcome was inspiring.

Seven athletes from SLSMTB celebrated official wins this weekend. The team focuses on NICA's core mission of "getting more kids on bikes" while building strong minds, bodies, character, and communities through cycling. Connor Buchanan finished in first place in the D2 JV3 race as he held his sight on the finish. He retains the white Leader's Jersey for this season with the highest overall points. Nathan Gowe and Rider Rainer pushed through the treacherous conditions to secure additional podium spots in 2nd and 5th place for the highly competitive D2 JV3 race behind Connor. Ryan Paupore (10th grade, St. Joe's Catholic Academy) found his rhythm and navigated the ruts, mud and slick conditions to a 3rd place finish in the D2 JV2 race. The girls showed up too, and gave it their all with Paula Urban (11th grade, Grayslake High School) finishing in 4th place for girls JV3 and Samantha Brooks (10th grade, Wilmot High School) climbing to a second place finish. Jon Olenick (7th grade, Trevor-Wilmot Consolidated) continues to shine as a leader in the 7th grade field as he quickly captured a generous lead and held his pace to secure 1st place. The SLSMTB association is divided into six teams. The SLSMTB Composite IL North team cinched a first place win this week and is currently holding in at third place overall for team points YTD for the season. The SLSMTB community couldn't be more proud of every single athlete this week.

Connor Buchanan	10th grade	Lakeview Tech	D2 JV3	2 laps	57:05.58	1st place
Nathan Gowe	10th grade	Warren Township High School	D2 JV3	2 laps	58:52.16	2nd place
Rider Rainer	12th grade	Burlington High School	D2 JV3	2 laps	1:00:44.40	5th place
Ryan Paupore	10th grade	St. Joe's Catholic Academy	D2 JV2	2 laps	56:31.93	3rd place
Paula Urban	11th grade	Grayslake Central High School	JV3 Girls	3 laps	1:37:33.29	4th place
Samantha Brooks	10th grade	Wilmot High School	JV2 Girls	2 laps	1:02:04.92	2nd place
Jon Olenick	7th grade	Trevor-Wilmot Consolidated Grade School	MS 7th grade boys	1 lap	29:26.24	1st place

Complete race results can be found at <http://www.wisconsinmtb.org/race-3-nordic-mountain-race-results/>

The next race will be on October 13, 2019 at Minooka Park in Waukesha, WI.

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.

Southeastern Lakes Scholastic Mountain Bike Assoc.
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