

Air Academy MTB Team Finishes Second in the Colorado High School Mountain League State Championships



Showing Air Academy Pride

Glenwood Springs was the place to be last weekend as 87 High Schools and Composite Teams were represented at the Colorado High School League State Championships. Races took place over the entire weekend with Freshmen and JV boys and girls racing on Saturday, followed by Sophomore and Varsity boys and girls on Sunday. The Glenwood Springs course is easily the most technical and rocky of the league's race courses, well suited for a state championship.

Freshman Boys

For Air Academy the action started with the Freshman boys on Saturday morning. Jackson Lorigan, Ethan Allen, and Jacob "Jake" Lane took their starting positions among a field of 142 racers. The start was fast and furious up a long climb before converging into rocky technical singletrack. Jackson Lorigan led Air Academy as he moved from 47th starting position to 32nd on a course that had so much singletrack, passing opportunities were limited. Ethan followed finishing in the top half of the field at 61st. Jake unfortunately suffered a broken shifter and after determining that it couldn't be fixed, his bike was swapped with Varsity teammate Carson Pevoteaux's bike. Jake started the second lap in dead last place, but immediately passed riders

on the first climb. Jake was penalized and additional 5 minutes for outside assistance but still manage to finish 136th. Another example of the “Never Quit” mindset of this team.



Jackson in a Sprint Finish



Jake Fully Focused After a Bike Swap



Ethan Leading through the Singletrack

JV Girls

Sophomore Kylie Moerk, as the Crystal Regional Champion, lined up in the first row along with the champions of the other three regions in a field of 102 JV Girls. The racing was tight

throughout the first lap with Durango and Summit racers finally opening a 20 second gap going into the second lap. Kylie was in the chase group of three consisting of racers from Fairview and Thunder Ridge. The Durango and Summit riders were able to hold their gap with Durango rider taking the win. Kylie battled throughout the second lap within the chase group, crossing the line in 4th and earning a spot on the podium.



The Four Regional Champions Line Up First



Pushing Hard up the Climb

JV Boys

The last race of the day was the JV Boys, and it didn't disappoint. With a field of 156 racers and the amount of singletrack on this course, starting position was key. Ben "Zim" Reichart and Keegan Hale had the best starting assignments, starting in rows 2 and 4. Lawrence "Eli" Rawe, Simeon Scheid, and Braun Deighton were further back, at 65th, 77th, and 85th starting positions. The start was insane as racers did everything they could to get up the climb and to the single track in the best position possible. As in the JV Girls race, it was tight between the top riders through the first lap with two riders opening a 20 second gap between a chasing group of three and another group 20 seconds behind them. Zim was in the first chase group. Like Kylie, he finished 4th, earning a podium spot. Keegan Hale followed just over a minute later in 17th. Braun, Eli, and Simeon came in at 41st, 52nd, and 86th, scoring valuable JV points for the team.



Zim in a Close Battle Up Front



Braun Railing a Corner



Keegan Fighting for a Top 20 Spot



Eli Moving up 25 Places from Starting Position



Simeon Putting some Power to the Climb

Sophomore Boys

The second day for Air Academy started with the Sophomore Boys and they rocked. In a field of 152 riders Air Academy finished with three in the top 20. Jacob Webber and Cooper “Coop” Markley led the team outsprinting two Steamboat Springs riders taking 13th and 14th places. Keenan Swanson was close behind out sprinting a Fairview rider for 19th. In a close battle for the team title with Steamboat Springs, Jacob and Coop helped move Air Academy little closer to the top spot. Creed Anderson was Air Academy’s fourth Sophomore coming in at 142.



Jacob Leading Down a Rocky Descent



Jacob and Coop Working Together



Keenan Climbing Hard



Creed Riding the Rocks



Coop Sorting through the Crowd

Varsity Girls

The Varsity Girls were next on the line with Avery Harris representing Air Academy. These girls were incredible to watch, the fastest in the state of Colorado and among the fastest in the country. Avery was right in the mix upfront battling for a top 20 spot. Steamboat Springs, who were emerging as the team to beat had four girls racing Varsity. Despite Avery finishing in the top 20 at 17th, their accumulative score was enough to move them into first place, despite their riders finishing as far back as 41st and 50th.



Avery Sporting her Disco Shades



...And Pushing the Pace

Varsity Boys

The last race of the weekend was well worth the wait. Watching these racers rip through the switchbacks and over rocks is poetry with incredible power. There are simply no words to describe the speed and skill these racers displayed. It must be seen to be appreciated. The race up front between the top 5 was almost wheel to wheel from start to finish, with the lead changing many times along the way. Sophomore Austin Leigh was right in the mix and at one point took the lead. Over the course of three laps, gaps starting opening between the five riders and Austin finished third, just 20 seconds off the win. Less than a minute separated the first five riders. Senior Reed McAfee, in his last High School race, turned in a powerful performance with a tremendous finishing sprint, placed 47th, moving up 14 places from his starting position at 61st. Trevor Kornmesser was in the mix until his rear derailleur fell off and got caught up in his spokes. He was eventually able to fix it with outside assistance. He did not let this deter him and continued to push from last place knowing he would be given a 5 min penalty on top of the time taken to fix his bike. He raced hard anyway, moving up the line to approximately 70th place. The five-minute penalty however sent him back to 88th place of 95 starters. Huge kudos to Trevor for not quitting and continuing to race hard despite the mishap.



Austin 5th Wheel in a Tight Race Up Front



Final Lap and it's Down to Three



Trevor Deals with a Bike setback



Reed Giving His All in His Last HS Race

Wrapping It All Up

The season ended as it started, an Air Academy Team that proudly represented their school and district as one of the top teams in the Colorado High School Mountain Bike League. It's been a magical season with how the team supported, encouraged, cheered, and worked together to be the best they can be. These students came to every practice motivated, positive, and ready to work hard as a team. During the races they left everything out on the course. There were many mishaps such as mechanical issues, crashes, and sicknesses. In every case our riders did not panic or get upset but rather did what it took to resolve the issue and keep going. This is the team's third year. In these three years the team has had over 315 individual race starts and not a single DNF (Did Not Finish). The volunteer coaches along with captains Reed McAfee, Avery Harris, and Austin Leigh led the way, helping to create a culture of positive mindset, teammate support, encouragement, hard work, and "Digging Deep". It was a magical season indeed.