

Air Academy MTB Team Finishes Second at the Cloud City Challenge in Leadville, Colorado

The Air Academy MTB Team traveled to the land of no air, Leadville, Colorado for the third of four Regional Series races. This weekend turned out to be a very tight race for the top spot between Air Academy and defending state champions Colorado Rocky Mountain School (CRMS). Both teams flipped back and forth between first and second throughout the day. In the end CRMS squeezed out first place by 15 points. Air Academy finished second with 631 points over third place Evergreen.



At 10,000+ feet, Leadville is a high-altitude course with a mix of singletrack, doubletrack, and dirt roads that include portions of the [Colorado Mountain College](#) Leadville cross-country trail system and Lake County trails. The course is a rough 6.2 mile loop with 620 feet of climbing per lap. The course starts and finishes at Colorado Mountain College Leadville, with a steep uphill climb to the finish. Freshmen, Sophomore, and JV race two laps and Varsity race three.

Sophomore Boys: The Sophomore Boys were the first to get things underway on a crisp cool morning of about 36 degrees F. The boys got warmed up right away as the start was up a steep hill, then funneled into a steep singletrack descent, followed by a long fire road climb. The lead pack fell into two groups with five riders opening a gap of about 20 seconds on a chasing pack of seven riders that included Air Academy's Carsten Varcie. Aspen's Andrew Dube surged on the second lap separating himself from the lead group. Carsten turned on the afterburners and caught the first group and threaded his way through to a duel with Crested Butte's Jackson Hosteen for second place. Going around the corner on a steep uphill sprint to the finish, Carsten's rear tire slid out, and he took third place. Chase McAfee improved his standing by finishing in the top 20 at 17th, and Jackson Wroten rounded out the sophomore boys finishing 37th winning a sprint finish by the length of a tire. The day was off to a great start.



Carsten in Battle for 2nd Place



Jackson Edging out Rock Canyon



Chase Ripping the Corner

JV Girls: Ruby Harris, Nora Bots, and Georgia Swanson were next with an added challenge of cold wind and rain throughout the race. The first lap saw Ruby sandwiched between two CRMS riders with Nora and another CRMS rider less than a minute behind. Georgia came around in a group of four shortly after. Ruby pushed the pace and dropped the CRMS girls taking first place by 17 seconds. Nora held on to finish on the podium at 5th, and Georgia came in at 21st to round out the JV Girls.



Georgia Starting a Climb



Nora on the Final Descent



Ruby Take the Win!

Sophomore Girls: Elora Walkup and Katelyn Markley represented Air Academy, also in the rain. The rain and cold did not seem to faze them, as Katelyn had a breakthrough race starting in 8th position, and despite dropping a chain on the first lap, rallied strong to take second place. Elora was just behind in third, placing both sophomore girls on the podium and scoring huge points for the team.



Katelyn Hitting the Climb Focused



Elora Hot on Her Heels

JV Boys: Dylan Hudson, Creed Anderson, Jackson Lorigan, Alex Winslow, Jacob Lane, and Luke Pajak hit the starting line for Air Academy's JV Boys in a fast and furious start as 70 riders shot up the first climb. Five riders, including Jacob Lane, opened a gap at the front with a group of seven riders that included Dylan Hudson in the chase. A little over halfway through the first lap, Jacob broke his chain, which took time to repair, plus an additional five minutes was added to his time for accepting outside assistance. Dylan was able to separate himself from the chasing group, close on the leaders and take the 5th podium spot. Creed came in next at 22nd. Jackson and Alex worked together throughout the race coming in at 23rd and 24th. Luke came in just ahead of three CRMS riders at 49th. Jacob with his broken chain and five-minute penalty finished 45th.



Jackson Climbing the "Ridge"



Jacob getting Aero!



Dylan Ripping the Singletrack



Creed Leading Rock Canyon



Alex Threading through the Aspens



Luke Close Behind

Varsity Boys: The Varsity Boys start, as always, was nothing short of incredible. At the word go, the varsity boys exploded out of the start with so much power they hit the first climb as if shot from a slingshot. Austin Leigh, Justin Tremblay, Zim Reichart, Keenan Swanson, Jacob Weber, and Cooper Markley blasted out of the starting chute along with 44 of the fastest racers in the region. All vied for the steep singletrack descent at the top of the climb. Austin, Justin, Zim, and Jacob were in the front group as they funneled into the singletrack. Things began to break up as they raced up the long doubletrack climb shortly after the descent. At the end of the first lap, Jack Higley of Thunder Ridge and Austin Leigh opened a 30 second gap on chasers Henry McMartin of Cheyenne Mountain and Justin Tremblay, with Zim Riechart and Jacob Weber in a pack of six, another 30 seconds back. Keenan Swanson was next, just ahead of riders from Palmer Ridge, Columbine and Crested Butte. Cooper Markley came around the first lap approximately one minute behind Keenan. Austin and the Thunder Ridge rider went into the third lap wheel to wheel as did Justin and the Cheyenne Mountain rider, still only 30 seconds back. Zim moved up several places and was looking strong going into the third lap, passing three riders up the climb. Keenan was not far behind, and Jacob came in behind Keenan with a flat tire. His wheel was exchanged, and he was back in the race. Jacob lost a significant amount of time plus he was assessed a five-minute penalty for outside assistance. This dropped him from a potential top 10 finish to ultimately finishing in 40th place. Up front, the Thunder Ridge rider turned in the fastest lap of the day at 24:02 and opened a gap on Austin. Austin finished 2nd while Justin put in a

surge on the third lap, dropping the Cheyenne Mountain rider and finishing 3rd. Zim continued to ride strong reeling in more riders, finishing 6th in an uphill sprint to the finish decided by tenths of a second. Keenan was next at 27, with Cooper not far behind in 41st.



Varsity Boys Explosive Start



Austin Wheel to Wheel with Thunder Ridge



Coop in a Dual with Cheyenne Mountain



Keenan in the Slingshot Jersey Ripping the Rollers



Jacob Having some Fun after a Flat Tire



Zim Catching Riders on the Climb



Justin in the Battle for 3rd

Varsity Girls: Air Academy fielded two varsity girls at Leadville: Kylie Moerk and Sandrine Tremblay. The Varsity Girls start, like the boys, was a display of speed and power. Kylie Moerk, along with a CRMS rider and two Evergreen riders were off the front sprinting up the climb to the singletrack. A tight exciting battle ensued as all four riders covered the first two laps wheel to wheel, attacking on the climbs and bombing the descents. Sandrine Tremblay rode alone, less than a minute back from the leading group, and a minute ahead of a chasing pack of four. The race continued to be tight up front going into the third lap with Kylie and Hazel Lazar of CRMS opening a gap on the two Evergreen riders. The CRMS rider then surged to open some space between her and Kylie taking first place with Kylie a close second. Sandrine was able to hold off the chasing pack and take the 5th podium spot.



Kylie & CRMS Rider Opening a Gap on Evergreen



Sandrine Holding Down 5th Place

Freshman Boys: Finishing up the day was the Freshman Boys. Steel Starkey and Jake Leigh rolled up to the start representing Air Academy. Forty-six Freshman shot off the start with Steel and Jake tucked in the middle. After the first lap, a lead group of four established a significant lead over a chase group of eight that included Steel. Jake was sandwiched in a large group that followed the chase group. Steel was able to move up in the second lap finishing 8th overall. Jake also held strong finishing in a respectable 26th place.



Steel Ripping the Descent



Jake Determined and Focused

Summary: Leadville was a great race with great competition. With the competition so close and the lead changing back and forth throughout the day, it made for a very exciting weekend. In the end, Air Academy took second by the slimmest of margins. This has further motivated the team to improve and be our best. We are super excited about the Regional Championships taking place outside of Canon City, CO on October 5th. Our Team Motto is “**Dig Deep**”. As we prepare for the regional championships, that is exactly what we will do!

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Thank you! **Dig Deep!**