

TOP CYCLISTS COMMIT TO ATTEND MIDWESTERN STATE

Four cyclists, including a three-time junior national champion, have committed to attend Midwestern State starting in the 2006-07 school year.

Three of the athletes will begin at Midwestern as freshmen in the fall. The fourth will begin work on a master's degree in January.

"The riders who are coming to Midwestern this coming school year are a great investment in this program and its traditions," said MSU Cycling Coach Gary Achterberg. "We've got some solid experience on the road that will help fill gaps left by graduation, and I'm also excited that we're going to be getting more involved in track racing again."

Midwestern State athletes have won 17 national championships and numerous other national awards during the 16-year history of the cycling program. Many of those championships and medals have been won on the velodrome – a banked four-turn track on which riders compete on fixed-gear bikes with no brakes.

The freshmen coming to MSU are:



■ Matthew Fox, 18, of Highland Park, Ill. Fox has specialized in track events during his junior career. He earned four medals – including silvers in the 17-18 age group in both the kilometer and the team sprint – during the 2005 USA Cycling Junior National Track Championships. Fox also has won junior national championships in younger age groups earlier in his cycling career. He also has won multiple state championships on the track in Illinois as well as national championships held by American Bicycle Racing, a smaller cycling federation. Fox has attended numerous training camps at the U.S. Olympic Training Center and also has competed on the track as part of the U.S. Junior National Team. Fox is a 2006 graduate of Highland Park (Ill.) High School.



■ Aaron Kacala, 20, of Racine, Wis. Kacala, who also specializes in the track, has spent the last two years as a permanent resident at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. He moved from the OTC and started looking at colleges and collegiate cycling programs because he wanted to start working toward a college degree." Kacala won three junior national championships in the 17-18 age group – the kilometer both years and the team sprint when he was 18. Kacala also has competed in numerous elite-level track competitions around the world, including the 2003 Junior Track World Championships in Moscow, where he finished 16th in the kilometer and fourth in the team sprint. He also has won the junior state road and criterium championships in Wisconsin. Kacala is a 2004 graduate of Racine Case High School in Wisconsin.



■ Kip Spaude, 18, of Watertown, Wis. Spaude has established himself as one of the top junior cyclists in the Upper Midwest over the last two years. He has had top finishes in numerous junior and Category 3 races over the past few years. He also competed at Le Tour de l'Abitibi in 2004 and 2005. The race in Val-d'Or, Quebec, is the only international junior race that takes place in North America. Throughout his junior career and now in his first year of senior racing, Spaude competes for the ISCorp Cycling Team, which has seen numerous riders move on to professional teams as well as to international competition in Europe as part of the U.S. National Team. Achterberg was the coach of the ISCorp Junior Cycling Team before he moved from Wisconsin to Wichita Falls in August 2003. Spaude also is a national-caliber cross-country ski racer. As he was considering colleges, Spaude also looked at several schools with cross-country ski programs. Nordic skiing is an NCAA sport. Spaude is a 2006 graduate of Watertown (Wis.) High School.

"These freshmen are a very solid foundation from which this team can grow," Achterberg said. "We've got track talent in Aaron and Matt that will make us contenders at the Collegiate National Track Championships right away this fall."

Spaude, whose strength is on the road, also is getting involved with track racing. He plans to spend time this summer developing his skills at the velodrome in Kenosha, Wis., with help from both Kacala and Fox, who also live in the vicinity.

In addition to the three freshmen, the current top cyclist from the South Central Collegiate Cycling Conference who is not already a student at Midwestern State plans to transfer to MSU in January to begin work on a master's degree in kinesiology.



■ Colt Trant, 22, of Seguin, Texas, will graduate from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, in December with a degree in economics. Trant finished third in the 2005-06 season-long collegiate conference competition behind MSU riders Brian Wyrick and Adam Biwan.

Trant has won several events this past season, including a road race stage in the biggest USA Cycling stage race in Texas, as well as a collegiate criterium.

"Colt is going to be a great addition to our program. I'm really looking forward to him coming to campus in January," Achterberg said. "He's improved exponentially as a rider in the last year. He works hard. He's eager to learn. And, he's definitely a team player. He'll fit right in."

In addition to these scholarship riders, Achterberg said he expects several other top young riders from Texas to walk on to the team this fall.

"I'm also talking to several more out-of-state riders who just graduated from high school who are planning to visit the campus and who still could begin school here either this fall or in the spring," he added.

"And, I'm in regular contact with a number of other promising juniors who still have one or two of high school remaining," Achterberg said. "One is spending a portion of the summer racing with the U.S. Junior National Team in Belgium and another young Canadian cyclist also is getting experience racing in Europe this summer."

Midwestern State is one of a handful of schools across the nation that offer scholarships to cyclists. The program has attracted athletes from around the world. The Mustangs finished sixth in the nation and earned four medals during USA Cycling's Collegiate National Road Championships this May in Lawrence, Kan.