

4/14/08 -- MIDWESTERN STATE CYCLIST WINS MAJOR TEXAS STAGE RACE

FORT DAVIS, Texas – Jason Short, a first-year cyclist for Midwestern State University, won the Fort Davis Hammerfest, the most difficult and prestigious multiple-event stage race in Texas, on Sunday.

Short moved from 10th place overall and 3 minutes back to the top spot after a 65-mile breakaway in a 74-mile road race that included many difficult climbs through the Davis Mountains in west Texas. This is the first time in memory that a Midwestern State rider has won the top Pro/Category 1-2 event at this long-running Texas Cup race.

MSU's Alex Boyd, the defending national collegiate road race champion, led the race going into the final stage. Boyd took over the top spot after winning the second-stage on Saturday, a hill climb from downtown Fort Davis, up Mt. Locke – the highest road in Texas – to the McDonald Observatory. Boyd finished second in the opening-stage 16-mile time trial.

Short, who was 11th in the time trial and 17th in the hill climb, said he initially jumped into the early breakaway to help protect Boyd as race leader. An initial nine-rider breakaway kept losing riders on the difficult climbs. The breakaway's time in front of Boyd and the field increased to eight minutes at one point.

"As the gap grew, the focus shifted from just sitting on the breakaway," Short said. "Once I realized who was in the breakaway and what was going on, it became my job to give it everything I had to win the overall so the team could win."

The Midwestern State Cycling Team made the 450-mile trip to Fort Davis with a squad of 10 riders and its coach to compete in this non-collegiate event. The other top finishes of the weekend included:

- Collin Davis' win of the third-stage Category 3 road race. Davis finished fifth overall.
- Natalie Klemko's second-place finish in the time trial in the Women Open category.
- Sean Brown's second-place overall finish in Category 5. Brown, a former high school middle-distance track standout from Burkburnett, finished third in the time trial, third in the hill climb and second in the road race.
- Tyler Henderson's fifth-place overall finish in Category 4. Henderson was fourth in the hill climb and fourth in the road race.

"Jason's win is a credit to his hard work in the breakaway and his being on top of the strategy involved to seal the victory," said Gary Achterberg, MSU's cycling coach. "Winning Fort Davis is a very nice step forward for Jason, who has been riding solidly all spring."

The collegiate national championships are in Fort Collins, Colo., in less than a month, Achterberg said. "Having this strong team performance right now in such a climbing-intensive race is very encouraging."