

MIDWESTERN STATE'S CYCLING TEAM IS SIXTH IN THE NATION

LAWRENCE, Kan. – The Midwestern State University Cycling Team finished sixth out of 47 teams competing this past weekend at USA Cycling's Collegiate National Championships at the University of Kansas.

The Mustangs' top overall finish since 2003 was spearheaded by its women's squad, which earned podium spots in all three events.

Jennifer Purcell, a third-year radiology student from Milwaukee, finished third in the overall women's competition. She was second in Sunday's criterium and third in Saturday's road race.

MSU's women's team time trial squad – in which four riders rode a 24-kilometer course against the clock – also finished second on Friday. The members of that team were Purcell; Ivana Miucic, a kinesiology graduate student from Serbia; Sheri Jordan, a kinesiology undergraduate from Fort Worth; and Laura Whittle, a third-year engineering student from Belleville, Ill.

MSU's top men's finish was Adam Biwan's 12th place finish in the road race. Biwan is a third-year education and math major from Sheboygan, Wis.

The University of California-Davis won the team competition. Also finishing ahead of MSU were Fort Lewis College, Colorado, Penn State and Indiana. Rounding out the top 10 behind MSU were Colorado State, Florida, Wisconsin and California-Berkeley.

"Our women had an awesome weekend and clearly were the key to our overall finish," said MSU Cycling Coach Gary Achterberg. "The team time trial truly was a team effort and this was Jen's best nationals – and she's gotten on the podium each of the last two years."

Purcell's strong finish definitely was complimented by the experience of MSU's other women, Achterberg said.

"Ivana's back as MSU working on a master's degree," he said. "She was a part of several national championship team time trial teams when she was an undergrad. Her experience and strength are a huge boost. And, when you add Laura and Sheri, who both have grown a lot in the last year or so, and you have perhaps the best women's squad in the country."

Crashes played a big role in the women's road race on Saturday. Purcell was the only one of MSU's women to avoid them entirely. Whittle was in the front group of about 20 just several hundred yards from the finish line when she was taken out by a crash. She ultimately finished 35th. Jordan and Miucic also had good position in the field when they were involved in crashes earlier in the final 28-mile lap.

"We clearly would have had other riders toward the top of the road race results if it hadn't been for the crashes," Achterberg said. "But there are a lot of schools who also can say 'would have' or 'could have' after that race."

In the men's road race, Biwan finished just off the front of the field in 12th place. A group of six riders in a breakaway had gained about three minutes by the end of the race. Biwan and five others also managed to get some separation in the final miles of the race to finish in front of the field.

Brian Wyrick, who won the South Central Collegiate Cycling Conference championships in Austin, Texas, earlier this month, finished in 34th place in the middle of the field sprint. The senior from Quitman, Texas, spent this past summer racing in Belgium at the Cycling Center, an elite U.S. amateur program. Dominic Van Nielen, a senior from Kingwood, Texas, was involved in a crash in the final miles of the race and finished just off the back of the field. Van Nielen is spending two months of this summer racing in the

same program in Belgium. MSU's fourth men's rider, Jarred Gilker, a freshman from Fort Smith, Ark., did not finish the race due to mechanical problems.

In the women's criterium, a fast initial pace narrowed the field to a lead group of 23 and a second group of about 15 riders. The top 30 finishers scored points toward the team title. MSU was the only school with all three of its starters in the front group. Purcell's second-place finish landed her on the podium again. Miucic finished 16th and Whittle was 19th.

The men's criterium field stayed together and came down to a bunch sprint. Van Nielen finished in the points with a 27th-place finish and Wyrick was 42nd. Biwan rolled in at the back of the field to avoid crashes after realizing he was out of the points.