

MIDWESTERN STATE CYCLIST WINS TWO NATIONAL TITLES

INDIANAPOLIS – Aaron Kacala, a freshman Midwestern State cyclist, won two national titles last week at the National Collegiate Track Cycling Championships in Indianapolis.

Kacala's championships in the kilometer time trial and the match sprint are the 18th and 19th national champion jerseys won by Midwestern State since the collegiate cycling program started in the late 1980s.

Kacala, who is from Racine, Wis., left a resident athlete position at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., this spring because he wanted to attend school. Kacala, 20, is majoring in kinesiology at MSU working toward certification as a physical therapist.

These national championships are not Kacala's first. He won the kilometer time trial twice – both when he was 17 and 18 – at USA Cycling's Junior National Championships. He also has competed in cycling sprint events at the Junior World Championships in Moscow and at other world-class races, including the Pan Am Games and at events in Cuba, Ecuador and elsewhere.

“Aaron's national championships are a great start to his collegiate career,” said MSU Cycling Coach Gary Achterberg. “Not only is Aaron a great athlete, he's really a wonderful mentor for the other riders on our team. It's also really gratifying to see that he's having fun on the bike and also really embracing his responsibilities as a student.”

Kacala's two wins were enough to earn fourth place in the individual overall competition, which tallied points from the three-day-long competition at the Major Taylor Velodrome.

Midwestern took three riders to track nationals – all freshmen. The others were Matt Fox, 18, from Highland Park, Ill., and Kip Spaude, 19, from Watertown, Wis.

The three athletes earned a fourth-place podium spot in the team pursuit – an event normally run with four riders. The team rides together around the track, taking turns pulling at the front, for 12 laps or a total of 4 kilometers.

“We thought we had an outside chance at one of the five podium spots,” Achterberg said.

“However, the three rode a very flawless race technically and Kip's endurance definitely was the glue that held things together, considering that this race is a much longer track event than either Aaron or Matt normally would race.

“Clearly, everyone is thrilled with Aaron's two national titles, but I know all three guys think that being able to combine to get a medal in an event that we really thought we were a long-shot in is really something special.”

In other results:

- Fox, who won the Junior National Championship this summer in the kilometer time trial, earned the fourth-place medal in the event at Collegiate Nationals. Fox

also finished tenth in the individual overall competition among approximately 70 men who competed in at least one event. In addition to competing at Junior Nationals this summer, Fox also was selected to race for the U.S. National Team at the Junior World Championships in August in Ghent, Belgium. He also raced for the national team this summer in Trinidad and previously has raced for the national team in Venezuela.

- In addition to getting on the podium in the team pursuit, Spaude finished tenth out of approximately 50 competitors in the individual pursuit, which is a 3 kilometer time trial, and 15th in the kilometer time trial out of approximately 55 competitors. Spaude's strength is racing on the road. He raced on the track for the first time in June and spent a fair amount of time over the summer competing with Kacala and Fox at the velodrome in Kenosha, Wis.
- Midwestern finished 11th among all of the teams who competed in Indianapolis. Achterberg said that is a very impressive showing for a three-person team without a rider entered in any of the full slate of women's events.

"It's really gratifying to have a team that's active again with racing on the track," Achterberg said. "While some of our previous national titles were won on the track, we've been in a hiatus for the past few years.

"I also would be remiss if I didn't give a lot of credit to the folks at our 'home velodrome,' the Superdrome in Frisco, he said. "They've been absolutely wonderful about giving us all of the training opportunities and other support that we've needed as we've been getting ready to go to nationals. That just made a huge difference in how these guys performed."

Midwestern State will begin a full spring of racing on the road – both in collegiate and other USA Cycling events – in mid-February as it prepares for the Collegiate Road Cycling National Championships, which will be conducted in mid-May in Lawrence, Kan.

This past year, the Mustangs finished sixth out of 47 teams at road nationals and got on the podium in all three women's events – second in the team time trial, second in the criterium and third in the road race.