

A composite team of five riders wearing the Midwestern State jersey competed in the six-day Tour of Ohio stage race this past week at locations across Ohio.

Members of the team were MSU riders Mitch Comardo and Jarred Gilker, along with juniors Joe Kukolla (Indianapolis, Ind., ISCorp Junior Cycling Team), Zach Hockett (Columbia, Mo., Mesa Junior Cycling Team) and John Caldwell (Villa Ridge, Mo., ISCorp Junior Cycling Team).



(Members of the 2007 Team Hotter 'N Hell at the Tour of Ohio are, from left, Zach Hockett, Mitch Comardo, John Caldwell, Jarred Gilker, Joe Kukolla and team director Gary Achterberg.)

Kukolla was Team Hotter 'N Hell's top rider in the overall results. He finished ninth in the entire race and had a top race placing of fourth in the second-stage, a rain-soaked road race. Kukolla finished the entire race in 10 hours, 11 minutes and 7 seconds, which was 1:30 back from the winner.

The other HHH overall results: 28. Comardo, 2:59 back; 57. Gilker, 14 minutes back; 65. Hockett, 16:05 back; and 118. John Caldwell, 3 hours 15 minutes 22 second back.

The race consisted of three criteriums and three road races. The third stage was an epic day that included five significant climbs in the Hocking Hills region of Ohio. While the race was just 68 miles, the climbs challenged the entire field and provided the best opportunity for separation during the six-day-long event. Kukolla and Comardo both finished in the main group and Hockett finished in the first chase group.

HHH's top finish on the week was Kukolla's fourth-place finish in a road race in the vicinity of Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. The rainy conditions fostered lots of crashes, including one just prior to the finish that took out three of HHH's five riders, including Kukolla. Gilker's efforts to help lead Kukolla out in the subsequent sprint up the hill to the finish line were instrumental in the finish.

"The race was an excellent learning experience for everyone," said MSU Cycling Coach Gary Achterberg, who directed the team at the race. "It was the first long stage race for Joe, Mitch and

John. And, the event is a great lead-in for Joe and John who both are going to be competing in less than a month at the biggest junior stage race in North America.”

Le Tour de l’Abitibi, the only race on the UCI Junior World Cup calendar that takes place in North America, kicks off on Monday, July 19. The nine-stage race in Val-d’Or, Quebec, will feature 200 of the top 17- and 18-year-old male cyclists in the world. Achterberg also will be at the team directing the Arizona Select team.

The team’s appearance at the Tour of Ohio was made possible with support from Hotter 'N Hell.