

MSU CYCLISTS DOMINATE TEXAS STATE RACE WEEKEND

SAN MARCOS, Texas – Midwestern State's cycling team dominated the top categories at a collegiate race weekend sponsored by Texas State University on March 4-5.

Three Mustangs won three overall titles for their combined finishes between Saturday's criterium and Sunday's road race. Brian Wyrick won the men's Category A competition, Jennifer Purcell took the women's Category A title and Tiffany Stewart was the top rider in the Women's B races.

"This was our first weekend of collegiate racing for the spring and our results reflect the hard work that our riders have been putting in over the winter," said MSU Cycling Coach Gary Achterberg. "This bodes well for the rest of the spring as we hope to repeat as conference champions and also improve on our results at nationals in May."

In Saturday's criterium, riders completed multiple laps on a 1.3-mile course outside of town.

The Category A men raced for an hour. A breakaway with two MSU riders – Wyrick and Adam Biwan – got away about half-way through the race. A third Texas State rider bridged up to the group. Toward the end of the race, Wyrick got away from that group and eventually won the race. The Texas State rider was second; Biwan finished third.

The Category A women raced for 45 minutes. Purcell won the race and was off the front by herself for the final laps of the race. MSU dominated the women's field. Ivana Miucic was second, Laura Whittle finished third, Sheri Jordan was fifth and Malinda Michaud was seventh.

"We have a really solid group of women this season," Achterberg said. "Jen has won medals at collegiate nationals the last two years and she's now being joined by Ivana -- who is returning to MSU as a grad student and was part of a national championship team time trial squad – and also Laura, who has been a key contributor to the team for three years, and Sheri, who really has developed nicely as a cyclist over the last year.

"This strength really boosts us as we get closer to nationals," he added. "If we work well together as a team, I think that medals at nationals are a definite possibility."

Tiffany Stewart, who also runs cross country for MSU, won the Women's B criterium on Saturday and was second in Sunday's 30-mile road race for her category.

"We're really pleased to have Tiffany racing with us and she's showing a lot of potential as a cyclist," Achterberg said. "I also truly appreciate the flexibility of cross country to give her the opportunity to compete in both sports."

MSU also had six riders competing in the Men's Category C race, which typically is one of the biggest fields at any collegiate race weekend. MSU took a total of 17 riders on the road.

"I was especially happy with the results of some of our new riders who were racing for the first time ever this past weekend," Achterberg said. "With a little more training and experience, I'm hoping we have several riders ready to move up to Category B as we get further into the season."

In Sunday's road race, Wyrick and freshman Jarred Gilker stayed away in a breakaway that Gilker initiated just after the start of the 60-mile event on a hilly course near Seguin. The two gained more than three minutes on the rest of the field as the race progressed. Gilker won the race and Wyrick was second.

The rest MSU's men also performed well in the sprint at the end of the race, Achterberg said. Biwan finished fourth and Dominic Van Nielen was seventh.

In the women's race, MSU swept the three podium positions. Jordan won, Purcell was second and Whittle was third. Miucic finished fifth.

Many of MSU's riders will be competing in non-collegiate events over the weekends on either side of spring break. Major events on the Texas calendar are planned for Lago Vista and Fayetteville, both basically in the Austin area.

The Mustangs return to collegiate racing on March 25 with a road race and five-mile uphill time trial being hosted by Stephen F. Austin University. The following weekend, MSU plays host to the conference with a road race and time trial on Saturday, April 1, and a morning full of criteriums on campus on Sunday, April 2.

The season culminates in mid-May with the Collegiate National Championships in Lawrence, Kan.