

Mid-Season Classic - Conway Arkansas - 2025

Hello sponsors and friends! The Eureka Springs Mountain Bike Team just returned from a great weekend racing (and eating) in Conway, Arkansas. We owe a big thanks to Terry and Patsy Miller who bought the entire team's dinner at The Golden Corral. I was afraid that the kids would eat themselves sick, but they all showed great restraint and no one ate more than six or seven plates of food. Dinner was followed by galloping contests in the parking lot and lots of swimming so the extra calories were burned off pretty quickly. You should be proud of your kids as I was pulled aside twice to hear about how respectful and thoughtful our kids were while in the hotel.

The prelude on the relatively easy course was strangely eventful, with a few injuries of top riders on the team. Luckily all of our riders save one was able to recover in time for the races on Sunday. The most difficult obstacle of the race was a 25 foot sand pit. Sand will stop a bicycle dead in its tracks, so many kids opted to run their bikes on its outskirts instead of trying to get through the middle. Jumping off and then jumping back on our bicycle is actually a skill that we practice. We look ridiculous when practicing it but it does come in handy. Other obstacles on this course included a water crossing, giant spiral, jumps, narrow bridges, and very tall roots. Our varsity riders (Winona and Jenna) had to go around the dusty course five times for a total of 17.5 miles. This race was a mental test of endurance just as much as a physical one. Counting while riding is difficult and there was at least one rider (not on our team) who lost count and accidentally rode an extra lap.

One of the greatest success stories of the day is that four of our newest riders completed their very first full length race. Max, Atticus, Fiona, and Mags all moved up from the Just Ride category into the JV3 category. These four riders have grown tremendously and exuded confidence on all of the course's obstacles. Max was actually one of the fastest boy riders through the sandpit and passed many riders at that one point.

The girls really turned on their thrusters at this race, with ALL of the girls moving up in placement. The longer mileage and heat seemed to weed some racers out while our girls just kept truckin along. Five girls made it on the podium (Jennavieve Erickson, Winona Milwagon, Molly Arnold, Melanie Smith, and Trew Freeman) and Laynee DeJarnette pushed hard to move up five places and secure a well-earned spot in the top 10 in the challenging JV1 category. All of these points added up to a 1st place overall team finish for the girls! We have been chasing first place for years and it feels amazing to finally achieve it.

The boys finally got a clean race from start to finish. There seem to be significantly more crashes at the start of boys' races and many of our boys got caught up in the tangle in Siloam Springs, but they were able to handle the chaos significantly better in Conway. Cavan moved from 17th to 12th in JV2 and became our number 2 point scorer! Corben moved from 31st to 25th in JV1, and Beck Herzig stole the title of fastest newbie from Indigo Milwagon and moved up six places in the JV3 division. Kyler had the most exciting finish, thrilling the crowd by beating out 7th place by less than a centimeter. The boys' categories are incredibly competitive

but our boys pulled off a 5th place overall finish. Unfortunately Dakota was unable to race, but more than made up for it by screaming for everyone else and mysteriously appearing at every obstacle to offer encouragement. His supportive attitude exemplifies what we are all about at NICA.

I want to share one more piece of kudos that we received from OZshredders. On Instagram they posted, "I've noticed something at [@arkansasmtb](#) races... the [@esmbteam](#) is the gold medal standard for cheering and encouragement. Each race start, mid race, and finish when they aren't on a bike they are out there motivating the team, making everyone feel like they are on the podium. Kudos Eureka for leading from the front 🙌 [#mtb](#) [#mtbracing](#) [#oztrailsnwa](#) [#nica](#)

My main goal for this team has always been to create a space where kids can do hard things while feeling supported by their peers. We are trying to teach kids how to be good friends, take care of themselves mentally and physically, find alternatives to sitting on their phone, work through hard moments, and to give grace instead of adding to the drama. The competition is great for us in that it helps us to get motivated and dig deep - but I want our riders to see the competitors as potential friends and ride buddies. Thank you to the parents who are just as proud of their kid when he/she is kind and supportive as when they get on the podium. Most of our kids will not become professional mountain bikers and they won't remember their placement in a certain race, but they will remember this experience and it will shape who they are in the future.

This brings me to our final big accomplishment....both our boys and girls teams got 1st in trail core in the state. This means that they did more bike related community service (mostly clearing trail) than any other team. Our team is not afraid of hard work and they have really taken ownership of our local trails.

Thank you for your support - we couldn't do it without you.

Shawna Miller



