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INTERSCHOLASTIC CYCLING TEAM

Pittsburgh North Cycling Kicks Off Its Third Season with Strong Performance at Penn College

The Pittsburgh North Interscholastic Cycling team kicked off its third season Saturday and Sunday at Penn College, showcasing a mix of seasoned race veterans and new riders off to test their skills and stamina in a field of almost 650 Pennsylvania interscholastic riders.



Saturday's first race featured **Michael Fuener** and **Joel Parker**, both podium regulars in the Middle School Advanced race followed by **Graham Smith** and **Brody Salai** in the 8th grade race. Michael's strong climbing and negative splits offset a couple of wipeouts as he charged to the front of the pack and held on for a solid third place finish and his first podium of the season. Joel found himself on the ground more than once as well, but kept it together for an 8th place finish. Graham and Brody placed 23rd and 39th respectively out of a field of 77 racers. All the 8th grade riders battled through difficult racing conditions with newly cut trails and heavy rain, setting a tone for the team despite the tough conditions.

Saturday's racing continued with the 7th grade girls race with **Grace Finley** and **Elyse Beitko** firing out of the start chute and up a long gravel climb into the woods. Grace battled back and forth and continued her podium streak from 2023, finishing in a strong second place. Elyse cracked the top 15 as well, besting the ten other riders in her category.



The 7th grade boys also had a great showing, with veterans **Gelis Straub** and **Cy Prisk** and new racer **Oscar Pearlman** challenging a field of 73 7th grade racers. Gelis cracked the podium again, following up his final 2023 podium with a 5th place finish to start the season.

Oscar, who started in the last row of the 73 riders, passed 53 of them and finished in the top 20, with Cy just two places behind at 22nd place in the field.



Up last for the middle schoolers was **Jeremy Parker**, who also started dead last in his 6th grade heat and his first race. Jeremy blasted up the gravel climb, passing 37 riders on the way to an 8th place finish in the final race of Saturday.

The solid middle school performances Saturday were a good sign of things to come with the high school races on Sunday.

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Sunday saw ideal conditions for the 6 Pittsburgh North racers of the day. Varsity rider **Hayden Fischer** took off first thing in the morning, pushing the pace on his first lap so much so that he burped his rear tire, dropping it to 6.5 psi for the remainder of the race. We're pretty sure he did that just to make it fair for the other racers. Hayden soldiered on and finished with his first top ten of the season in 9th place out of 34 varsity racers.

The ladies of Pittsburgh North were up next, with **Giuliana Contini** racing in the Varsity category, **Mariella Contini** in the Single Lap High School race, and **Mia Troiani** and **Brynn Beitko** competing in JV2.



Giuliana faced a tough field of 25 of the best female riders from across Pennsylvania. Her negative split on her second lap kept her in contention as she moved up a place from her first lap and finished the race in 13th place overall.



Mariella threw down a sub 40 minute single lap race and as the only racer in her category Mariella finished both first and last at the same time. Pretty incredible stuff.



Mia and Brynn took off against a field of 20 JV2 riders. Despite being in middle school, Mia more than hung with the high schoolers in her field, battling back and forth between third and fifth place riders over two consistently fast laps. Her training and maximum effort saw her prevail over the fourth and fifth place riders as she passed them both on lap 2 and brought home the third



place finish and her first podium of the season. Brynn rode consistently fast laps as well, passing two riders on lap 2 to secure a solid 15th place finish.

Last of the day was new racer **Paxton Pavshak**. In his first bike race ever and first with the team, Paxton stayed on the lead lap in the Male JV3 race and brought home 94th place overall.

The team's success this weekend landed it in 7th place out of 46 PICL teams with two state events and two conference events to go in the season. Solid climbing, gutsy battling the elements, and consistent pacing and passing late in the races defined the team, as the gritty riders of the West prove once again to be a force to be reckoned with no matter where they race.

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Our team couldn't exist and couldn't afford these amazing student athletes such incredible experiences without **the support of our generous sponsors**. We're so grateful for their generosity and for the opportunity to partner with them to get more kids on bikes!

Thank you, Sponsors!

We'll see you all this coming weekend in Gettysburg for Grinnin' at Granite 2024!!

Ride Fast,
Coach Nick

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