

Air Academy MTB wins at the Royal Gorge Rumble and Crowned Division 1 Regional Champions.

Air Academy raced this past weekend at the Royal Gorge Ranch outside of Canon City Colorado for the fourth and final race in the Colorado High School League Regional Series. The team was especially motivated and excited when Air Academy High School Principal, Dr. Ripperger, came to watch and cheer them on. This made everyone's day, and it showed, with a dominating performance, taking first place by over 400 points!



Air Academy MTB Team - Division 1 Regional Champions

The Royal Gorge Rumble is a new course located at the historic Buckskin Joe site. It is a 5.6-mile loop with 500 feet of climbing per lap. Running clockwise, the course includes a mix of double-track and technical singletrack through piñon forest. Freshmen, Sophomore, and JV raced two laps. Varsity raced three.

Freshman Boys: Steel Starkey and Michael Lowery led off the day for Air Academy. Steel had a solid race finishing 11th, ahead of two riders from Colorado Rocky Mountain School (CRMS), which is Air Academy's closest rival. Michael Lowery, in his second ever race, followed at a respectable 41st place.



Michael Ripping the Corner



Steel in the Chase

Sophomore Boys: Air Academy fielded four Sophomore Boys this week: Carsten Varcie, Chase McAfee, Jackson Wroten, and first-time racer Keegan Foster. The Sophomore Boys start was fast and chaotic as over 50 riders shot off the starting line. Roger Farrel of Aspen/Basalt took the lead and opened a 20 second gap on a chase of about ten, that included Carsten Varcie at the end of the first lap. Chase McAfee followed in the next group of six about 30 seconds back. Carsten and Chase both picked up the pace and raced a faster second lap. Carsten kept to the front finishing on the podium in 4th place, while Chase finished in the top 20 at 18th. Keegan in his first race, had the last starting position and moved up seven places to finish 47th.



Chase leading the 3rd Chase Group



Keegan in the Mix



Carsten In the Chase Group



Jackson still going on a Broken Bike

JV Girls: The JV Girls start was fast, with Ruby Harris, Nora Bots, and Georgia Swanson shredding the course for Air Academy. Ruby shot off the front and never looked back. Half way through the first lap, she opened a gap on the entire field and just kept increasing it, finishing almost two minutes ahead of second place. Nora battled for the podium as she came around the first lap in a group of three, 30 seconds behind a Cheyenne Mountain rider holding down fifth place. Nora went into turbo mode on the next lap, dropping the two riders, then catching and passing the Cheyenne Mountain rider to take 5th place. Georgia also had a fast second lap, catching a Woodland Park rider that was six seconds ahead of her, then putting almost two minutes on her and finished 23rd.



Ruby takes the Win!



Nora Racing for the Podium



Georgia Ripping the Singletrack

Sophomore Girls: Katelyn Markley and Elora Walkup followed the JV Girls. The Sophomore Girls race strung out as Delaney Olmstead of Gunnison took the lead with Katelyn and Elora right behind. The gaps increased between the three front runners with a minute separating each of them. Katelyn finished second and Elora third just 5 seconds ahead of fourth.



Elora hitting the Tech Sections Hard



Katelyn Tearing up the Singletrack

JV Boys: With just under 70 riders on the start, the JV Boys presented the biggest field of the day. The racing was tight up front from beginning to end. Creed Anderson, Dylan Hudson, Jacob Lane, Alex Winslow, and Luke Pajak were in the race for Air Academy. Going into the second lap, less than a minute separated the top ten, with Creed, Dylan, and Jacob in the mix. The racing continued to be tight and intense through the second lap. A Columbine rider and an Aspen rider managed to open a small gap taking first and second. The next eight battled each other with a spread of about a minute between the entire group. Creed, Dylan, and Jacob were in this group finishing 6th, 7th, and 8th respectively. Meanwhile, Alex raced a fast second lap catching several riders that were ahead of him and finished 40th. Luke also had a fast second lap catching riders from behind finishing 48th.



Dylan & Creed Working Together



Luke not Far Behind



Alex Rocking the Descent



Jacob Racing for Top 10



Jackson Leading the Descent

Varsity Boys: Austin Leigh, Justin Tremblay, Zim Reichart, Keenan Swanson, Cooper Markley, and Jacob Weber took the start for Air Academy in the Varsity Boys race. As always, the start of the Varsity Boys race was fast and furious. A big crash at the front took Justin Tremblay down. He was back up and riding immediately but his handlebar was knocked crooked. Austin managed to avoid the crash and took the lead. Like Ruby Harris in the JV Girls race, Austin opened a gap that continued to grow as the race went on, ultimately winning with 39 seconds over second place. Justin tried to straighten his handlebars while racing, which resulted in him being catapulted over the handlebars. Again, he was back on his bike and back in the race in a three-man chase group rounding the first lap. Coming through the second lap, Justin was in fourth position then hit the gas on the third finishing 3rd. Zim was next for Air Academy, making the top 20 in 13th place with Keenan and Cooper following at 28th and 32nd. Jacob Weber was in the mix up front until he crashed. He lost a lot of time pulling cactus from his hands and face and came in at 35th.



Keenan pushing the Limit



Justin & Zim in the Chase Group



Coop Ripping the Corners



Jacob near the front before the Crash



Austin Takes 1st Place

Varsity Girls: The last race of the day saw the Varsity Girls shoot off the start, and like the Varsity Boys, it was fast and furious. Kylie Moerk, Sandrine Tremblay, and Maddie Mager were off to a great start. As the race developed Kylie raced in the lead group of three with Sandrine in a chase group just seconds behind. Maddie found herself in “no woman zone” as she raced most of the race alone, just behind 10th and just ahead of 12th. As the leaders came around the first lap, Kylie put in a scorching attack immediately opening a gap. She kept the gap until she crashed, got passed and had to go all out to catch back up. All three riders came through on the second lap wheel to wheel. Heading into the third lap Kylie attacked again, and again opened a gap, and again crashed. Sandrine, going into the third lap, attacked the same place Kylie did and dropped the chasing group. Kylie caught back up to the lead group but had burnt all her matches catching and had nothing left for the sprint finish, taking third place. Sandrine after dropping the chase group, came in just behind in 4th. Maddie kept her position throughout the entire race finishing 11th.



Sandrine puts the move on Evergreen



Maddie Holding her Position



Kylie Attacks Hard & Opens a Gap

Summary: This race was extra special, with Air Academy High School Principal, Dr. Ripperger coming to cheer and show support. Dr. Ripperger’s presence inspired the team to dig even deeper to represent their school and district.

It’s been an incredible season for the Air Academy Mountain Bike Team. Regional Champions for the third year in a row. This team trains and races their hearts out. They are 100% supportive of each other and have become the best of friends. Given the size of the team, it is no small feat for such a small team to win in Division 1.

The Colorado High School Mountain Bike League state championships will take place outside of Glenwood Springs, Oct 18 – 19. The [Air Academy Mountain Bike Team](#) is ready to “Dig Deep” and make it happen!

Thanks so much to our sponsors. This team could not exist without your generous support: Criterium Bike Shop, My Dental Co, Ostroy, Rocky Mountain Properties, Mountainside Builders, Cost Plus Anesthesia, T2 Leadership, Bailey Orthodontics, AllAboutEndurance

For more information on joining or following the Air Academy Mountain Bike Team, check out our website at: <https://airacademymtb.org/>