

Air Academy High School Mountain Bike Team Takes First Place Division 1 at the Spring Valley Scramble!



The Air Academy High School Mountain Bike Team traveled to Glenwood Springs, Colorado, to compete in the **Spring Valley Scramble**, the third race of the Colorado High School Cycling League Crystal Region series. Framed by peak autumn Aspen foliage and crisp, partially cloudy skies that offered welcome relief from the sun, the team delivered a standout performance. Air Academy captured a thrilling **1st Place in Division 1 with 6,928 points**, expanding its overall season lead to **1,373 points** heading into the regional finale!

The Spring Valley Scramble took place on the Colorado Mountain College (CMC) Spring Valley Campus at a starting elevation of 6,871 feet. Deviating from the standard 6-mile loop format, this race presented a fast, tactical **4.3-mile course** with 504 feet of climbing per lap. Riders charged off the grass start onto doubletrack before funneling into *Dreamer* singletrack, continuing through *Slacker*, *Swoop's Loop*, and the *East Ridge Loop*. With shorter lap mileage, officials increased lap counts to **3 laps (12.9 miles)** for Freshman, Sophomore, and JV categories, while Varsity riders battled over **4 laps (17.2 miles)**—a change that tested pacing and mental endurance on trails that grew increasingly loose as the day progressed.

Sophomore Boys (3 Laps / 12.9 Miles)

Wave 1 got the day underway with a blistering start up the CMC campus grass climb. **Steel Starkey** delivered a stellar podium performance, holding a fierce, steady pace across all three laps, mixing it up at the front of the race before claiming **2nd Place** in 1:01:43.07. **Luke Quicksall** executed a calculated race strategy, working through traffic to move from 23rd on the grid all the way up to **12th Place**, finishing in 1:06:54.57. **Cody Judkins** maintained remarkable consistency from start to finish, crossing the line in **27th Place** (1:12:08.83). **Jake Leigh** dug deep on the final lap, holding off a charging pack to round out the Sophomore Boys in **34th Place** at 1:14:27.41.



Steel at the front of the race



Luke completes an impressive performance

JV Girls (3 Laps / 12.9 Miles)

In Wave 2, **Elora Walkup** set out strong for the Air Academy girls, opening with a fast 21:47 first lap before settling into a steady rhythm on Laps 2 and 3 to earn a **4th Place** podium finish in 1:11:04.78. Senior **Georgia Swanson** put together a smart, well-paced race, moving up two positions on her second lap into **14th Place** (1:37:39.06) and holding it to the finish to bring home essential Division 1 team points.



Elora is Locked In



Georgia powers through with a smile



Sophia contending for the race lead

Freshman Girls (3 Laps / 12.9 Miles)

Air Academy's lone Freshman Girl, **Sophia Ugarte**, delivered another remarkable performance. Coming through the opening lap in a tight lead group of four riders, Sophia solidified her 2nd place standing over the final two laps. Despite losing time when she fell on a tabletop feature on her third lap, Sophia remounted, kept her composure, and held off a late charge from Crested Butte's Grace Tucker by 8.4 seconds to secure **2nd Place** in 1:11:38.91!

JV Boys (3 Laps / 12.9 Miles)

The JV Boys category featured intense tactical battles across a crowded field. **Carsten Varcie** delivered a masterpiece of race strategy. Pinned with the intent to reclaim top honors, Carsten came through Lap 1 in 4th place, patiently drafting behind the leaders as part of his game plan before launching a decisive attack on the first climb of Lap 3. He dug deep in a thrilling wheel-to-wheel sprint finish to win **1st Place** (56:27.93) by just 1.95 seconds! His strategy worked exactly as planned, and he will once again be wearing the **Leader's Jersey** in the next race as he looks to defend it.

Jackson Wroten put together a fantastic drive, taking **14th Place** at 1:04:01.08. **Nico Vega Brautigam** executed a strong Slingshot performance, advancing 7 spots from his baseline to take **17th Place** (1:04:45.18). **Luke Pajak** stayed composed through the singletrack to earn **25th Place** in 1:06:57.46. Senior **Jackson Lorigan (Legacy)** fought hard from start to finish, crossing in **43rd Place** (1:12:18.92).



Carsten looking confident



Chase crosses the line with a broken wrist

In a display of impressive personal grit, **Chase McAfee** suffered a severe crash on the downhill section resulting in a broken wrist. Demonstrating admirable determination, Chase pushed through the pain to complete his ride, crossing the line in **50th Place** (1:13:28.82). **Keegan Foster** recorded one of the biggest Slingshot jumps on the team, advancing 11 positions from his baseline to claim **59th Place** (1:16:56.42).

Varsity Boys (4 Laps / 17.2 Miles)

The Varsity Boys tackled 4 demanding laps totaling over 2,000 feet of elevation gain. **Justin Tremblay** put on an unforgettable display of toughness. After taking three tumbles in the treacherous "crash central" downhill section, Justin remounted each time and charged back from the rear of the field, negative-splitting his final two laps (18:47 and 18:41) to capture **6th Place** in 1:15:48.13!



Justin makes a move



Jacob Lane powers through the singletrack



Dylan lets it fly

Senior **Jacob Lane (Legacy)** was the **#1 Slingshot improver among all Varsity Boys in the region**, slicing through the field to gain 10 positions and finish **23rd Place** (1:23:35.98). Between his own racing duties, Jacob embodied the team spirit by running along the course to cheer on his teammates as they powered through their laps! **Dylan Hudson** put in a hard-fought effort across 17.2 miles, successfully balancing his dual commitments to mountain biking and lacrosse while contributing valuable team points in **30th Place** (1:28:00.22).

Varsity Girls (4 Laps / 17.2 Miles)



Ruby shows intense focus

In the Varsity Girls race, **Ruby Harris** showcased elite bike handling through the technical sectors. After skillfully wrangling her bike back on track during a near-crash in the downhill section, Ruby powered through all 4 laps to capture a **4th Place** podium finish in 1:32:42.89 as Air Academy's top point scorer of the day! Senior **Nora Bots (Legacy)** rode with relentless focus and her signature smile, crossing in **8th Place** (1:39:28.53) to place two Air Academy riders in the top 8.



Nora smiles her way to a Top 10 Finish

Freshman Boys (3 Laps / 12.9 Miles)

Closing out the afternoon, the Freshman Boys charged off the grid. **Quincy Reed** led the team effort, turning in a great Slingshot ride by advancing 6 positions to take **23rd Place** in 1:10:55.07. **Ransom Johnson** pushed hard through the singletrack sectors to finish **50th Place** (1:19:58.62).



Ransom is ready to roll



Aiden charging hard

Aiden Nelson encountered a setback on Lap 2 when a crash left him needing a tool to straighten his handlebars. Borrowing a tool resulted in a 5-minute outside assistance penalty, but Aiden responded with a strong 25:55 final lap to take **56th Place** (1:25:22.27). Not far behind, in an exciting sprint finish was **Jaxon MacDonald**, who put together a fantastic ride—passing multiple riders on a strong last lap to finish in **58th Place** (1:25:26.61)!

Season Momentum & State Championship Watch

With three races down and one to go, Air Academy enters the final regional meet with huge momentum! Series point standings count a rider's highest 3 out of 4 race scores, creating exciting opportunities at the upcoming regional finale in Cañon City.

- **Top-Seed Battles:** **Carsten Varcie** (JV Boys), **Sophia Ugarte** (Freshman Girls), **Ruby Harris** (Varsity Girls), **Elora Walkup** (JV Girls), and **Steel Starkey** (Sophomore Boys) are charging hard for premier regional overall standings and front-row State seeding.
- **On the Surge:** Riders like **Luke Quicksall** (Sophomore Boys), **Jackson Lorigan** (JV Boys), and **Ransom Johnson** (Freshman Boys) are positioned right on the threshold. With a strong finish in Cañon City, these riders have a real shot at qualifying for the State Championships!

Summary

Air Academy's Division 1 victory at the Spring Valley Scramble was a true team effort. From podium finishes to unbelievable recoveries, every single rider gave everything they had for the team. In true Air Academy fashion, the entire squad stayed until the very end to cheer on the final finishers and celebrate together on the podium.

A special thank you goes out to our incredible coaching staff, alumni, parent volunteers, and feed-zone crew who supported the team throughout the weekend! We also send our best wishes to Chase McAfee for a speedy recovery.

Next stop: Cañon City for the Regional Championship! **Dig Deep!**



Ready for Canon City