

Hemet rider wins division mountain biking championship again

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By BRIAN ROKOS
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Zachary Valdez of Hemet High School clinched his second consecutive varsity boys championship in the SoCal mountain bike league by winning the Lake Arrowhead Challenge on April 11.

Valdez won the four-lap race on a 5 ½-mile course over Tucker Trotter and Brady Kiss of Yucaipa High. The race was contested at almost 6,000 feet, Hemet coach Peter Kirkham said in a news release.

"It was a fun course -- up and down the whole time -- but it was definitely cold," Valdez said.

The third race of the season included 142 riders and 18 teams.

Hemet High won the day's team title over Newport Beach Composite. Yucaipa was third, Rim of the World fourth and Woodcrest Christian Cycling fifth.

Defending varsity girls champion Tiana Row, who competes independently, won a race for the second time this season, with Rachel Somerville and Leila Carrillo of Newport Beach Composite and Jasce Goldsmith of Hemet High the top finishers behind her.

Casey Williams, riding independently, won the junior varsity boys race; Cody Phillips, also an independent rider, won in sophomore boys; Yucaipa's Alex Bagg was the freshman boys winner and took over the season series lead; Rim of the World's Maddy Horan won in junior varsity girls; and Jennifer Valente, riding independently, clinched the frosh/soph girls season title with her third consecutive victory.

The next races are Sunday at Santa Ynez and the state championships at Grass Valley.

Information on the league: Matt Gunnell at 818-415-1133 or matt@socaldirt.org, and on the Web at socaldirt.org.