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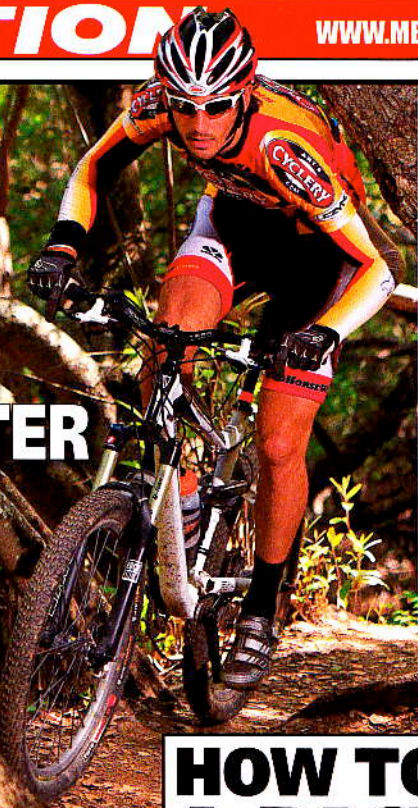
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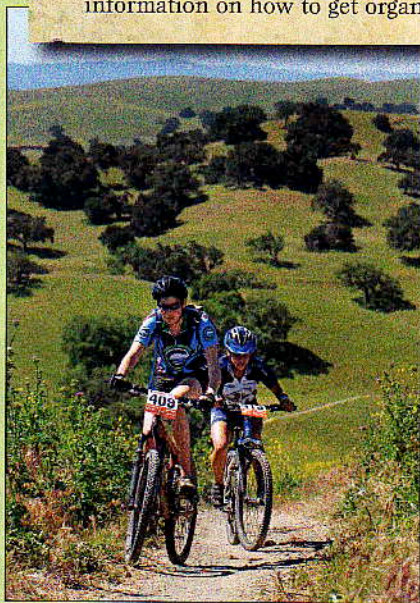


The most exciting news in mountain biking has to be the burgeoning High School Mountain Bike League. Started in 2001 by Matt Fritzinger, a teacher at Berkeley High and the *MBA* "Rider Who Inspires" of the November 2008 issue, Matt saw strong student interest in mountain biking, but without organized events, there was no way for these students to participate. He started the NorCal High School Mountain Bike League and has watched it grow steadily. The League could possibly increase to 10 leagues by the start of the 2011 series.

Interested in starting a high school mountain bike league in your state or a mountain bike team at your school? Check out www.nationalmb.org for more information on how to get organized.



Casey at the bat: The independents made a great showing with Casey Williams taking the JV Boys' race and title.



The hills are alive: Crescenta Valley High School's Tania Kartolova leads Kristina Hunyady of the Rim of the World Team up a climb at the final event of the SoCal season at the Cow Pie Classic in Santa Ynez, California.



Serious competition: Alyssa Valenzuela leads rival Jennifer Valente in the Frosh/Soph class. Jennifer went on to win the race and overall series title. Both of these racers are independents because their schools have not formed a team.



Homecoming queen: Tina Row, another independent, used her Jamis Dakar XCR to ride to the SoCal Girls' Varsity title. Maybe school officials will get serious about a team now that they have a champion.

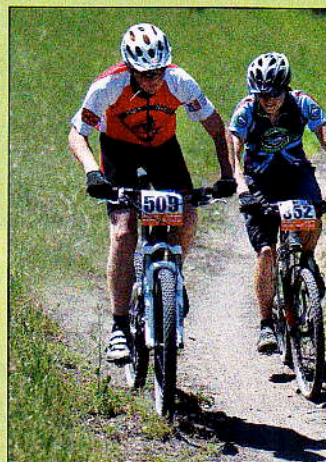


Close finish: What looks like the closest finish in cross-country racing history is actually the start of a Junior Varsity race. Steve Lansing (356), Gregory Celentano (327), Josh Bloodworth (366), Brandon Blakely (309), Jacob Danchuk (331) and Chris Johnson (313) dodge the cow pies.



Remember this name: Varsity rider Zachary Valdez has already earned himself a Specialized sponsorship as well as the Southern California Series Championship. Zachary is a Category 1-ranked rider outside of the high school events.

Great program: High School League courses and event lengths are tailored for riders of all abilities. The events welcome new riders instead of discouraging them. Freshman Austin Orr will be back next year.



Good sponsor: Christian Gonzalez (509) works his way past Reilly Pratt. Christian is the son of Trek's R&D honcho Jose Gonzalez. "This is the best thing to happen to mountain bike racing in a long time," said Jose. Christian agrees.