

Team Swift Race Reports

May 2016

Race Reports for:

1. NCNCA Junior Criterium Championships
2. Berkeley Hills Road Race
3. Cat's Hill Criterium
4. Kern County Junior Stage Race
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6. Folsom Criterium
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8. Mt Hamilton Road Race
9. Memorial Day Criterium
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May Top Results:

1 st Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Juniors 17-18	Ethan Frankel
1 st Place	Folsom Criterium	Juniors 13-14	Andrew Mathiesen
2 nd Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Juniors 13-14	Andrew Mathiesen
2 nd Place	Kern County Jr Stage Race, TT	Juniors 17-18	Parker Rous
5 th Place	NorCal Race #5	JV boys D2	Ben Cook
3 rd Place	Kern County Jr Stage Race, G.C.	Juniors 17-18	Parker Rous
3 rd Place	Red Kite Criterium #6	Senior Category 4	Ethan Frankel
3 rd Place	NCNCA Junior Criterium Champs	Juniors 13-14	Andrew Mathiesen
3 rd Place	Red Kite Criterium #6	Senior Category 3/4	Ethan Frankel
4 th Place	Kern County Jr Stage Race, Crit	Juniors 17-18	Parker Rous
4 th Place	Berkeley Hills Road Race	Senior Category 3	Ben Cook
4 th Place	Cat's Hill Criterium	Senior Category 3	Ben Cook
4 th Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Juniors 13-14	Grant Feige
5 th Place	Kern County Jr Stage Race, RR	Juniors 17-18	Parker Rous
5 th Place	NorCal Race #5	JV boys D1	Ben Cook
7 th Place	Cat's Hill Criterium	Senior Category 3	Gianni Lamperti
8 th Place	NorCal Race #5	JV boys D1	Ethan Frankel
8 th Place	NorCal Race #5	JV boys D2	Isaiah Chass
9 th Place	Cat's Hill Criterium	Senior Category 3	Luke Lamperti
9 th Place	NICA MTB State Championships	Freshman Girls	Sawyer Tayler
12 th Place	NICA MTB State Championships	JV boys D1	Ben Cook
13 th Place	Berkeley Hills Road Race	Senior Category 4	Ethan Frankel
13 th Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Jrs 15-18, Cat 4/5	Esteban Ramirez
16 th Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Senior Category 3	Ethan Frankel
18 th Place	Cat's Hill Criterium	Jrs 15-18, Cat 4/5	Andrew Mathiesen
18 th Place	Folsom Criterium	Senior Category 4/5	Esteban Ramirez

19 th Place	Memorial Day Criterium	Jrs 15-18, Cat 4/5	Andrew Mathiesen
25 th Place	Modesto Criterium	Senior Category 4/5	Andrew Mathiesen
26 th Place	Berkeley Hills Road Race	Senior Category 5	Chase King
27 th Place	Mt Hamilton Road Race	Senior Category 3	Gianni Lamperti
28 th Place	Mt Hamilton Road Race	Senior Category 3	Luke Lamperti
29 th Place	Mt Hamilton Road Race	Senior Category 3	Isaiah Chase
30 th Place	Mt Hamilton Road Race	Senior Category 3	Ethan Frankel
34 th Place	NICA MTB State Championships	JV boys D2	Isaiah Chass

Rider Race Reports

1. NCNCA Junior Criterium Championships 5/1/16 Salinas

Andrew Mathiesen

3rd Place NCNCA Junior Criterium Championships Juniors 13-14

After a great dinner of pasta I went to sleep. I got to the event at 8am but had to wait a couple hours until the race started. For warm ups my dad had me do pyramids and afterwards I went to roll outs, and then lined up. There were three age groups that started seconds after one another. After a lap, everybody caught up to each other and there were about twenty five of us together. During the race there was a good pace being set because the older riders would often pull. The majority of the race was easy, since I was careful to never pull too much. There was a couple who never gave up and tried throughout the whole race to break away. On the last five laps of the race people were starting to speed up and we started dropping people. On the forth to final lap I started moving up. By the end of that lap I was in the front and was trying to break away. They caught me on the last lap and right as they passed me, I caught the pack and was in a good position. The last lap was fast and when we went through the last corner I started sprinting but it was too far from the finish. When I was a couple yards from the finish a couple of kids from the San Jose team passed me. I didn't know at the time but later found out after reviewing pictures with the officials that a kid from Reno barely passed me. I thought I had finished second but ended up with third. The race was windy but it had a large number of racers and although there were no Team Swift riders at the event I was able to work with a few other teams during the race.

-Andrew

2. Berkeley Hills Road Race 5/7/16 Berkeley

Ben Cook

4th Place Berkeley Hills Road Race Senior Category 3

After my first ever win out at Wente road race a couple weeks ago, I was coming into Berkeley Hills looking to repeat. The only difference this time was that I was hoping to win from a breakaway, in order to experience a new side of racing and learn how to ride in the break better. I came into the race with a plan to attack on the Mama Bear climb on either the 3rd or the final lap, and hopefully stick it to the finish, either solo or with a group.

The first lap was a typical first road race lap, a few attacks and a hard pace up the climbs but nothing major had happened.

"Now the first lap of the real race can start." Joked my friend Kyle from Limitless Cycling. Kyle had been racing strong in the last few races we had done together, I knew he would be a good friend to have alongside today, since I didn't have any teammates in the field with me. On the second lap Kyle and I chatted with the other Limitless riders for about half a lap, as little to no action happened. Coming into the three climbs the pace increased and I stayed attentive at the front. A few riders attacked and got a small gap, but I missed the initial jump, so I worked with Jasper from Limitless to bridge to the move. We stayed away until the top of the finishing climb, before settling back into the field.

All race the clouds over the reservoir had been growing darker and darker, and on the third lap I finally began to feel some sprinkles on my arms and legs. I remained in about the top 20 of the race, feeling stronger and stronger as day went on, when a Sunpower rider and a rider from Kissena Cycling rider in a black kit took off the front of the field. I watched but didn't react, as I didn't know the strength of the move and didn't want to blow an unnecessary match. After some dilly-dally between the field and the blocking Sunpower team on the flats, I soon realized that it was time to chase the two leaders down. I wasn't going to mess around in a rotation on the flats and end up in the wind, so I decided to use the hills to chase. Up the first Mama Bear climb I finally headed towards the front and set out a hard tempo up the climb, and looked back to see most of the field strung out behind me. Halfway through the climbs the Sunpower had come back to the field, leaving just one rider up the road. I rotated in on the descents but kept up my own pace on the climbs, and by the time that we had reached the crest of Papa Bear we could see the lone leader just ahead of the master's field, and the field was motivated to chase. As we took off down the blurry fast downhill the skies finally opened up, and before I knew it I was soaked through and through with rain.

By the start of the next lap we had caught the leader, but we had also caught the masters 1/2/3 field. However, when we tried to pass them, they were not neutralized, and instead many of the riders intermingled with our field, and soon enough the fields were completely entangled, not to mention that it was dumping buckets and the roads were as slick as ice. As we passed the masters field, I rolled quickly to the front to get out of any mayhem that may be caused at the back in the rain.

The last lap was fairly tame and the field rolled quickly through the trees heading into the base of Mama Bear climb for the final time. As we came to the bottom of the climb, I waited to make my move. I hesitated, questioning whether or not it would

blow me up for the finish, but finally as I was about to jump a Sunpower rider made the move first. He took off up the hill at full speed, so I hopped into my drops and chased right after him. Two other riders came with me, but the leader already had a gap of about 10 seconds on us at this point. I checked behind me and realized that about 5 of us had a solid gap on the field, so I drilled it over the top of the climb to keep us away. Our group rotated over the Baby Bear climb and into the bottom of the finish climb. Right at the base near the feed zone, the field had caught up, and barely made contact with our group. I knew that if we hesitated we might never catch the leader, so I took a big dig on the front to keep some of the remaining riders of our group away to the finish. As we came into the last 100 meters, I found myself with another strong junior, Ruben, who is a friend of my teammate Parker's. I saw another two or three riders coming fast from behind, so I picked up the pace and Ruben and I sped away to the line together, and he jumped around me and beat me into the finish. Chilled to the bone from the rain with my hands nearly slipping off the handlebars, I tried to jump around Ruben but could do nothing but push harder on the pedals and stay in the saddle. I came in settling for 3rd, knowing that I had tried my best but hadn't caught the winner, and had still retained a podium spot.

"I got 2nd!" yelled the alleged winner from Sunpower. I looked over to see a short and smug looking man in a Decca Hackett kit standing with his arms crossed, shivering next to the motor referee. I overheard the Sunpower rider saying that the man, whom I later came to know as Tim, attacked and stayed away on the last lap in the midst of our confusion with the masters. I walked over to Tim, shook his hand on a good race, and asked for the full story from his side of things. Travel forward one hour, with all of us standing around in our sweatpants and jackets in the rain debating the win at the protest center. I had soon realized that Tim did not draft in the masters field like he was accused of, and in fact he attacked before the masters passed us again, and had the motor ref at his side making sure he didn't draft them. Once I explained this to all of the other riders in the top 5 or so that hung around at the finish, the protest period finally ended, we all picked up some Berkeley made honey for our prizes, and headed home in our warm, heated cars.

At the end of the day I learned a few valuable lessons, the first and foremost being that the race truly isn't over until the race is over. After Ruben attacked me and the leader seemed unreachable, I somewhat gave up and decided that after pulling our break to the finish, I would settle for third. But sometimes it doesn't matter, who you think is or isn't up the road, you have to fight all the way to the finish line because you never know what your placing could actually be. And besides, fighting to the finish is a good attribute to have in life. After a freezing and long day, I too finally headed home like the others, with my new lessons learned and all, happy with a 4th place but always ready for more improvement.

Thanks!

-Ben

Ethan Frankel

Racing Age 18, Senior Category 4

13th Place Berkeley Hills Road Race Senior Category 4

My mindset going into the race was that I was going to win. However, I came into the race too cocky and unprepared for failure. Racing the past several years has taught me to prepare for different situations and focus on the race, not individual performance. Today, I failed to remember that and it cost me some of my confidence.

The course lap was relatively long (19 miles) of which I would be racing 3. It was relatively flat until the last four miles, which contained three climbs known as the "Three Bears": Mama, Baby, and Papa Bears. It would benefit a climber, and me, being a short, punchier climber, felt confident about the race.

After warming up for a brief few minutes, the 50+ of us were rolling off the line. I stayed towards the front for the neutral start and remained in the top 10 for much of the race. There were rarely any attacks or breaks that formed. If there were attacks, I made sure I was ready for it and never had to chase anything on my own.

The last lap was the most eventful, and most painful. As we passed the finish line for the penultimate time (which was at the top of Papa Bear, a 5-minute climb), water began falling from the dark clouds above. The wet descent began and my muscles immediately began to freeze up. At least I had arm warmers, but I shook out my legs to keep them as fresh as possible for the next 19 miles of racing.

As we endeavored through the pounding rain and soaked roads, the pack dwindled from 35 to 25. An attack went up a short roller. I was there to cover and didn't waste energy chasing back. Finally, we hit Mama Bear, just three or so miles from the finish. A 19-year old from Bear Development, named Steffen, attacked near the crest of the climb. The field accelerated, but no one was able to follow his move. We descended quickly and shortly hit Baby Bear: a 2-minute grind. We had 3k to the finish, and we were still 40 seconds back. I was still near the front, occasionally taking a pull but leaving most of the chasing to bigger guys. We hit the final descent before the road pitched up and Papa Bear started.

I could feel my heart racing as hard as my mind and muscles. I prepared myself for a big acceleration as we began climbing. We passed the feed zone on the climb. 1k to the finish, and I couldn't hold on much longer. I lost 5th wheel and soon, 10 guys had zipped past me. There was no way I was crawling my way back to the leaders; I was already 10 seconds back and the gap was increasing.

All of a sudden, I flew by Steffen. He had been so close but had attacked too early. 250 meters to go. I saw two guys just a few feet in front of me. I was gaining, but oh so slowly. I caught one before I came across the finish line in 13th.

Throughout the race, I kept thinking about how I was going to sprint up the hill and win. I was so focused on what I was going to do, that I didn't consider others being stronger than me. 13th wasn't the result I wanted. Disappointed with my performance, I rolled back to the car. I was going to have to rethink my next race and keep my confidence, although get rid of my cockiness.

-Ethan F.

Chase King

26th Place Berkeley Hills Road Race Senior Category 5

The day was unexpectedly overcast and cold with a chance of rain on the forecast, making for an interesting race. At 8:18 am, the inexperienced group of cat 5 riders, rolled off the line on a neutral start until reaching the road. Somehow, there was an overlap of wheels and a small crash a few riders behind me. Once we reached the road, I was expecting an attack, but instead was greeted with a rider who went over the curb a few wheels up. I slammed on my breaks, barely managing to avoid hitting into him, clipped back in, and sprinted up to the group ahead of the pileup. On the steep climb before the finish, I weaved my way to the front of the group, expecting a steep and fast descent immediately after. On the descent, which was not as steep but just as fast as I had expected, I got dropped off the back as the group, traveling 45+ mph, whizzed past me. I had a goal of finishing the race without crashing, and wasn't exactly willing to risk serious injury in a group of new riders. After the descent, another rider caught up to me and we started a paceline trying to catch up. We gathered two other riders before catching up to a group of about 8 riders who were dropped from the front bunch. It was clear that everyone in this group had sore legs, and as we started the ascent to the finish, the pace was noticeably slower than last lap. One rider attacked, and I jumped up with him, and we gained a fair amount of time before the sprint finish, which I managed to win. Overall, I finished 26th, and was glad we finished when we did, because the rain started to come down as we rolled back to the parking lot.

-Chase

3. Cat's Hill Criterium

5/14/16

Los Gatos

Ben Cook

4th Place Cat's Hill Criterium Senior Category 3

Coming into Cats hill, I was excited to race on such a challenging and fun course once again as a cat 3. Coming into the race, coach wanted me to try to go for the win, something I hadn't done in a crit yet. I was happy to show up and meet my two teammates, Luke and Gianni, who I knew would both be strong today. The plan was for me to go for the win if I could, but Luke and Gianni weren't to commit all their work for me, since it was a training race for Nationals and they needed to get in their racing too. After a quick warm up we rolled to the start line with about 65 other riders.

The first few laps were tame and I was able to move quickly to the front to meet Luke, who was already covering attacks. Gianni soon joined us in the top 10 as well. On such a technical course it was nice being further forward, as riders were sure to have mechanical problems or start dropping off on the hill. There were a total of 4 primes in the race, and Luke was aggressive in going for all of them. I went for the second one, came around the last turn in 3rd wheel, and tried to sprint but made absolutely no ground. I realized it was a short downhill sprint and I would need to be in

1st or 2nd wheel in the last turn.

Each lap I used the hill to move right up to the front with Luke, but I wasn't too sure what to do with my energy. The hill wasn't long enough for me to shoot by the front and make a solid move until after it was over, but I had to try something. This is probably where I made my biggest mistake of not being aggressive enough throughout the race. About 5 laps I tried a move over the top of the hill and got somewhat of a gap, but it wasn't a clean enough attack to break away completely. I learned here that if you want to attack, you need to be at the front at the bottom of the hill, not just the top, or else you will spend all of your energy moving up before you can actually make your move.

After I came back, I realized that it would need to come down to a field sprint for us with the way things were looking. On the last lap I moved up on the hill once again, and found myself in about 4th or so over the hill, with Luke right in front of me, dropping me off in good position. I pushed up again, but soon realized I was not far enough forward as I needed to be. I pushed forward once again on the last blip before the downhill and slotted into 3rd wheel, but couldn't hold it on the fast and bumpy downhill to the finish. I came around the final corner in 5th wheel and sprinted around one rider for 4th place.

Overall I'm happy that I placed at Cat's hill, but it was a bummer to not do better when I knew I could. I came away learning that sometimes it takes aggression to win in a technical course like this.

-Ben

Gianni Lamperti

7th Place Cat's Hill Criterium Senior Category 3

When the race started I took the first lap a bit cautious as I had not ridden the course yet. I was a little too far back for the first five laps or so, in the top 15. On the climb I honestly thought it would go a lot harder over every time but it was not all out. The pavement was really rough on the bottom half of the course and you would have to be careful and watch for the people in front of you to hit cracks or holes. There were a few moves from the two big teams, Sun Power and Dolce Vita. They would just bring each other back and it stayed together for most of the race. Coming into the last few laps it got a little bit faster and people were trying to move up all over the place. With two to go I followed an attack over the top of the hill and he gave up when he looked back and saw me. This was the worst mistake I made of the day and I did not counter and go off by myself on the last lap. Anyways, coming into to the last lap I was once again second wheel going over the top of the hill. At the bottom I had shifted into my little ring every lap before and of course this lap I was delayed while shifting into the big ring. Over the top I dropped back to about tenth and sprinted to move up on the top straight. At this point Ben was right in front of me and I knew we were too far back as the guys at the front were sprinting down the hill. I came around the last corner and sprinted on Ben's wheel up the left side. He came in fourth, me in 7th and Luke 9th. I

learned that I should take my chances with opportunities that I have on the last laps of races like this.

-Gianni

Luke Lamperti

9th Place Cat's Hill Criterium Senior Category 3

Bang and Cat's Hill Crit was off. I was at the front with a few others. Then we hit the climb and our team was up there. We did not go too hard up the climb but as we hit the false flat at the top it picked up. Then we rolled down the hill. A little attack went so I jumped on it. There were 3 of us with a little gap. We rolled over the climb and down. The next lap was a prime lap so we picked it up knowing the field would go hard. We made it over the hill with a good gap. We rolled through the line as I was taking a pull. Then we got caught. I decided to sit top 5 because dropping to far back would not be a good idea at this race. I saw that both my teammates Ben and Gianni were right there when I came back. There were a few small attacks that we were on but nothing was going too far. Now we had about 7 to go. I followed a move over the climb and then attacked to get a prime. I slowed up and got back in the field. We had 5 to go and I was up there with Gianni and Ben. We rode wheels and I stayed top 5 to avoid crashes. Teams were setting the pace at the front so we let them pull. We rolled through with 1 to go and I was top 5. We sprinted up the hill. With 2 corners to go I was top 5 then we started going down the hill and everyone was sprinting. I rode wheels as I was spun up. We made the last corner and I was sprinting. I ended up 9th and was happy with my result.

-Luke

Andrew Mathiesen

18th Place Cat's Hill Criterium Jrs 15-18, Cat 4/5

The night before the race I had chicken, rice, and salad. The next morning my dad and I had breakfast around 7:30, which consisted of three fried eggs, a couple pieces of toast, and some milk. We arrived at eleven, and when we got out of the car I had a Clif bar. Then my dad sent me to find registration and while I was trying to locate the registration I saw Tony (Luke & Gianni's dad) from Team Swift and went to talk to him. He told me a few pointers about the course and said to ride it once so I could see what it is like. My dad went with me to get my number and told me to meet him at the car. So, I rode the course then got ready to do my warm up. After that we went to the start line because there were only a few minutes until the race started. So I took a Clif Shot, rolled out, and then went to the start line. I was in the front until they blew the whistle then I could not clip in until the first corner. I almost got passed by everyone by this point. So I pushed the first two laps until I finally caught up to another racer from San Jose. I stayed with him until the last lap when I broke away from him. I finished strong with a sprint at the end. I thought the course was challenging having to go up the hill so many times.

-Andrew

4. Kern County Junior Stage Race

5/14-15/16

Bakersfield

Parker Rous

Age 16 Senior cat 3

2 nd Place	Kern County Junior Stage Race, TT	Juniors 17-18/Cat 1-3
4 th Place	Kern County Junior Stage Race, Crit	Juniors 17-18/Cat 1-3
5 th Place	Kern County Junior Stage Race, RR	Juniors 17-18/Cat 1-3
3 rd Place	Kern County Junior Stage Race, G.C.	Juniors 17-18/Cat 1-3

Stage 1: Time Trial

I've never done a time trial so short so 1.5 miles was a new experience for me. The race taking place at the kern county race park meant it was close to home and of course I was familiar with the venue. This put extra pressure on my shoulders, it's important for me to do well personally but it's also important to represent Bakersfield as a great place to ride and race. The course was short but a sustained effort even at that distance can leave you not only practically dead but also may ensure a less than impressive final few hundred meters. With this in mind I knew starting out fast was a must but I needed to refrain from burying myself early as the wind in Bako can be unbearable at times and was the case on that morning. The competition was not deep in terms of field size but it made up for in quality, LUX had brought a full team consisting of team captain Bo Knickman, strong riders Camden Vodicka, and Kevin Hernandez, along with sprinter Noah Schlosser. On top of that Jules Gilliam and Ruben Saatjian showed up solo and Velosport as always brought numbers. Without any teammates a good result in the time trial was necessary to compensate for tag- team efforts of the other squads in an attempt to isolate solo riders which would take place in the road and crit stages. My start time was mid-field and I had the privilege of chasing a fast rider so I knew I had a fair set up. In the race I did exactly as I planned but as I sat at the finish watching riders come in, naturally I started to think that my time would be less than impressive. Fortunately this was not the case and I ended up in second place for the stage, slotted in between Jules Gilliam and Kevin Hernandez.

Stage 2: Criterium

The criterium posed its own set of challenges, consisting of the apparent issue with the lack of teammates, the fact that my sprint is subpar compared to the competition, and the stage race was scored on the scale of an omnium so points were awarded at the finish instead of time gaps. This meant I couldn't let a move go that had anyone in the top five. Knickman was active early; searching for moves but at first couldn't find one that would stick. That would change quickly as he soon found a move with 15/16 sprinter Weston Giem, and a Velosport rider. Seeing a move drift up the track I forced an attack in an attempt to bridge and maybe even bring a rider along in

the process. Luckily as I looked back I saw my buddy Ruben Saatjian on my wheel. The great thing about Ruben as a rider is that he is always game for a breakaway and is always willing to work hard. With this we were able to make the gap across and the field sat up just enough to allow me to recover and then start to take pulls. Weston then for some unknown reason dropped out of the break. The rest of us worked well together and despite efforts from Jules to make it across he couldn't. Coming into the final lap Ruben made a move and I was forced to cover it. This is when the cat and mouse games started. The race was on a banked track and Bo went high on the banking on the back stretch. I got on his wheel while the other two stayed low. Bo made a jump and we all filed in behind each other, I was given the favorable position of second wheel as we came to the finishing stretch. I then jumped too early and was over taken resulting in 4th place on the stage. Disappointing considering everything I put into the break but it's the result of an ill timed sprint.

Stage 3: Road Race

The final stage was a road race and I was happy about that because with 2/3 of the racing in the books, there was less margin for error. I am very familiar with the road race course and over the races on Saturday I was able to size up the competition and I knew who I had to look out for. I knew that Jules was on extremely good form; Ruben is an amazing climber, and Bo, although he scored low on the time trial, compensated for it with a win in the crit. This left three main guys that could on seat me from 2nd overall. The start of the road race meant an attack from the gun by teammates Bo and Camden who are two strong riders in their own rights and have both proved that long solo efforts were not an impossible task. Seeing this Jules and Ruben helped me chase it back. This attack although didn't do much damage to the group, started a trend of constant attacking that would last throughout the first lap and resulted in the eventual forming of a group containing two 15/16 riders along with Jules and Ruben. With these four long gone Bo tried a few attacks and made one stick for awhile. His downfall was his own team who chased him down with the help of me and another rider in the group. When we regained Bo in the group he knew there was something wrong and his moral was broken. This left two riders that I cared about and they were both up the road. On the second and final lap we slowed down tremendously and I knew I needed a good finish to preserve my spot on GC. I finished 3rd in the group which resulted in 5th on the stage, and a drop to 3rd on GC. Overall I was happy with the weekend because I knew I was racing with quality racers and I competed with them.

-Parker

5. Red Kite Criterium

5/15/16

Livermore

Ethan Frankel

Racing Age 18, Senior Category 4

3rd Place

Red Kite Criterium # 6

Senior Category 4

I'd never before done a Red Kite Criterium, but it was a classic four-corner criterium with a long straightaway. Today, I was looking for upgrade points. Today, I was on the hunt for a win. After watching Mark Cook do very well in the masters' race, I rode to the line and waited patiently as other riders, most of whom I was not familiar with, lined up.

The whistle blew and 42 Cat 4 riders rolled off the line. There were going to be three primes. Primes are ideal practice situations for the sprint, and they are also opportunities to receive prizes. So I knew I'd like to at least try for one or more primes. 10 minutes into the 40-minute race, the bell rang for a prime-lap. I got to the front and waited patiently for a lap. Before the final corner, an attack went and I hopped on. I practice my sprint and timed it to perfection, picking up the first prize prime.

20 minutes later, the exact same situation occurred. An attack went, I followed, and I sprinted and ended up with another prime. I knew exactly how I was going to win this race. However, those two hard efforts had sapped some of my energy. My legs were feeling a bit fatigued, but I felt that I had a little bit left in the tank. I didn't even use that little bit of energy for the sprint, but rather to get into proper positioning in the last lap. Our captain, Ben, always says to use your sprint not in the final straightaway, but in the final few laps. Today, that strategy worked out perfectly as I sat 4th wheel going into the last corner. I came around one guy to take third and several upgrade points. That was a fun, exciting race, and I was happy to come away with two primes and other tasty prizes.

Ethan Frankel

Racing Age 18, Senior Category 3!

3rd Place Red Kite Criterium # 6 Senior Category 3/4

Thanks to this race, I finally received my Cat 3 upgrade! After the Cat 4s race, I spun out and chatted with the rider, Peter, who had parked next to me. He and I quickly became friends and rolled around together as a warm up.

The start came quickly, and again there were going to be 3 primes. This time, however, I was thinking that I would stay out of contention for those and focus on the finish. For the first 35 minutes, I stayed in the top 20, but never sprinted for primes (I already knew how to race this course) or made it into any moves.

It was in the final 4 laps where things got interesting. Firstly, a break of two began to establish, and they had a few seconds on the field. A chase ensued, and with three to go, we caught them. Then, with 2 to go, I saw a rider trying to obtrude his way between two riders. Two of them started bumping. I was directly behind them, and noticed the sketchy movements. I accelerated to the right, and not two seconds later I heard and *felt* the crash. One of them came down on my rear wheel. I managed to keep it upright and was content that I wasn't involved and was still in the mix. Finally, with half of a lap to go, Peter attacked. He had a solid 2 seconds on the field, but SJBC hunted him down and he was caught going into the final corner. I held onto 3rd wheel going into the final straight, but the others were simply too strong for me to come

around. I finished 3rd yet again, but it was a great result in the 3/4s field. The racing capped off a very successful weekend.

-Ethan F.

6. Modesto Criterium

5/21/16

Modesto

Andrew Mathiesen

25th Place Modesto Criterium

Juniors 13-14

The day before the race I was late getting things ready because my clothes were dirty so I had to wash them. For dinner that night my family had some pasta with sausage. I went to sleep around nine fifteen and woke up to my dad pulling my feet at four. At six I had breakfast that consisted of a PB and J sandwich and half of a Clif bar. My dad and I got to the event at eight. As soon as we got there, I put my Team Swift clothes on and then went to get my number. I warmed up on the course until about five minutes before the race. When the race started I got dropped onto the second group. Then on lap two I got dropped from that group. I was riding by myself until a person started to pass me at a fast pace. So I sprinted to get back on his wheel. When we were on our sixth lap we finally caught up to the second group. We stayed with them until the second lap when I got in a breakaway with two others. We got caught on the last lap and pushed hard till the end. I thought the race was challenging because there were not many Cat five competitors, and I was the only junior racing.

-Andrew

7. Folsom Classic Criterium

5/28/16

Folsom

Andrew Mathiesen

1st Place Folsom Classic Criterium

Juniors 13-14

The night before the race I had chicken, rice, and brussel sprouts. I went to sleep at nine with all my things ready for the next day. I woke up at six twenty and as soon as I got in the car I started to fall asleep. I woke up at seven which was two hours before the race and ate half of a Clif bar, and a PB and J sandwich. We arrived an hour and a half before the race started. I put on my clothes and went on the course. Then did a lap to see what it looks like. While I was riding I saw my teammate Esteban and sprinted to catch up to him. Once he noticed me, we were discussing things about the race and what might be challenging for us. When we finished our lap, he had to roll out, then line up to start. I watched the start then went to warm up on the trainer. After that I went to see the finish of the race Esteban was in.

When everybody was off the course I did a roll out and went to line up. At the start of the race I clipped in immediately and went towards the front. For the whole race I was in top three, the pace was a little slow until the last 3 laps of the race, then the pace quickened. People were getting dropped and a couple people tried to break away but they never succeeded. I was the one of the people that was catching everybody who was trying to break away. At the last lap I had a little bit of juice left in me so I picked up my pace and a few seconds after the last corner I was in a full sprint to the line. I got first with another Junior about a wheel length behind me. I thought the race was easy until the last three laps when I started pushing and was psyched to come away with the win.

-Andrew

Esteban Ramirez Fregoso

19th Place Folsom Classic Criterium Senior Category 4/5

I got up for this race severely early in the morning for this race because it was all the way in Folsom. The night before, for dinner, I had a protein rich meal instead of a high carb dinner like usual to see if that would possibly improve my performance. I was excited for this race because it is one of my favorite crits and also because I was racing against the elites instead of the juniors. After I was done warming up, I ate a banana to give me the necessary fast acting energy thirty minutes before the race. The race was forty minutes so I was really conserving throughout the race by switching into my hardest gear and conserving with the rest to the huge pack of riders, though in the corners everyone rapidly accelerates but not hard enough to make me tired. I did this for the entire race. On one lap I found myself at the front of the pack and pulling everyone, but I realized I was burning way too much energy so I soon found myself with the rest of the pack again. On the final lap, it was still pretty relaxed compared to a junior crit. I could not get into a good position because I was stuck in the middle of the group and when it really started to pick up was on the last turn. I sprinted hard, but not my hardest because I knew I was going to get an ok place. Anyway, I had a good time racing there in Folsom.

- Esteban

8. Mount Hamilton Road Race

5/29/16

San Jose

Ethan Frankel

30th Place Mt. Hamilton Classic Road Race Senior Category 3

There were going to be four of us at the 57th annual Mt. Hamilton Classic! I was very excited to race with Isaiah, Gianni, and Luke after having not raced with them for several months. Additionally, I was racing my first race as a Cat 3!

The 63-mile race begins by climbing the 4,000-foot Mt. Hamilton. Over 20 miles, with three false flats, we went from an elevation of about 100 to about 4,000. I must

admit, it was one of the hardest races I've ever done, and it was certainly a tough one to do as my first 3's race.

16 miles in and we hit the final upward section. Just a few more minutes until we hit the peak. Isaiah, Gianni, Luke, and I were all well within the top 10-20 of the group. However, I was beginning to feel my legs burn and my muscles start to give out. I wasn't going to be able to hold on much longer. Suddenly, there was an attack and I popped off the back. I was bummed but kept riding my pace.

I caught up to another rider who'd been dropped, Kyle from Limitless, near the top of the climb, and we decided to race the next 40+ miles together. Down the twisted descent and through the rolling hills of Central California we coasted.

With just 10 miles left, a group of two passed us. I decided to hop on. Kyle had other plans and kept riding easy. It was now three of us working together, and the pace was high. Eventually, we hit a descent that marked the 5k to go to the finish. It was here that I decided to attack from my three-man group and got a solid gap. From the bottom of the descent, it was a flat 1k to the finish, where I time trialed my way to 30th. Luke, Gianni, and Isaiah had finished just a couple of minutes before me in 27th, 28th, and 29th.

It was an enlightening experience because I did not feel confident or cocky at any point during the race. After upgrading, I knew I was not the strongest in the field anymore, and racing Hamilton just proved that I have lots of improving to do, especially with the long, grueling climbs.

-Ethan F.

Gianni Lamperti

27th Place Mt. Hamilton Road Race Senior Category 3

Once we started the race after rolling neutral for the first few minutes we turned right onto the climb. It was already going at a tempo pace and stayed that way until about halfway up. Once we got there it started to go quite a bit harder. Then a Sun Power guy attacked and the whole field fell off except like 10 guys. I stayed on for about 5 more minutes and then could not go anymore. It was a tough choice but I should have dropped off with a little bit left to hang with a group. Instead I went until I was completely done hoping that they would slow up a little. After I got dropped I was by myself until the top then got caught by two of my teammates. We rode to the finish and had a good ride. It was a bummer but we will be back next year.

-Gianni

Luke Lamperti

28th Place Mt. Hamilton Road Race Senior Category 3

The race started neutral until we turned right onto the climb. Then the race was on. It quickly picked up and guys were going hard on the front. I was riding around 10th wheel knowing we had a long climb ahead. I did not know the climb but I knew from Team Swift graduate & Assistant Coach Sam Bassetti it was about 1 hour long. We

were only 30 minutes in and the pace was high the whole time. When we hit 1 hour a rider attacked. I thought he was going for the KOM sprint so I followed. It was pretty much all out. I started to fade. I was waiting for a group and the first one that went by I was not able to get on. I followed the second group for a while and then faded. I saw my teammate coming up behind me. I was riding in a group and he caught me and then we ride to the top that was like 20 minutes after the attack. We chased but knew the group had a lot of time on us at the top of the climb. We rode down the descent and rotated on the flat. Two other teammates and I rode the rest of the race together. I was bummed with my result but will look forward to this race next season.

-Luke

Isaiah Chass

29th Place Mount Hamilton Road Race Senior Category 3

The race started off on city streets, for about 5 minutes until we got to the climb. The climb started, and the pace started to pick up right away. I stayed near the front not thinking that any move was going to go this early, but thinking that it would smoother the closer I was to the front. I wanted to save as much energy as I could early on, because it was going to be a long climb. After a good 30 minutes of climbing at this pace, we were still going at a pretty good pace early on in the climb. I had heard that the climb was around 1-¼ hours, so I started to realize that it was going to start getting hard soon. After climbing for nearly an hour, there was the first real attack about 5K from the KOM, and it started going full gas. It kept getting faster and faster, and finally I couldn't hang on anymore. I faded back through the field, and was just trying to hold onto the back. I was blown up now, and was just trying to recover a tiny bit so that I could hang with someone to the top. I got on a wheel and got my way to the top, but I was too far off the back to catch on the descent. I think that if I would have not gone as hard for so long, and then blown up, I could have put a bigger effort in the last few kilometers of the climb, and get with a group to catch the main group on the descent and in the valley. Going over the top of the climb, I was with my teammates Gianni and Luke. We rode the rest of the race together, but it was a long day being out there without a solid group.

-Isaiah

9. Memorial Day Criterium

5/30/16

Morgan Hill

Ethan Frankel

Racing Age 18, Senior Category 3

1st Place Memorial Day Criterium Juniors 15-18 Cat 1/2/3

There were exactly four of us. Yes, four. And all of us were Cat 3, so it was going to be a small race for sure, but I was still prepared to do well and practice for the

Cat 3 race later in the day. I didn't actually expect it to be so fast from the gun. Immediately, the youngest one, Grover attacked. The three of us followed and for the first couple of laps we were all together. Attack after attack dwindled the legs of my friend, Justin, and it was down to just three of us. We still had a while to race.

Fast forward about 8 laps and I was on a bigger guy, Aidan's, wheel. We had about 250 meters to the line, and were about to round the final turn. He jumped. I got on and rode his wheel. We cornered. He unleashed his sprint. I stayed on his wheel and jumped around in the last 100 meters to take the win! It was a great practice race for the upcoming 3's race, and I felt ecstatic about taking a win after never having done so.

Ethan Frankel

16th Place Memorial Day Criterium Senior Category 3

The field was relatively small, but there were several big teams, including Alto Velo, SJBC, Fremont, and TB143. I was alone, being the only Swiftie. But I was excited to race a pure, Cat 3 crit! It was fast from the beginning as the big teams dominated. Many breaks formed, but most were brought back quickly. I kept my cool through the first half and when attacks went, I started to get in some of the moves.

Before I knew it, it was the last corner of the final lap. It was hectic. We were catching a strong break that had stayed away. We rounded the final corner and I started sprinting with the pack. I finished mid-pack after some crazy chasing and lead-outs in the closing meters.

The race ended and I saw a text from Ben asking how it went. The following string of texts ensued as I summarized my heroic chase in the final minutes of the criterium.

Ethan Frankel:

So it was a break of 2 guys with 5 to go and they were pretty strong. One was Alto Velo, who had at least 6 guys in the field (field of 35). The rest of Alto Velo didn't pull and no one was coming to the front to pull. They had a solid 20-second gap. I attacked with 4 laps to go and had a gap with one other guy and we worked to chase them down and brought them back about 10 seconds. The field caught us, but Alto Velo was controlling and again no one was willing to chase. So Jeremy from Limitless, a Fremont rider, and I chased for another lap. We caught them in the very last corner, and I didn't have much for the sprint. In hindsight, if I had conserved and not chased, I would have had more for the finish and if I had won the field sprint, would've come in 3rd.

Ben Cook:

Yea, that's a tough situation, since Alto Velo won't do anything. A lot of people don't know that though, and it can be good to motivate the field by saying things like "they're blocking!" Or "help us chase!" and stuff, it usually gathers some people. The other chance is to let it come back naturally, which it most definitely could, and if it doesn't go for third.

Ethan Frankel:

A couple people helped me chase, but Alto Velo was at the front blocking every time someone went to the front to chase. It wasn't gonna come back naturally, they were strong and had at least 20 seconds on the field. Yeah, I could've settled for a field sprint for 3rd, but I think I gained some great experience and made a smart move (if I had teammates it would've been a perfect setup). Sadly I didn't have teammates, but Justin [from SJBC] sprinted to 5th.

That was the race. Pretty simple and fun, but I learned quite a bit by doing the hard work at the front. Ben also taught me some great lessons when in those situations, and when I continue to race with teammates or alone, I can use those tactics to my advantage.

-Ethan F.

Esteban Ramirez-Fregoso

13th Place Memorial Day Criterium Juniors 15-18 ,Cat 4/5

At least I didn't have to get up as early for this race compared to the Folsom classic. But even still, I had to get up at 4:30 in the morning, which is not ok. When we got to Morgan Hill, it was overcast and cold compared to Santa Rosa, which was already 70 degrees at 5:00 in the morning. For this race, I did a more extraneous pyramid warm up to prepare myself for the more intense junior race. I was pretty confident in this race because I wanted to see if I could use the same race tactics in this race as I did in the Folsom classic. And for the most part, I was able to use the same strategy, although there was much more get up and go sprints, which did not drain as much of my energy as I thought.

I stayed with the pack for the entire race and the people who did attack, did not get very far and eventually came back to the rest of us. On the last lap I remembered I needed to strategically place myself in the best position to sprint, so I worked my way up to the front and I made the mistake of going to the *very* front of the peloton in front of everyone, doing an unnecessary large pull on the last 150 yards of the race. The racers around me capitalized on that moment and sprinted ahead and for a brief moment I didn't have the necessary explosive energy to sprint but I did accelerate and in the last 90 yards to the finish I sprinted and got 13th. This race and the Folsom classic were in my opinion crucial for my development in strategy in criterium races.

- Esteban

Andrew Mathiesen

2nd Place Memorial Day Criterium Juniors 13-14

19th Place Memorial Day Criterium Jrs 15-18, Cat 4/5

I was glad to see at the start that I was racing with my teammate Grant. We talked a little bit before the race started. My group only raced for around twenty three

minutes. During the race it was cold and windy and everybody was riding at a slow pace for the first few laps, then the pace started to increase. With three laps to go I tried to break away but the pack caught me. On the final lap in the last corner, I was right behind a San Jose rider when he clipped his pedal on the ground and took the turn wide. I took the turn sharp to avoid a possible crash, and he started pulling away. I sprinted all the way to the finish to try to catch him but couldn't. I came in second by a bike length. After the race, I went to my dad and he informed that if I raced one more time I would be able to apply to get to category four. I signed up for the junior 15-18 category 4/5. I figured I would be racing with my teammate Esteban and would try to help him. During the whole race I was trying my hardest and not to get dropped by the pack since it was only 45 minutes since my last race. During the whole race there were people trying to break and the pack would catch them again. For the final six laps the pace was a lot faster and I could barely keep up but I held until the finish. On the sprint to the finish only one person passed me, I placed 19th. I thought the course was nice except for the last corner before the finish due to how sharp it was.
-Andrew

Grant Feige

4th Place Memorial Day Criterium Juniors 13-14

I got up at around 4:45 to leave for a long drive to Morgan Hill for my second official race of the year. I had been to plenty of the recent TNTs so I felt ready for this race especially since the group I was going to race with was 11-14 so I would be one of the older racers. On the drive I got dressed into my jersey and finished up just as we were passing through San Jose and getting closer to our destination. It was early and cloudy which I liked. As we got to where we thought the race was going to start but we realized we were on the wrong section of the road so we followed it back to where the race actually was. As we found a parking spot, I examined the course. I liked it better than the course at Cherry Pie. It was around a business area and the clouds were holding which is what I was hoping for when I first saw the weather. When we got out to go get my number I kept my sweats and sweatshirt on over my jersey because it was still a little cold. We got my number and went back to put it on my jersey. I got all ready and went to check out the course but on a bike this time. I looked around for my teammate Andrew then rode with him for a while and soon we were lining up to start.

Andrew had been to more races than me but I was a little older than him so I was looking forward to seeing how this would go. The race started slow which I was surprised by. And it stayed pretty slow for a while. There would be some attacks and some good accelerations but nobody ever got away. A big guy who looked like he was at least sixteen from San Jose was driving the pace for most of the race and reeled in any attack. I tried to follow most of it to see if I could get myself in a better spot for the finish because I had a good feeling I could beat some of these kids in a sprint. The entire group stayed together for the last lap and I tried my best to get in front of these 2 riders from the same team who I was sitting behind for most of the race. When we took the last turn I took a wider line and went around the guys in front of me and just

like I thought my sprint was better than most of the other guys but I was too far back to have a chance to win. I ended up 4th with I was happy with. Looking back, Andrew and I probably could have done something which would have given us a better chance at one of us winning. But I was happy with how the race went and later that day I went to a baseball and Warriors playoff game so I had a long day. I look forward to my next race and I hope I can improve.

-Grant

10. NorCal MTB Race #5

5/8/16

Laguna Seca, Monterey

Gianni Lamperti

2nd Place Nor Cal MTB #5 JV. D.2

When the whistle blew I was in position on the second row to the left side. I moved up the hill and was third wheel over the top into the singletrack. I stayed there for the first lap before it was down to only 3 riders by the end of the first lap. This lap Taylor Kring was on the front the majority of the time. I passed them going into the first downhill descent and when we were about halfway down Taylor flatted so it was down to two of us. We did not go super hard this lap but enough to stay away from the rest of the riders. Coming into the last lap I was once again on the front coming into the downhill singletrack and he passed me over a little roller on the way down. He pulled a little gap on the decent and I tried to pull it back on the climb, but I did not make it. I learned a lot and it was a fun day of racing.

-Gianni

Ben Cook

5th Place NorCal Race #5 JV boys D1

After a great ride at Berkeley Road Race yesterday, I was feeling very confident heading into Laguna Seca. I enjoyed a nice long drive on my own down to Monterey to meet my teammates for our team dinner. We had a fun night and stuffed our faces with all the pasta we could in anticipation of tomorrow's race. My friend Harrison and I roomed together as usual, and I got a good night's sleep before the early morning waiting for us.

The next morning we got to the race course and unloaded at the team pitzone. I then met up with Luke, Gianni, Ethan, and Isaiah, who I wouldn't get to race with today, but I had the pleasure of hanging out with in the motor home and relaxing before our late afternoon start times.

After an hour or so I headed back to the pitzone to start getting ready for my race at 1:30. I wanted to be at the start by around 1:10 to allow for extra staging time, as I was going into this race without a call up, from not having raced the first half of the mountain bike season.

After a good hard warm-up, I rolled up to the start line with my teammates from

Redwood, Jordan and Harrison. They both had call ups, and Jordan was in the varsity race anyways, so I wouldn't get to start with them. I found my place about 30 riders back, or 6 rows from the front was about as best as I could do. The start was a steep uphill road followed by a wide open descent leading into the courses first major climb. I lined up next to Dylan Fryer, a friend of mine from Drake, who was sure to do well today, even though he didn't have a call up either.

"Gentlemen, welcome to the NorCal district championships!" Called the announcer, Bill, over the loud speaker. I always loved the energy of the NorCal league races, it was like nothing else you could experience in cycling, and always motivated me and the other racers so much. Bill, the NorCal director Vanessa, and the rest of the large crowd began to count us down.

"5..." I picked my foot up to get ready to sprint.

"4..." I waited patiently, more and more ready to take off down the road ahead.

"3... 2... 1... GO!" They cheered.

I clipped in as fast as I could and darted down the left side of the field, passing as many riders as I could on the first hill. I made my way into the top 15, but not as fast as Dylan who got into the top 5. Down the open descent I worked with Harrison to pull away from the field behind us and go into the climb with a small gap. My heartrate was already at 197bpm just 3 minutes into the race. As we pushed up the hot sandy climb, Harrison's wheel slipped out in a rut, and he, myself, and friend of ours from San Rafael named Gustavo all unclipped and sprinted our bikes up the hill as fast as we could. At the top we remounted where I found Luke cheering for us.

Coming into the first downhill I had no idea what place I was in after such a hectic start, but I knew it wasn't as far as I had dreamed of. "Well, this must be what it's like to race for 15th place." I thought to myself calmly. Quite frankly it was just the start off the race, and I had done a great job of staying calm and going as hard as I could go sustainably, and therefore I was happy. Harrison and I traded pulls on the downhill and picked off a few riders. He and I have been best friends for the last three years, but never really had a chance to race as teammates before today. We blasted down the winding and sandy downhill together into the base of the next climb. I passed him on his left, and eventually carried on up the climb without him, and began to pick off riders ahead of me. I was happy to have Ethan in the race as well. We worked together up the first section of the climb, but then Gustavo and I set out a harder pace and took off without anybody else on our tails. I looked up the trail to see a tight group of 4 riders working together on the climb, and I picked out Dylan's green Drake kit. From him to me, I counted nobody else. "5th and 6th! Go get 'em you guys!" Yelled an official on the side of the trail. Gustavo and I had about a 40 second gap to close together, but I think we simultaneously realized that we also had each other to beat for 5th place, the last spot on the podium.

I flicked my elbow coming up the windy feed zone climb and Gustavo pulled around me. "Let's work together; we can try to get them." I said. He agreed without hesitation. After my lesson about letting groups up the road slip away learned yesterday at Berkeley Road Race, I decided to work with Gustavo as best I could to get back to that group ahead of us.

We chased hard through the finish line of the first lap. I always wonder if it's fastest in mountain biking to have the faster rider lead the downhills, and potentially drop the slower rider, then have the stronger rider lead the climbs, and potentially drop the weaker rider, or if it is best to do it the other way around, with the rider who is slower at the up/downhill lead their weaker section, so that you stick as a group. As I lead hard up the courses beginning climb on the 2nd lap, I looked back to see Gustavo digging deep to keep my wheel. At the top of the climb we switched and he led down the fast and twisty descent. I flowed through the turns and sand as fast as I could, but Gustavo was blazing down the hill. I chased hard where I could pedal, and kept as good of form as possible on the technical parts to try to cling to his wheel. He entered the next climb with about 5 seconds on me. I chased hard and caught his wheel, before he flicked his elbow and I set a hard and fast pace up the climb, where he struggled again to hold my wheel. I guess that I had the answer to my first question, then.

The Laguna Seca course is famously known for "Hurl Hill", an aptly named 23% wall at the very end of the final climb of each lap. I lead coming into Hurl Hill, and set out a darn hard pace up the climb. I gapped Gustavo a little bit, but we came back together by the close of the lap.

"That is Ben Cook and Gustavo Tagliari coming through for 5th and 6th! Push it boys!" Yelled Bill over the loudspeaker. On the sidelines fans cheered like crazy. Friends, parents of friends, and officials yelled and howled and threw their arms in the air for us as we blasted under the NorCal truss at the finish line. I couldn't help but crack a smile as I filled with excitement, and I knew that Gustavo was feeling the same thing.

As we started the third lap, I set another brutally hard pace up the first climb, and Gustavo began to detach from my wheel. There was no sign of the leaders ahead, and no sign of being caught from behind, for all we knew. I figured I could start hunting for that 5th place podium spot now! I rode as hard a pace as I sustainably could, and finally Gustavo started coming unglued. I pushed the pace on the downhill, but he had clawed back by the next roller. We traded pulls one more time, then back again to my leading over the rollers before the main downhill. Finally, I put in as big a move as I could from the front, and completely rode Gustavo off of my wheel. I held the pace as hard as I could up the main climb, anticipating the infamous hurl hill all along. When I got to the base, I knew I was going to need to put in a big effort to stay away. So, when the trail pitched up, the sun and sand seemed to get even hotter, and the fans cheered louder, I did just that.

"EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT BEN! GI MAN GO GO GO!!" Yelled the Redwood freshman and sophomores on the side of the hill. I couldn't believe it! I don't think I had ever gotten cheering like this before. I could hear Gustavo, now well behind was gaining equal support from his team. I pushed onwards over the top of Hurl Hill and up the feed zone climb, where my teammate Nico ran alongside me up the steep fire road. "You've gotta beat me Ben! Come on!" He yelled as he sprinted by my side. I nearly sprinted up the climb and secured an even bigger gap on Gustavo behind me. "Ladies and gentlemen, hanging onto 5th place is Mr. Ben Cook from Redwood High

School!" Yelled Bill over the loud speaker. I just didn't look back and pushed on and on up the opening climb one last time. Down the descent I felt comfortable enough to let loose, and began flying through the turns and sliding over the sand like never before. I checked behind me and saw no sign of Gustavo anywhere. Now, more than ever, it was time to put what I learned at Berkeley yesterday into place. I might've secured 5th place, and I might just have to ride into the finish, but I knew that the race truly wasn't over until I crossed the finish line. From here on out, I had to push myself as hard as possible all the way into the finish. Up the long climb I began passing varsity or lapped JV riders. "Have a good race man!" We yelled to each other as they let me pass. I pushed on with a big smile in my face and passion like nothing else to stand on the podium, and to get to race in such an amazing community. Gustavo was nowhere in sight by Hurl Hill, but I had teammates to impress right? They wanted to see me hurl! I threw everything I had into my final climb up Hurl Hill, passing every rider I could, making up as much time as possible, even if I wasn't going to catch 4th place. I sprinted up the feed zone climb one final time, and even passed another rider coming into the finishing sprint as the announcer yelled my name one more time. I mashed on the pedals and twisted the handlebars, and put every last ounce of energy into the race. I pushed my bike across the line and finally sat back in the saddle, completely smashed, completely successful.

I shifted down to my easiest gear and spun out my legs as best I could as I came into the finishing section. There I met my friends Dean and Noah from Drake and we all celebrated together. Dean ended up placing 6th in the varsity category, and Noah sick and unable to race today, but proved to be one of the best and loudest fans on the sideline all day. We dumped some water over our heads and brought it in for a hug. Next, I met my teammates that had just walked back from Hurl Hill to see me, and it was all hugs as well. The NorCal League was a special place, and the only place that you can feel like a superstar for finishing 5th in a Junior boy's high school race, or even just for finishing your race. Gustavo met me at the finish about a minute behind me, with a look of pain on his face that simply said it all. We hugged and congratulated each other on another fantastic and fun race, and wished each other well until we met again at State Championships in two weeks. I looked back down the trail to Harrison rolling in with a painful look on his face not far behind me for a top 20 placing. We fist bumped congratulations, and I later realized that he had a rubbing break the whole race, but toughed it out and still finished strong!

More and more teammates rolled in over the next 10 minutes, so Harrison and I rolled back to the pit zone and got some much needed recovery drinks and grabbed a seat in the shade to talk about our races. I told him about how Gustavo and I worked to stay away, and how awesome our teamwork on the first lap was. He told me all about how he tried to stick with us in the climb, but realized soon that something was wrong with his brakes, and had to drop off our tail. He had a big air bubble in his brake line, and has no choice but to just ride on for the remainder of the race and tough it out.

After another half an hour of storytelling, we finally got up from our chairs and walked over to podium with the rest of the team. My friend Teddy had place 5th in the

varsity race, putting two Redwood riders on the podium today.

After podium celebrations, I thanked Vanessa, Bill, and my coaches and teammates for an awesome day. Finally, Harrison and I headed back to the cars and packed up for the long drive home. I hopped in my car alone, put my music on, and headed for home, completely satisfied with my race with year at Laguna Seca, and so happy to have had such a fun and amazing experience with the NorCal League.

-Ben

Ethan Frankel

8th Place NorCal Championships #5 Junior Varsity D1

My last ever high school mountain bike race. I couldn't really believe it; it was quite a surreal experience. I wanted to perform as well as I could, and Laguna Seca was one of my favorite courses in NorCal. The course features several steep climbs; the most infamous and longest one is called "Hurl Hill". Hurl Hill consists of a couple of minutes of easier climbing before it pitches up to 30% for nearly 30 seconds. Afterwards is a false flat before it pitches up one last time to the feed zone. The finish is just after the descent on a flat, gravel fire road, making it an ideal "roadie" sprint.

The 39 of us lined up under the spring sun. I still had my 5th place call up although I had only been on the podium once during the season, so I had great positioning for the start. From the "GO", it was fast. We sprinted up the first gravel hill and I found myself comfortably in 5th wheel. My teammates Julian and Liam were also in the top 5 with me. We headed up a steep, paved climb that soon merged into single track. We were still together. Finally, on the technical descent, I dropped off the leaders' pace. My water bottle flew out of its cage. Uh oh. At least there was a feed zone just a few minutes away.

Over the course of the next lap, I found myself slip from podium position to 12th. Ben and a friend of ours, Gustavo, passed me on the penultimate climb before Hurl Hill, and I was unable to hang with them. However, after receiving a bottle, gathering myself, and preparing myself both physically and mentally for the next three laps, I clawed my way back to top 10.

It was the ultimate lap, and I was in 10th wheel. I could see other JV riders just a minute up the trail. I put in an effort up Hurl Hill to catch them, and found myself in 8th with other rider from Drake contending 8th place.

I allowed him to take a pull from the top of the climb to the bottom, where I eventually came around him in the final 50 meters, like a true roadie.

I was the first senior to finish in the JV category as my last NorCal race, but I was disappointed with my performance in the earlier laps. It seemed that throughout the mountain biking season, each race had gone the same way. I would have decent starts, fade back within the first lap or two, and find myself out of the top 10. I'd then be fighting my way back and chasing the leaders the whole race. There's something about mountain bike racing where the strongest person wins, not necessarily the smartest or craftiest. That is why road racing is so much more appealing, although the technical aspect of mountain bike racing is certainly fun and different. Now that my

mountain season is finished, I'm excited to focus on the road and the USA Junior National Championships! Thank you to NorCal for a great 3 years of exciting and amazing racing.

-Ethan F.

Isaiah Chass

8th Place NorCal MTB Race #5 JV Boys D2

Starting off on a short hill, I moved my way up to the top 3 near the top. On the next punchy hill, I moved back and was around 7th going into the descent. The lead group started pulling away from me on the rollers before the final two climbs. There were a few riders on my wheel, so I put in a move over the top of the next climb to get them off my wheel. On the final steep climb, I put in another effort to catch a rider just going over the top. I got on his wheel and stayed with him on the fire road section. I got by him on the next lap, and knew I needed to put in a good lap time on this lap. Staying top ten on this lap I could make up a few places on the last lap. I went as hard as I could on the climbs, and recovered a little on the descent but still made up some time. On the last lap I was in 9th going over the last climb. I sprinted into the climb and caught 8th place going over the top. He got on my wheel and attacked me on the fire road. I couldn't get on his wheel, so I kept him close and near the top he sat up. I was able to get on his wheel so I stayed on his wheel until about 100 meters from the finish and sprinted around him for 8th.

-Isaiah

11. NorCal MTB Race #6

5/21/16

Los Olivas

Ben Cook

12th Place NICA MTB State Championships Race #6 JV D1

It was a hot and windy day as I rolled up to pre ride with my teammate Harrison. Last year I had an amazing time at the state championships, and ended up placing 9th after an incredibly hard and fast race. This year I looked to do the same. The course suited me well with a big climb to start off, and some long flat sections that were good for power. I was excited to say the least.

After a good warm-up I sat at the start line in the blistering heat, about 60 riders from the front of the group. It would be a tough start, but last year I used the road section in the beginning to help me pass and get up to the leaders quickly, and I anticipated to do the same this year. The younger riders and coaches waited with me on the start line as the crowd began to count down. "5, 4, 3, 2, 1, GO!" And we were off! I moved up the right side as fast as I could, and even though it was hard and dusty, passed up into the top 30. I sprinted over the next hill before settling into a rhythm on the false flat uphill and passing more riders. Before I knew it I was in the top 10. I checked my heartrate to see that I was at 188, high but not too bad. I pushed

on.

Through the first two sandy turns I found myself in 7th or 8th wheel, just hanging onto the rider in front of me, already feeling the effects of starting in the back. I've grown accustomed to starting in the back of the race, as I often have to miss a race or two each season due to road racing commitments that overlap with the MTB schedule, but it never made it any easier. Over the top of the climb I pushed into the top 5, but not long before I found myself in no man's land facing a wall of wind ahead of me. Last year I made it to 3rd, but two riders had already broken away from me and the other leaders.

The first descent was relatively tame, but I found myself struggling to hang onto the wheels in front of me. Finally, after the first downhill I realized that my fork had been locked out all the while, causing me to feel the pain of the downhill more throughout my whole body. I unlocked my fork and took off down the trail. At this point in time I was hanging onto 6th or 7th place. The next climb as I entered the 2nd lap hurt but I dug deep and held onto my position, I was in no man's land again. On the downhill I finally told myself to loosen up a bit and have some more fun, which would ultimately lead to me going faster. Last year I suffered a bad crash on the first downhill, so I was a bit more cautious earlier in the race. But before I knew it I was full gas through every turn, flying down the trail, holding onto 7th place.

I was feeling ok coming into the 3rd lap, my back hurting more and more as the day grew hotter and hotter. During the 3rd and final lap, two riders, one from Bruins and one from San Rafael, my friend Gustavo, caught up to me on the climb. We worked together for a bit, and then began trading attacks on the flats after the first downhill. Finally, the Bruins rider pulled a big move on the next winding climb and began to crack me. However, I looked back to see my teammates Craig coming up the climb not far behind. "Come on Craig!" I yelled. He would be great to have alongside me. I dug deep and caught Gustavo and the Bruins rider on the next downhill, and Craig caught us at the same time. At this point there was about half a lap left.

We worked together over the rolling sandy climbs towards the final downhill, and began to crack Gustavo. On a long and windy fire road section right before the downhill, the Bruins rider jumped me. I fought hard for his wheel but had nothing, when suddenly I saw Craig come pushing past on the right side, dropping me and the Bruins rider immediately. I couldn't believe it, Craig was only a sophomore! And he was going to get a top 10! I took off on the downhill after the other rider but couldn't hang on. Gustavo quickly came back, and we rounded the last two turns together. I sprinted out of the first one to hold my position against him, but he pulled a move back coming into the final open section. I took the inside line and pushed as hard as I could, then rounded the last corner ahead of him for 12th.

At the end of the day, I had a pretty tough state championships. I found out later that my saddle had slipped and was tilted down and pushed far forward, which could explain my back pain that potentially held me back in the last few laps. Overall it was a really hot and dusty day and my starting position fought against me, but I'm happy that I could fight on to the finish and still place relatively high in the 100 rider race. I couldn't thank my coaches on the Redwood mountain bike team enough for

allowing me to rejoin the team mid season. I had a blast coming back to the NorCal League for a few fun races.

-Ben

Sawyer Taylor

9th Place NICA MTB State Championships Freshmen Girls

As my first race back from getting a concussion less than three weeks before, I was expecting nothing more than to have fun at mountain bike state champs. I knew that I wasn't as physically or mentally fit as I had been earlier in the season and didn't have a great shot at a spot on podium and certainly not a win. By racing I could still get points for my team and be there to support my teammates which was a good enough reason for me to go.

I got a ride with my teammate Chase to the course on Saturday for pre ride and we pre rode together. Despite the dust, the course was fun and fast and all of the switchbacks were makeable. Later that night, my parents came up and we spent the night in Santa Maria. Sunday morning, we got to the course with plenty of time for me to watch the freshmen boys start and get in a great warm up.

My race started off fast. As soon as the whistle blew, the entire front row gunned it to get to the single track in a good position. Despite missing the last race, I still had 5th call up so I was able to get a good spot. I powered through the dusty pitch by the feed zone and got to the single track third behind the SoCal leader and Clodagh. By the time we hit the first set of switchbacks, I were hurting pretty bad. My legs were achy and everything felt slowed down. By the time we got to the top of the first hill, we had caught the tail-end of the sophomore group. A few of the girls in the front of my group quickly got around them and formed a gap.

Coming into the second lap, my head was throbbing and my legs felt like concrete. I didn't feel good enough to chase on the climbs and it was really hard to pass on most of the descents and singletrack. On some of the climbs riders from my group would get stuck behind the sophomores and have to get off and run. The gaps between riders just grew and grew. By the time we got to the switchback section before the finish, the only rider with me was Kelsey Van Allen from Tam. She passed me on the flat section and I didn't have a good line for the finish.

While I don't think I could have had a better race given how I was feeling, I still wish I would have been able to race better at states. Hopefully I'll be able to do really well next year in JV!

-Sawyer

Isaiah Chass

34th Place NorCal MTB Race #6 JV Boys D2

On the start line, I realized how big of a field I was racing in. I was starting 3rd row back, with over 90 other riders around me. The race started off in a sprint, with a

lead moto bringing us to the course circuits. I moved my way up to top 5, and before the climb started I knew I didn't have it in me. I got over the first climb top 10, but started drifting back on the next sections. I made some time back on the descent, and started my second lap in around 15th. I worked with a few other riders, and saved some time in the super windy sections on the ridge. On my third and last lap I started moving back, and couldn't hang with the riders passing me. On this lap I knew I needed to at least hold where I was now and just get to the finish as fast as I could. I got to the finish and was happy to be done, but I was really bummed with how the race went. I am excited for next year to come back and hopefully do a lot better.

-Isaiah