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Florida State's cycling team battles slick rocks and slick mud

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Cycling

The Florida State University's cycling team has done some slick riding in the first two races of the conference's fall mountain bike racing season.

At the season opener hosted by Georgia Tech two weeks ago, the squad had to deal with sections of granite slick-rock on the racecourse at the Georgia International Horse Park and a surprisingly strong Union College team.

"I'd never ridden on slick-rock before," said club president Bryan Derstine, who led teammates Jack Tomassetti and Nat King against predictably small fields on the weekend before classes began.

Derstine was happy with his two top-10 results in the Men's A division: an eighth place photo-finish sprint against Union's Justin Marquand after a nearly two-hour race cross-country race, and a ninth in the dirt time trial.

The points aided Derstine's overall goal of qualifying to race at collegiate nationals in Reno, Nevada in October.

Slickness persisted at last weekend's mud-wrestling contest at Eastern Tennessee State in Johnson City which was attended by nearly a hundred competitors from 13 schools. After all-night rains turned trails into slippery linear mud puddles, riders faced a race course riddled with crash-producing tight turns and spiky hills.

"It was a complete mud slop-fest," said Derstine who joined former club president Clayton Anderson in falling on the "glassy turns and slippery slopes."

But it was the big road sprinter Chris Mojock in his debut mountain bike race, who put the cycling Seminoles on the leader-board in a spectacular fashion in the Men's B short track dirt criterium.

Mojock, a ringer for Tour de France stage-winner Thor Hushovd, tips the scales at 220 pounds of lean muscle power. Pedaling an 11-year-old Trek 8000 mountain bike, the FSU doctoral candidate in Exercise Physiology sat in third place in a field of 21 racers going into the final lap. Trying to navigate the rutted and sodden trail that had been destroyed by rain and two prior races, Mojock was one of the few remaining riders who hadn't crashed or been lapped. Then, his SRAM chain snapped.

"I thought my race was over," said Mojock who balances time for the occasional bike race with his studies; teaching a class and two labs; "the greatest wife in the world" and two young daughters.

Derstine, who saw the mishap, yelled, "Run! Run!"

Although he had nearly a mile to go, Mojock began to push his mud-weighted machine up the climbs through the muck. He remounted to coast down hills, through the rock garden and over the double-jump.

The FSU man was surprised to learn that he finished third behind winner Matt Nourmohamadian (Union) and Kyle Rohan (Florida).

"It was a muddy, messy mangle of man and machine," said Mojock. "They were pulling people out left and right as they were lapped by the leaders, so I did not know who was where."

Teammate Tomassetti finished ninth and Kristen Baker placed 10th in Women's A.

Collegiate racing today in Tom Brown Park

Show support for the cycling Seminoles today in Tom Brown Park when collegiate conference racing begins at 9:00 am with a dirt time trial, dual-slalom at noon and short track race at 3:00 pm. The cross-country race starts at 9:00 am Sunday at Meridian Park off Meridian Road north of Maclay.
