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Bike racers fight the elements in the Mud, Sweat and Gears Cyclo-cross Series Final



A muddy Eric Wondergem. (Photos courtesy of Bart Nave Photography)

Cyclo-cross racers from nine states and collegiate racers from nine colleges and universities braved snowy and wet conditions racing over rough terrain at the Farmhouse Gallery and Gardens in Unicoi two weekends ago.

Over 200 racers competed in thirteen different USA Cycling Categories and two collegiate races. Mud, Sweat and Gears completed its seventh racing season at the event. It was also the first full SECCC Cyclo-cross season along with the ETSU Buccaneer cross event organized by the ETSU Cycling Club and was the conference final.

Collegiate racers from Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, who participated in this event, won last week's national competition at the USA Cyclo-cross National Championships held at Bend, Oregon. Mars Hill College, NC finished 2nd in Division 2. Appalachian State's, Ashley James, also a pro cyclo-cross racer for Kenda Tires, won the National Championship Collegiate Women's Division One jersey.

Mud Sweat and Gear's eight-race series was title sponsored by the Town of Unicoi.

Cyclo-cross is a mixture of road and mountain biking. The bike is similar to a road bike you might see Lance Armstrong riding but the main difference is the bike has wider knobby tires like a mountain bike, and cantilever brakes like a mountain bike.

Courses are a mixture of grass, pavement, dirt paths, gravel, sand and mud, in any combination. Courses are minimum of 10' wide, 1.6 miles long, and are closed, marked with plastic fence posts and caution tape. Each race usually has one set of artificial barriers that extend across the course and require most riders to dismount, run across the barriers while carrying the bike, and then remount.

Races are 30 to 60 minutes long depending on the skill level of the racer. Categories are provided for beginners, juniors, masters, and pro, as well as collegiate.



A college racer catches air.



Collegiate riders go for the best position.



Jeffrey Welch crosses the finish line.



The MSG Promoter for the 7th year! Dwayne Letterman



Dwight Smith crosses a barrier.



Young Anthony Bailey crosses a barrier.



Daniel Boles carries his bike.



Jonathan Kinnick finds a slick corner.



Mike Se (White jersey) passes another racer.

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