Heartland Cycling Development Hardin Composite Wins 2026 KY NICA Team State Championship as Eight Student-Athletes Claim Pedal for the Roses Series Titles

Season 6 wraps at the Battle at Bluff Boom in Greensburg with a full event weekend of racing, a Senior Send Off and the league's signature red roses jerseys

GREENSBURG, Ky. — The Kentucky Interscholastic Cycling League (KY NICA) closed its 2026 Pedal for the Roses Series at the Battle at Bluff Boom State Championship, held October 24 and 25 at Bluff Boom Trails in Greensburg. Student-athletes in grades 5 through 12, along with their coaches, families and volunteers from across Kentucky, gathered in Green County for the final event weekend of the season to celebrate a full year of racing, team practice and community.

Heartland Cycling Development (Hardin-Elizabethtown Stampede) earned the 2026 Team State Championship, finishing the five-race series with 10,850 team points. The team is led by Head Coach Andy Fortenberry. "I am very proud of the effort and hard work that the Stampede athletes put in this year. They bonded together to form a cohesive team and exemplified the meaning of being a good teammate and competitor throughout the season," said Fortenberry.

Eight student-athletes claimed individual series state champion titles and the red roses jersey, a KY NICA tradition inspired by the garland of roses presented to the Kentucky Derby winner. Series champions are determined by points earned across all five Pedal for the Roses races, honoring the commitment each rider brought to the trail from August through October.

2026 Pedal for the Roses Series State Champions

- Varsity Girls: Avery Fortenberry, Hardin-Elizabethtown Stampede
- JV1 Girls: Adelise Bozeman, NKY Roots Campbell Composite
- JV2 Girls: Evangeline Fortenberry, Hardin-Elizabethtown Stampede
- JV3 Girls: Chloe Sharp, Marshall County High School MTB Team
- Varsity Boys: Carden Bozeman, NKY Roots Campbell Composite
- JV1 Boys: Jonathon Clark, Hardin-Elizabethtown Stampede
- JV2 Boys: Eli Tabb, Hardin-Elizabethtown Stampede
- JV3 Boys: Mason Cook, Southern Kentucky MTB

Honoring a Legacy: Avery Criswell, Marshall County High School Mountain Bike Team
The weekend also celebrated a rare milestone. Avery Criswell of the Marshall County High School Mountain Bike Team received the KY NICA Legacy Award, presented to student-athletes who stay a part of the KY NICA community for their entire eligibility. Avery is the only student-athlete to earn the honor this season.

The Legacy Award represents seven years of practices, event weekends, trail work and time spent with teammates and coaches. Avery's journey began with the Marshall County team in the Tennessee NICA league before Kentucky's league was founded, and he has raced with Marshall County every season since. The award celebrates a student-athlete who grew up alongside the league and made KY NICA a part of his story from the very first pedal stroke to the final finish line.

"Our mission is to build strong minds, bodies, character and communities through cycling, and our seniors are proof of what that looks like over time," said Denile Hill, Executive Director of KY NICA. "Watching 21 seniors and our Legacy Award recipient close out their senior season this weekend was a reminder of why this work matters. Their time on the trail with us has shaped who they are, and we cannot wait to see where they ride next."

The championship weekend also honored the league's graduating seniors during the Senior Send Off, recognizing 21 student-athletes who are wrapping up their senior season with KY NICA.

The 2026 season marked KY NICA's sixth year, with 22 teams, 374 student-athletes (180 high school and 194 middle school) and 229 coaches taking part across eight statewide events. Through the league's Teen Trail Corps (TTC) program, student-athletes also logged 1,831.25 volunteer trail work hours this season, giving back to the trails and communities that host them.

KY NICA thanks its Season 6 sponsors, including Trek Bicycle, Henderson Services, Scheller's Fitness & Cycling, Middle of Town Cycling, Radical Custom Cycling Apparel and TC Screen Printing, for their support this season. The league also thanks the City of Greensburg, Green County and Bluff Boom Trails for hosting the State Championship, along with the partners and volunteers who make every event weekend possible.
Families interested in joining a team for the 2027 season can find a team near them or learn how to start one at kentuckymtb.org.

About KY NICA
The Kentucky Interscholastic Cycling League (KY NICA) is a youth development league that uses mountain biking as its program vehicle. A 501(c)(3) league of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA), KY NICA serves Kentucky students in grades 5 through 12 through inclusive, team-based programming that builds confidence, resilience, leadership and a strong sense of belonging. Its mission is to build strong minds, bodies, character and communities through cycling. Learn more at kentuckymtb.org.