

National Interscholastic Cycling Association launches new league in MS

Special to Pelahatchie news

The National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) recently announced that it has accepted the bid from Mississippi to join NICA as a new league. NICA develops interscholastic mountain biking programs for student-athletes and coaches across the United States.

“We are excited about bringing NICA to Mississippi,” said League Director Michelle Williams. “I am very impressed with how the NICA organization addresses the whole student-athlete. Mountain biking is for everyone - those who like to race and those who prefer to ride slower and enjoy adventures, as well as those who like to build and maintain the trails they ride. After spending several years participating in the Alabama NICA League, it is now time for us to bring this excellent organization to Mississippi for our kids. We are excited to get more kids on bikes, letting them have fun outdoors, teaching them new skills, helping them set goals, and building a supportive community. I can’t think of a better way to spend time with kids outside in a sport where everyone gets to participate. We don’t ride benches; we ride bikes!”

Mississippi is the latest state to join a growing youth mountain biking organization. Team practice begins in fall 2023.

NICA will open registration for coaches in September 2023, and student-athletes may register in October to begin pre-season activities. The regular season starts December 1, 2023, and races and other events will take place in the spring of 2024.

“We look forward to spreading NICA’s mission of getting more kids on bikes in the Magnolia state! We are so glad to welcome Mississippi into our NICA community,” said NICA President Amanda Car-

ey. “The commitment and dedication of Mississippi’s league staff has been tremendous as they have worked to bring this vision to life. We are thrilled to welcome such an outstanding team of cyclists who represent NICA’s core values of fun, inclusivity, equity, respect and community.”

The on-the-ground team expressed their excitement about the upcoming league and season.

“The launch of a MS NICA League is a dream come true for me,” said League Co-Founder Selena Swartzfager. “While I hoped this would happen for the student-athletes across Mississippi when

we started the MS Blues Team seven years ago, I was not sure how or when the Mississippi League would become a reality. I know that this opportunity for MS students will change lives. This sport gives everyone a chance to become a better version of themselves. The mountain biking community is really fun and inclusive of anyone who likes to spend time on a bike. Now, we just have to spread the word to all MS communities, so that we can grow a group of young

people that are healthier, more confident, and able goal-setters. Let’s ride!”

Al Kennedy, a parent of a student-athlete currently participating on

the MS Blues Composite Team, added, “NICA provides a unique environment for our kids that successfully spans competition, personal development, and fitness in a supportive community I have not seen elsewhere. I’m thrilled NICA is coming to Mississippi to offer our kids opportunities to get outside, get fit and get personal experiences you cannot find on a screen. Let’s grow together.”

With the addition of the Mississippi League, NICA has grown to thirty-one

leagues and increased the regional opportunities for youth cycling. NICA is a mission-driven nonprofit that provides safe, reliable, and predictable youth development experiences for middle and high school students by using mountain bikes as a character-building tool. NICA leagues focus on teaching life and bike skills through programming, including team practices and group rides, adventure activities, competitive racing, and trail stewardship. In addition, the organization offers an initiative called GRiT, designed to get more girls into cycling, along with dedicated diversity, equity & inclusion initiatives to bring more under-represented communities into NICA. NICA’s core values of fun, inclusivity, equity, respect, and community are visible throughout its national organization and Leagues.

The Mississippi Interscholastic Mountain Biking League is an emerging project of The National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) – 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. As one of many leagues across the country, we create, manage and organize a variety of mountain biking programs and events to get #morekidsonbikes!

For more information, visit Mississippi Interscholastic Mountain Bike League at www.MississippiMtB.org.



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