



Racers ready for heat in 2017 BUDU event at 360 Trails. Photo: Team Pearson, Woodinville Bicycle

Championship Mountain Bike Race at 360 Trails

MATTHEW DEAN, KP NEWS

The 360 Trails at Gateway Park will host hundreds of cyclists competing in this year's state championship mountain bike race April 15. This event typically draws riders from the Puget Sound area, the Olympic Peninsula and occasionally eastern Washington. About a dozen teams also participate.

This year's race has been selected by the Washington State Bicycle Association (WSBA) as the state championship mountain biking event, which means that winners will be awarded state champions' jerseys at the end of the race. The competition has also been sanctioned by USA Cycling, making racers who finish over a certain ranking also eligible to advance to the national level.

"There hasn't been (a mountain biking championship) formally in Washington state that I know of, and this is the first time the WSBA is offering that," said Deanna Muller, who cofounded BuDu Racing with her husband Rory in 2002. The company specializes in organizing cycling, multisport and running competitions. A typical mountain biking event for BuDu can involve 200 to 300 cyclists, split across three skill categories and age brackets from elementary school to 50 years or older.

BuDu began by promoting events in the Auburn area, but investigated 360 Trails as a possible racing location after an invitation from local mountain biker and trail builder Courtland Capwell.

"Rory and I met in December and it was 37 degrees, pouring rain and snow," said Key Pen Parks Commissioner Mark Michel. Despite the less-than-ideal conditions, "(Rory) looked at the trails and said he could do an event there ... that was about six years ago, and ever since then they've had one of their races every year

at the 360 Trails."

The Mullers and Michel both praised the work of Capwell and KP volunteers on the trails. "None of this would have been possible without his volunteering to build those trails, and then maintaining them and keeping them so nice," Michel said. "Usage in the park has just skyrocketed, based on how good those trails are."

"People like single track but they also want places where they can pass, for races, and that course really provides opportunities to do all the different things that mountain bikers are looking for," Deanna Muller said. The Mullers also praised the overall trail design, drainage and continued work of volunteers.

"Those guys put in hours and hours of work to maintain and keep trails good and add new trails, so each time we come there, it's slightly different," Rory Muller said. "People get tired of doing the same old thing, so each year it's got that little bit of different that makes it new and exciting."

This is one of the first major regional events held at Gateway Park since its opening. "That's one of the things we've built the park for. The whole design was to have that, to be able to host events," Michel said. Very large events are likely to stay out of reach for Key Pen Parks for the moment due to parking and space concerns, Michel said. "But small-to mid-level events, yes, whether that's equestrian, like poker rides or stuff like that, we absolutely hope to host events like those."

The April 15 event will begin at approximately 9 a.m. at Gateway Park. Those with mountain biking experience can register online for the event, but observers are also welcome. "If somebody wants to come and just spectate, the park is open and the team tent area is a great place to take in the event," said Rory Muller.