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Photo by Steve Morton

Westlake High School student Sam Morton (middle) competes in a recent mountain biking race. He and several other Westlake students recently formed a team to train together, which is open to all high school students in the area.

# Westbank teens hit dusty roads

## Club members find motivation in peers

By Emily Martinez  
Special to the Picayune

It may seem that Westlake is all about football, but for some, the pulse-pounding adrenaline rush of mountain biking is an irresistible call.

But answering the call of the trails can get a little lonely, so a group of students formed the Westlake mountain biking team, an upstart program designed for kids with a hunger to ride.

"The program is intended to teach mountain biking in a safe, encouraging and fun environment for anyone that is interested," said Sean Ahmadi, an experienced mountain biker and head coach of the team.

Though the team has experienced riders, this program is open to any high school students in the area. All you need is "desire, dedication and of course being able

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Coach of newly formed mountain bike team

to ride would be great," said Ahmadi.

The team, which started as an informal group around the beginning of the school year, currently has 12 members who have been pushing each other to get better while they learn the finer points of biking technique. The team is not affiliated with Westlake High School.

The training varies, from stationary and indoor riding to hitting the trails at places such as the Green Belt, Slaughter Creek trails or Walnut Creek. Members of the team said that both types of training are important

to the overall biking experience.

"I'm excited to get a more structured team feeling by participating," said Sam Morton, a longtime biker and one of the team's masterminds. "And it will also give me a lot of chances to improve my technique with coaches who really know what they're doing."

Racing starts in the spring and it is Ahmadi's goal to have everyone prepared to compete the best they can.

"We will have organized workouts and rides every week along with skills clinics to properly prepare every-

one for races." Ahmadi said.

The riders aren't the only ones working hard on this team. The coaches and assistant coaches use a mixture of patience and hard-won knowledge to pass on what they've learned to younger riders. It's their goal to make mountain biking a healthy, life-long habit that members of the team can continue their whole lives.

And a winning season wouldn't hurt either.

The racing is fun, team members said, but intense. And while mountain biking is a competitive sport, it's also rewarding. The self-driven nature of the sport means each rider decides how well they will do.

Paul Dutton, another member of the team, said, "It takes a lot of work, but in the end it is all worth it."

For more information on the Westlake Mountain Biking Team, contact Sean Ahmadi at sean@coachahmadi.com.