

Bicycle Retailer

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News Briefs

FSA offers briefing on BB standards in Chinese

FSA has invited all members of the Taiwan bicycle industry to a one-hour presentation on bottom bracket (BB) standards today at the Nan Shan Education and Training Center in Taichung.

No registration is required for the presentation, which will be given in Chinese, and there's no limit to the number of attendees. "We intend this to be a pivotal presentation, similar to the BB30 presentation in 2008," FSA officials said. The presentation is intended for local bike assemblers and other employees of Taiwanese bike brands.

The company said it would discuss the numerous BB standards that have followed in the wake of the BB30 launch in 2000, including PF30, BBright, BB86, BB82 and BB386EVO.

The presentation will cover the standards, their evolution and market trends, "spelling out the technical points of each in a simple, easy-to-understand manner," the company said.

The presentation begins at 9:30 a.m., and check-in starts at 9 a.m. FSA's presentation is part of the Taiwan Day events hosted by Ride On.

FSA will repeat the BB presentation, and present its 2013 range, during the

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Bike Week beats strong on opening day



Taichung Bike Week began Tuesday in Taiwan.

Bigger and busier were two commonly heard sentiments as Taichung Bike Week kicked off Tuesday in three popular hotels along the industrial city's bustling downtown strip.

Industry folks shuffled in and out of the Evergreen, Tempus and Splendor hotels all day as the omnipresent throngs of scooters mo-

tored by on Port Road. Bike Week and Ride On are expected to draw between 1,500 and 2,000 product, sales and brand managers to Taichung over the next four days.

"There's a lot more traffic here," said Rotor sales manager Phillip Lucas, as he taped up posters outside his small meeting room in the Evergreen Ball-

room. Rotor moved to the more centrally located Evergreen this year from the less busy Splendor. "There are a lot more people coming past," Lucas said.

The Evergreen Ballroom—former home of the annual industry dinner—is a new addition for exhibitors this year, and the

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Happening Today

9 a.m.-6 p.m.: Ride On. Presentations from Hayes Bicycle Group, FSA, Crankbrothers, Vittoria, Mavic, Ride On Cables, Magura, Fizik and Fox Racing Shox. Hotel One.

9 a.m.: Taiwan Day. Presentations for Taiwanese and Chinese companies from Ride On exhibitors. Nan Shan Center, Taichung.

7 p.m.: Industry dinner. Splendor Hotel, 13th Floor Banquet Hall. Hosted by Taichung Mayor Jason Hu. (Registration closed.)

Novatec to open office in Southern California

Novatec, a high-end brand of hubs, wheelsets and other products, will officially open a U.S. office in Temecula, California, Jan. 1, said Henry Hinojosa, the brand's U.S. director.

Joy Industrial owns the Novatec brand as well as popular BMX brand Joy Tech. It's also an OE supplier to major brands in the U.S. and Europe. Hinojosa said he has worked with the company for the past two years helping develop a strategy to increase Novatec's penetration among American and Canadian retailers.

"We've been going to Interbike

for six or seven years, but we didn't have a presence the other 51 weeks," he said. Despite Joy Industrial's manufacturing quality, building an independent brand is difficult, he added.

Currently, Bike Fetish is Novatec's only U.S. distributor. The company has no plans to add more. "We've been working together and as they grow, we'll grow with them," Hinojosa said. The Temecula facility will warehouse products and handle warranty issues for the company. The move to Temecula in Southern California also puts it closer to South American markets, he said.

The 49-year-old Hinojosa has worked in the industry for more than 20 years, starting in retail as a mechanic. He worked at Santana Cycles learning how to build tandems for Bill McCready and later opened a paint shop specializing in high-end painting for U.S. brands. He's also worked at RST on the Mozo brand.

Establishing a U.S. presence will help the company redefine its product line with an eye toward trends in the U.S. market. Tubeless rims for road and mountain bikes, for example, will be a company focus, he said. "Right now we're a little bit ahead of schedule [with the new office] and there's a lot of exciting stuff we're working on. I just can't talk about yet," Hinojosa said. —Marc Sani

BAR NONE

A tragedy in a Taichung nightclub this year led to a crackdown on most of the city's bars. And that's been a hardship for industry folks who want to have an after-hours drink.

Due to what some call an overzealous reaction by city authorities, several bars and nightclubs that were favorite haunts of industry visitors have been shut down.

Gone are such places as Fubar and Frog. The Londoner, a popular sports pub, moved a few miles away so that it's a taxi ride from Taichung Bike Week instead of a walk. Orgasmo has gasped its last.

"We can't serve wine by the glass, cocktails—anything by the glass. But you can buy a bottle of whiskey and pour yourself a drink," said Ramin Fouladpour, an American expat who owns Uzo, a bar and grill that is popular with industry members.

Fouladpour said the pouring restrictions on his restaurant go into effect Thursday. Earlier this year, authorities instructed him to cut back Uzo's hours. Instead of 2 a.m., Uzo is closing at midnight.

He said authorities have been inconsistent, targeting establishments that have received complaints and leaving others alone.

"Laws are tenuous in Taiwan," Fouladpour said. "There are laws; how they are enforced is a matter of discretion."

Hotels aren't affected, so Taichung Bike Week organizers encouraged the Evergreen and Splendor Hotels, two of the host locations for this week's event, to put up temporary bars for the thirsty industry.

The Evergreen opened a large room, with lots of couches and chairs, for what it called the "2011 Bike Week Drinking Party." But last night it was almost empty. The true drinking party instead was in full swing at the Evergreen's regular hotel bar, overwhelming the small space.

Taichung's crackdown stemmed from a March fire that killed nine. A dancer set fire to the ceiling of the ALA club with a torch during a performance.

—Doug McClellan



Clément back in North America

In the early '70s Donn Kellogg was a New York bike messenger making regular trips to Conrad's Bike Shop to press his nose against the window to get as close as he could to the Clément Criterium Setas on display.

After a 50-year wait, Kellogg owns the worldwide license to Clément from tire giant Pirelli. And he is showing the first of the revived tire line in the upper room above Uzo.

"The brand has such heritage. I hope to infuse that heritage with new technology and energy," Kellogg said. Clément has been off the North American market for about six years.

"I don't want to hear someone say, 'That's a tire my dad would ride' because of its traditional look and feel. We are launching tires full of new technology," he added. Clément tubulars are sourced in the Czech Republic and the clinchers are from Taiwan.

While there are styling cues that play on Clément's heritage, Kellogg is making a clear break with Clément's naming tradition, using unique model names based on airport abbreviations.

Some of Clément's first tires, the X-Plora line, target the emerging category of adventure cycling or dirt Fondos. The fat road clinchers take to dirt paths



Clément's Donn Kellogg

and gravel roads with aplomb.

From the 700c-by-35 X-Plora USH—the airport code for Ushuaia, Argentina, the town at the bottom of the Pan-American highway—to the 700c-by-50 X-Plora MSO—the airport code for Missoula, Montana, the tires have a similar raised center open knobby tread design.

Each tire is available in 60-tpi or 120-tpi casing versions that sell for \$50 to \$80, respectively.

The first two cyclocross tires, PDX and LAS, are available in \$50 clincher or \$129 tubular versions. PDX, named for Portland, is the mud tire, and the Las Vegas-named LAS is the dry conditions tire.

The tubeless-design cyclocross tubulars come with an ex-

tra layer of sidewall protection rubber to save racers the laborious and toxic task of Aqua Sealing sidewalls.

"Sidewalls look new even after weeks of racing. Plus the polyester casing doesn't soak up water like cotton does," Kellogg said.

Kellogg's tire sponsorship of Ryan Trebon and Belgian racer Ben Berden, started when he headed up Challenge Tires USA, will continue with both racers now on Clément tires.

The Strada LGG road line comes in 23-, 25- and 28-millimeter widths, with a Criterium-inspired tread pattern. Available in clincher and tubular models, the tires go into production in February. —Matt Wiebe

Praxis Works hopes to 'ring up suppliers

A few years back many suppliers offered proprietary cranks on their high-end models, but backtracked as chainring performance was far from Campagnolo, Shimano and SRAM standards.

Praxis is hoping to give suppliers confidence to get back into the crankset market. The brand is showing at Splendor 1622.

"Besides Shimano, we are the only other chainring supplier offering forged chainrings," said David Earle, Praxis Works' director of operations. "But suppliers cannot get just Shimano's rings," he added.

"Our forging technologies allow us to offer highly profiled rings without the high cost of

lots of CNC time. We don't claim to shift better than Shimano, but I think we offer comparable performance," he added.

Look is spec'ing Praxis Works rings on its ZED crank and the company is in conversation with other suppliers.

Earle said that with orders as low as 1,000 rings, Praxis Works can offer custom forging tools. And on smaller orders, creative post-forging CNC work can give the rings a distinctive look.

The company also is working on a variety of 2-by-10 chainring sets to give 29ers the low gears they need. But Earle notes timing issues, as tooth count drops into the low 20s, mean not every combination is possible. —Matt Wiebe



Adam Haverstock, director of sales and marketing for Praxis Works

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three-day Ride On event at Hotel One starting Thursday. Although the BB discussion will be in Chinese, the 2013 range presentation will be done in English.

Design firm Jonny Mole opens Taichung office

Jonny Mole, the Italian sport design company that also manages Ride On Taiwan, is expanding into Asia with a new Taichung office. The company is celebrating with an opening ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Friday at its office in Shih-Hwa International Tower, 19Fl.-7, No. 530, Yingcai Road, Taichung (the same building as Hotel One).

The company's founder and namesake, Jonny Mole, will be present along with Showin Chiu, the company's Asia manager.

Jonny Mole's core business is the bicycle industry, but the company has been involved in several other sporting goods segments including motorbike, winter sports, trekking, sailing and home fitness.

One of the company's long-term partners is the classic Italian bike brand Wilier. Jonny Mole recently designed Wilier's flagship Zero.7 road bike.

ITM's new owners take manufacturing to Taiwan

Three years ago, the venerable Italian components manufacturer ITM slumped into bankruptcy.

Today, its new owner is slowly nursing the brand back to prominence.

"We started from totally zero," said Luigi Seghezzi, general manager of ITM. Seghezzi and his partner, a Taiwan company called Bike Machinery Trading Co., purchased the ITM brand and some of the manufacturing equipment.

But the new ITM started with totally new products and staff and manufacturing, Seghezzi said.

Several companies were interested in buying ITM, but Bike Machinery had a particular interest: ITM owed it money when it went bankrupt. Given a choice between losing completely and gambling that it could rebuild the brand, Bike Machinery chose the latter.

"The beginning was quite difficult, but now I say it was the



ITM's Luigi Seghezzi

perfect choice," Seghezzi said.

Best known for handlebars and seatposts, the "old" ITM, which has been in business for half a century, had moved much of its production from Italy to Romania, where labor is more affordable.

Under its new owners, all manufacturing is done in Taiwan, Seghezzi said, with de-

sign and engineering handled by a small office in Grumello del Monte, Italy. He calls ITM a Taiwan-Italian company, which blends Italian style and design with Taiwan manufacturing quality and precision.

ITM last year began distributing its products in the United States exclusively through Cycles Brixton. —Doug McClellan

Ergon aims for firmer grip on OE market

Ergon is introducing a new grip intended for flat-bar bikes.

"We see ourselves as an aftermarket brand. We always will be an aftermarket brand. However, OEM is fairly critical in our strategy to expand the brand beyond where it is at the moment," said Richard Todd, Ergon's international sales manager.

"We know the majority of mountain bikers can benefit from our grips. The idea with the OEM is to expose more people to our brand," Todd added.

As a percentage of production, OE represents 15 to 20 percent of Ergon's business.

By 2013, "I'm expecting growth of 50 percent to 100 percent" in Ergon's OE business, thanks to aggressive pricing on the new OE grip.

Ergon is known for its grips, saddles, packs and pedals.

Ergon redesigned its popular GA1 Evo grip to be less expensive and more attractive to



Richard Todd

OEMs, Todd said. "It's Ergon technology at a cheaper price point." The grip will be sold under the Phorm name, he said. —Doug McClellan

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Opening day

allotted space for 80 companies filled within 48 hours, noted Steve Fenton, an organizer for the annual gathering designed to pair product managers with sales folks in an informal, inexpensive venue as they finalize spec for next year's lines.

After the Splendor disappointed many vendors last year with its lack of support, it's back on the map this year with a small group of new exhibitors and room for 60 to 80 additional companies as Bike Week continues to gain prominence in the industry, Fenton said. It's also hosting tonight's industry dinner.

With spec deadlines varying across the industry, the timing of Bike Week is always fodder for discussion, but organizers' decision to congregate a week earlier this year appeared to be well received.

"This is where we need to be. Actually, there appears to be no good time to do OEM. Whoever you speak to, it's always too late or too early. At some point you have to have an OEM show somewhere. Timing's always going to be a compromise," said Richard Todd, international sales manager for Ergon International.

Product managers from most of the large North American brands have already wrapped up spec decisions, but this week is still timely for Europeans and some Americans. And many product managers make the trip anyhow, using

the time to peruse Bike Week as well as meet with Taiwan factories and vendors.

This year, Ride On moves downtown after years of being at the remote Freshfields Resort, about 45 minutes outside Taichung. Starting today, Crankbrothers, Fox Racing Shox, FSA, Magura, Mavic, Vittoria, Selle Royal and Hayes Bicycle Group present their new lines to OEs at nearby Hotel One. Linking the proximity of the coinciding events is a win for everyone, said René Wiertz, president and CEO of 3T.

"Now with Ride On being next door and the people that are here growing in importance, it's more equally spread out. It's all in walking distance now. That's fair competition, I think," he said.

Sprinkled in with conversations about product trends, lead times and pricing were comments about the overall state of the industry. While optimism abounds, there is some concern, particularly among Taiwan manufacturers, about how the struggling European economy will affect next year's orders. Europe represents more than 70 percent of Taiwan's exports.

Inventory levels are high and distributors are hoping to offload some of the excess product during the holiday season, said Jeff Chen from wheel and hub manufacturer Joy Industrial. Orders are down from Europe as consumers in the troubled euro zone keep a tight hold on their wallets.

"It will be a difficult year," Chen said.

American Classic opens rim skunkworks

Like a small-batch brewery, Bill Shook's 2-week-old rim factory will allow him to test new alloys, knock off small special runs and bring his high-end rim production in-house.

"My relationship with my current rim suppliers hasn't changed; they will still do my high-volume models," said Shook, American Classic founder. American Classic's line is on display at the Evergreen A32-A33.

"But there is a lot of rim development work I have in mind and it's just easier for me to try things out rather than convince a vendor to experiment," he added.

The thickness of many of American Classic's high-end rim extrusions are 0.5 millimeters, quite a bit thinner than the 0.8- to 1.0-millimeter extrusions commonly used.

"All I do is high-performance lightweight

rims. They are so thin and delicate that if anything in the process is not perfect—stray aluminum chips or slight misalignment—the rim can be damaged," Shook said.

The thin extrusions allow his 28-millimeter-wide Race rims to weigh in at 320 grams for 26-inch varieties and 400 grams for the 29er rim.

One of the first new things Shook is looking forward to trying is 30-millimeter and deeper road profiles in thin wall extrusions. The depth of the rim makes it very hard to hoop the extrusion without crinkling it, so Shook expects he will generate a fair amount of scrap as he experiments.

Shook is quick to point out that he is not looking for other rim business. The factory is not set up for volume production.

—Matt Wiebe

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