



# Retailers ride high on the Front Range

By Matt Wiebe

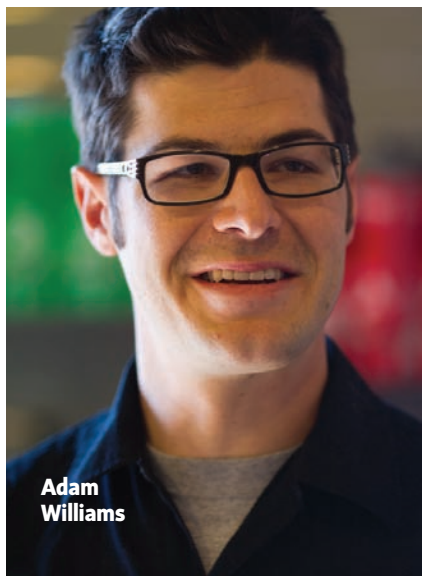
**W**ith shuttered storefronts filling strip malls around the Front Range, it's clear Colorado consumers have curtailed purchases. But, apparently, they've increased bike spending.

"Denver is a saturated bike market and I don't really know why sales have improved when the economy hasn't," said Gene Hodges, who owns three Denver-area Treads Bicycle Outfitters and expects his best year of business yet.

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## DEALER PROFILES

## Shop in Golden caters to Denver's fat-tire fans



Adam Williams

**G**olden Bike Shop knows how to lure in mountain bikers headed up to Golden from Denver for a little weekend fun. The shop places a 50-model fleet of Niner, Pivot, Rocky Mountain, Salsa and Scott bikes on the sidewalk to tempt them to try something new.

"Our demo program is core to the shop's success. Riders pay \$150 and can compare up to six bikes. The demo fee is deducted from a new bike purchase," said Adam Williams, manager of Golden Bike Shop.

The small 2,000-square-foot shop gets close to six turns a year. It staffs eight full-time employees; five of them are mechanics. Only about 10 percent of its sales are road bikes; the rest is fat-tire business.

The show floor was recently rede-

signed to better display its selection of bibs, shorts and jackets. And clothing sales are substantially above last year as a result, but still a small part of overall business.

During winter, staff focuses on custom mountain bike builds. Williams said he expects this business will grow now that Quality Bicycle Products' Utah warehouse can get them parts overnight.

"Our location at the trailhead means a lot of riders who left home and forgot to fix this or that visit us for service, or leave the bike to be ready next weekend," Williams said. "They know the mechanics here, so when they are building their dream bike, they want them to build it."

An avid Pugsley-riding employee began leading winter snow tours through the mountains behind town. The tours

have become very popular and, not surprisingly, propelled sales of fat-wheeled bikes by Salsa, Surly and Sun.

Siblings Greg Floyd and Kristi Floyd Henes started Golden Bike Shop. The business grew out of the bike department at their outdoor and climbing store, Bent Gate Mountaineering. They spun the bike business off into its own location, about half a block down the street, in 2005.

The Floyds close up shop on Saturdays for religious reasons, but open back up on Sunday. But being closed part of the weekend doesn't appear to have a major impact on sales.

"The shop may be closed, but we are present at trailheads supporting our teams and helping out on Saturday. And when we open on Sunday, most of the other shops are closed, which works to our advantage," Williams said.

—Matt Wiebe

## Service model is key to success at Vecchio's

**V**ecchio's Bicerletteria's name comes from an Italian theater form called commedia dell'arte—the comedy of artisan craft. That's an apt description for a shop that can chase the threads on a French bottom bracket or freewheel, service any Campy part back to Grand Sport, and actually enjoys repairing equipment rather than selling new components.

"Fixing the stuff other shops don't want to, or know how to, is a small niche. However, since we get all this work in Boulder, it's a good business for us," said owner Peter Chisholm.

Chisholm has a long history working in bike shops, beginning with moonlighting at Bike Lane and Mountain Bike Warehouse while still a Navy pilot based in San Diego, California.

Upon retiring after 20 years in the Navy, Chisholm and his wife moved to Boulder, where he became service manager at the iconic Morgul Bismark Bicycles. He later helped launch Pro Peloton before opening Vecchio's in 2000.

"Boulder has only a handful of new car dealers, but 60 or so mechanics. Most people wouldn't bring their car for service to a dealer, and I figured the same thinking would work for bicycles," he said.

And it has. Granted, Boulder is a very mature market where Nuovo Record-, Huret- and Simplex-equipped bikes are ridden regularly. But because those bikes are ridden regularly, maintenance and service are in high demand.

Depending on whether parts need to be ordered, the shop turns around ser-

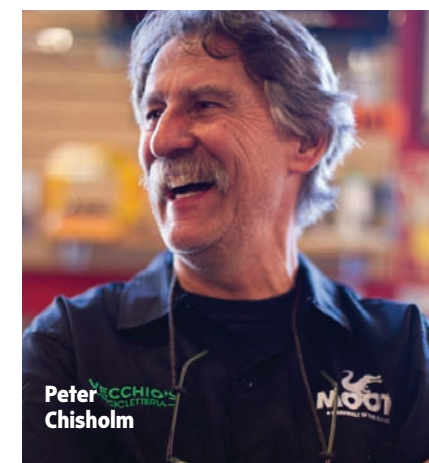
vice orders the same day or overnight. During the season, service appointments are three weeks out.

Entering Vecchio's, visitors walk straight into a mechanic's service area. Chisholm and fellow mechanic Jim Potter's work areas dominate the shop, and service and custom wheel building generate 60 percent of the shop's business. Parts and apparel account for 30 percent, and custom bike sales fill in the rest.

"I didn't really want to do new bike sales, but I have customers I've serviced for years wanting to buy a bike from me. So I only do custom frames from Moots, Waterford and Gunnar," he said.

Chisholm also places a few brightly colored Linus bikes on the sidewalk to lure in passersby.

That his Navy pension gives him



Peter Chisholm

the freedom to create the bike shop he wants is a huge bonus. Making quite a bit of money is just icing. He looks to pay a substantial dividend to a few investors in the store for 2011, as it is his best year ever. —Matt Wiebe

## Wheat Ridge steps up its game after remodel

**F**or most of its existence, Wheat Ridge Cyclery has been known for its friendly down-home feel of a neighborhood bike shop.

An extensive remodel finished in 2007 transformed the old shop's warren of wandering rooms into a stylish 30,000-square-foot retail space with 25 full-time staff and as many as 70 employees working the peak of the season.

"We don't really sell many more bikes now, but our average selling price is much higher than before," said Ron Kiefel, Wheat Ridge Cyclery's general manager. The shop sells about 3,800 bikes a year.

"Given how nice the store is, I think people are more comfortable buying higher-priced bikes from us," he added. Not only do people like buying bikes at

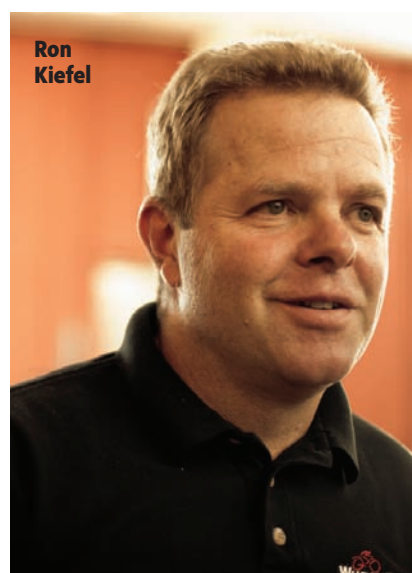
the store, but its 16 repair stands attest to its service business.

Kiefel, who along with his brother-in-law Gil McCormack oversaw the remodel, is particularly proud of their 50-kilowatt solar panels on the roof.

"They save us about \$1,000 a month on our utility bill and were completely subsidized. They don't provide all our energy needs all the time, but they contribute quite a bit," he said.

Despite Kiefel's professional racing heritage on teams 7-Eleven, Motorola, Coors Light and Saturn—he raced in seven Tours de France—high-end racing bikes have never been a focus of the shop. Wheat Ridge sells about equal numbers of mountain and road bikes.

"Plenty of my racing friends send their friends here for a bike, but this isn't



Ron Kiefel

where they shop. Even after the remodel, we are still a neighborhood shop with bikes for kids on up," he said.

But Kiefel notes that the growth of the shop, and its proximity to I-70, a major east-west interstate, attracts people from Denver, Colorado Springs and Fort Collins. He guesses 80 percent of his customers now drive across town to shop, while 20 percent of his business comes from the shop's neighbors.

Wheat Ridge recently added a triathlon department after pulling the plug on the category 10 years ago. Kiefel said what's different this time is he has customers asking for the bikes and he's running Pro Bike Express, which transports customers' bikes and gear by trailer to big events.

"Pro Bike Express really helped show how committed we were right from the start this time. It's really helped the category for us," he added. —Matt Wiebe

## DEALER PROFILES

## Boulder Cycle Sport builds up local 'cross fever

In the crowded Boulder market, Taro Smith and Brandon Dwight are known as the go-to source for cyclo-cross product and training.

"We're Ridley's No. 1 dealer in the nation in terms of 'cross bikes," said Smith, co-owner of Boulder Cycle Sport. "It definitely extends our sales season into December and January." Boulder Cycle Sport is generally known as the 'cross expert in town, he added.

The shop has fueled interest in the segment with a 'cross team open to all levels of riders, by sponsoring the Boulder Racing Cyclocross Series, hosting free 'cross clinics and leading group 'cross rides. Dwight said participation in group rides has ballooned from 10 to about 70 riders.

College buddies Smith and Dwight

hung up the shingle to their first store on Broadway in May 2005, a decade after they finished their studies at the University of Colorado and pursued other interests. Smith got a doctorate in integrative physiology and went on to open and manage physical therapy centers for a few years. Dwight pursued a degree in kinesiology and after graduating began racing mountain bikes professionally. Both raced during college but neither had retail experience.

There were challenges at first: making sure they had the right product and proper inventory control, and knew how to negotiate terms. Still, they learned quickly, and last year they opened a second store six miles away.

Their first, 2,600-square-foot North store leans more toward the high end.

It's within steps of some of the area's best road climbs, so it's often a meet-up point for rides. The newer 5,000-square-foot South store has a refined and clean look with wood floors, custom cabinets and an orange-and-gray color scheme throughout.

Dwight admits it was risky to open the South store last year given the economic climate. "But this side of town needed a bike shop and we were able to get a good lease rate and good terms—that helped," he said.

And despite dreary news reports

about the nation's slow recovery from the recession, Dwight and Smith said it has been a record year for sales.

Their two main bikes lines are Specialized and Scott, but they also carry bikes from Cervélo, Electra, Seven, Ridley, Redline and Turner. "We've created a destination shop for Turner, Seven and Ridley—there aren't many dealers of these brands in town," Dwight said.

—Lynette Carpiet



## Treads jumps at recession's opportunity

With two successful stores up and running in Aurora and Parker, Gene Hodges was looking to open his third Treads Bicycle Outfitters in the Denver area. In January 2008, one month after the official start of the recession, he opened a store in Lakewood and never looked back.

"The new store has a much higher average selling price than my other two stores. It is a bit surprising given all the retailers around here who have closed," Hodges said. And he is on the way to finishing his best year in business.

And though his Aurora store still leads on volume sales, Lakewood's up-market sales are really boosting his profit. And driving much of his high-end business is Cannondale.

Treads is one of the few Denver-

area bike shops selling the brand, picking it up in 1992 shortly after opening his first store in Aurora. As a result, many customers seek his shops out to have a look at what Cannondale is up to.

REI also sells Cannondale in Denver, something Hodges naturally dislikes, but at least the giant retailer doesn't carry many models.

"It's not as bad as dealing with Walmart, but it's not nice competing with someone like REI over sales," he noted.

In his more than 20 years in business, Hodges has tried a variety of business extensions, such as a 1995 venture into Internet sales.

"I don't think retailers realize how hard Internet sales are. I sure didn't. After a few successful years, competition grew and keeping the site competitive

took more work. I've kept the website but don't get too many sales anymore," he said.

He is also pushing his layaway program again, with good results—not only because area parents are buying kids' bikes at his shop, but people like paying cash a little at a time and storing the bike at the shop.

"I don't expect it will return to the old days where Christmas Eve was busy getting all the kids' bikes out of the shop and under the tree, but layaway still works for some people," he added.

A few years ago most of the suspension bikes sold at Treads' stores were for the local trails, so they were light for the steep climb out of the city.

Now with destination parks and more gravity riding options in the Front



Range, the shops move long-travel Diamondback, Intense, Pivot and Tomac bikes. —Matt Wiebe

## Velodrome is U-Bikes owner's latest pursuit

Doug Emerson is one of Boulder's most successful retailers. And University Bicycles, nestled in the heart of the city's historic downtown, enjoys near legendary status. But Emerson is pushing another project far more ambitious than day-to-day retailing—spearheading construction of a velodrome in nearby Erie, 14 miles east of Boulder.

While Emerson has yet to break ground, the property has been bought, zoning approved, architectural drawings done, and an excavation permit is in hand. Think of it as shovel-ready.

Emerson has been pushing this project forward since 2005, when he and Frank Banta, a construction company owner, formed Boneshaker LLC to build the Olympic-caliber velodrome. The



pair has lined up Peter Junek of Board Track Racing Inc. to build it.

Once built, the velodrome—10 miles north of Denver and 25 miles south of Ft. Collins—will attract Olympic hopefuls as well as beginners.

But it's unlikely that Emerson would be leading the charge for a regional velodrome if it weren't for University Bicycles, which he launched more than 25 years ago. "I borrowed \$10,000 from my dad—it was me, some used tools and 15 used bikes that started this business." Today, Emerson's store, near the University of Colorado campus, is an institution in this affluent, outdoor-oriented city.

Emerson opened his first outlet in March 1985 in a basement on Boulder's historic Pearl Street. He rented bikes. "I killed it," he said with a smile. Renting

bikes to foreign exchange students put enough money in his pockets to move a short distance up Pearl Street to open a full-service store.

Today U-Bikes, as most locals call it, and its staff sell upward of 3,800 units a year—mostly from Specialized—and his rental business is bigger than ever. This year Emerson said he would generate about \$150,000 in rental income; he then sells the used bikes.

But U-Bikes is more than a store. It is also a working museum where cycling memorabilia surrounds staff and customers. A 1910 trike sits upstairs in the warehouse, and the bike Andy Hampsten rode in 1988 to win the Giro d'Italia hangs in the store.

Dozens of other historic bikes, signed jerseys, posters, musette bags, saddles and more tell customers and staff that bikes have a place in history.

—Marc Sani

## DEALER PROFILES

## Campus Bicycles is a true neighborhood shop

Campus Bicycles' motto is simple: "Large enough to meet all your cycling needs; small enough to remember your name." Whether Mark Velat and Bobby Verenna, the store's owners, can remember every customer's name is debatable, but it's not for lack of trying.

As co-owners, the pair have continued the tradition and culture that Greg and Mary Seebart brought to Campus Bicycles more than 30 years ago. It's a sense of retail independence, community involvement and customer service reflecting the values of families living in this Denver neighborhood.

"We have a great reputation as a family shop," Verenna said. Campus Bicycles sits on the corner of a tree-lined residential street flanked by Evans Avenue, a larger thoroughfare. But with only four

city-authorized parking spaces, customer parking spills into the neighborhood.

The store is so tightly intertwined with its neighborhood that one wall of the 5,000-square-foot store is inches from the home next door. And as Verenna said as he took us on a tour: "We have no room to expand."

The store is so focused on neighborhood residents that the owners keep a stock of dog biscuits for a neighbor who walks her dog past the store every day. "He whines when he gets near," Verenna quipped.

Campus Bicycles draws its customers from an area defined by Washington Park, Platt Park and Denver University, but the campus, about two miles away, is small, with some 5,000 students. "We always joked that students there bought BMWs, not bikes," Verenna said. That's

changing as students park their Beemers to buy cruisers or commuter bikes.

Young professionals with families populate the surrounding neighborhoods, and they have sufficient disposable income to keep the cash registers ringing, he said. And the brands the owners carry reflect its customer base—Giant, Trek, Electra, Independent Fabrications and Bike Friday, the last of which sell surprisingly well, Verenna added.

As with most shops today, service is as important as the bikes Campus Bicycles stocks and sells. For customers, there are few surprises when it comes to repairs since the store's website includes a listing of service prices and packages. Even with six mechanic bays, the store can have repairs backed up for as long as seven days. —Marc Sani



**Bobby Verenna**



**Mark Velat**

## Family grows Full Cycle into multi-store entity

Kaj Gronholm got a taste for bike retail during his college years in Austin, Texas. But it wasn't a career choice back then. After getting a bachelor's in physics, he moved to Boul-



**Kaj Gronholm and shop dog Ronin**

der and worked at Full Cycle's original "Hill" district store in the late '90s, leaving it again to pursue a master's in business administration.

He started a computer software company, then sold it after realizing it wasn't what he wanted to do long term. The profits from that sale, however, allowed him and his wife, Karli, to buy Full Cycle in 2005 from its original owner, Tom Morris, who started it out of his garage in 1982.

"It was a mountain bike rider focused store, soulful, sold a lot of campus bikes," Gronholm said of the original "Hill" store, which to this day hasn't changed. "When I left in 1999, we were doing \$1 million in revenue. When I bought it in 2005, it was down to \$500,000 in revenue, so I knew there was potential for growth."

And as soon as he took over, Gronholm grew it—opening two more stores in 2006: a Fort Collins location and a second Boulder store. He also aligned his business more closely with Giant Bicycles, which pulled out of several other shops in the area.

Between all three stores, Full Cycle has about 20,000 square feet of retail space. Giant accounts for about 80 percent of his sales, Gronholm said, but the stores also stock bikes from Kona, Maverick, Felt, Surly, Ibis, Spot and Eddy Merckx. The family-owned and -run business—his sister- and brother-in-law and his parents also own a stake—sells some 3,000 bikes a year totaling more than \$4 million in revenue.

Its bread-and-butter customer is the non-racing enthusiast that spends

anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,500 on a bike. "People buy more bikes here than anywhere else," Gronholm said. "We joke that the Boulder starter package is three bikes. That's the running joke: How many bikes do you have in your garage?"

And while Gronholm admits Boulder has perhaps too many bike shops—his Pearl Street store is just steps away from Vecchio's—like the others, he benefits from the city's investment in cycling. The most recent example is the new 40-acre Valmont Bike Park.

Full Cycle is selling a few more dirt jump bikes and has seen a "big increase in pads" since the park's opening last summer, but Gronholm said its impact is far more widespread. "The park mainly helps the Boulder bike community thrive. The majority of people that ride there aren't doing dirt jumps. It's mostly families you see out there. It's got something for everyone." —Lynette Carpiet

## Giant Cycling World weathers first year amid tough economy

Upon walking into Giant Cycling World in Littleton, the first bike a customer sees is a Giant Ultegra Di2 spec'd model. The \$4,550 bike, featuring one of Giant's new wheelsets, is a rare find given Ultegra Di2's recent launch and tight supply. But having one in stock is one of the perks of being a brand concept store. Giant makes sure it gets first dibs on limited product.

The 3,300-square-foot store carries only Giant bikes and is a showcase of the brand's product depth, from \$300 kids' bikes to \$13,000 racing machines.

Owners Vint Schoenfeldt and Eric Krell partnered with Giant to open the shop, the brand's first concept store, just over a year ago. Schoenfeldt said that opening a store on their own would have been tough during a down economy and

with little retail experience. Both are physical therapists.

"It was always a dream to own a shop. But it's helpful to have a partner. Without their support, we would have struggled," Schoenfeldt said.

While Giant doesn't own the store, it picked up the cost of the build-out and helps monitor sales and inventory levels.

Giant director of sales and business development Gregg Frederick said the company prefers to sell through traditional IBDs and resorts to this model in markets where it's under-represented. Giant opened a second concept store that's company owned in Boston shortly after.

"We're learning a lot still," said Frederick, who called it an incubator store. "This is a way for us as a company to

learn about retail operations and help all retailers, not just our concept stores." The idea is to home in on inventory maintenance and stocking levels to make just-in-time ordering as seamless as possible.

Giant Cycling World's interior was designed and merchandised from the ground up and every detail carefully thought out—from well-defined women's and men's sections, to customized wall and island fixtures that can be mixed and matched, down to the one-of-a-kind wood flooring.

Its location in a newer upscale shopping center means it draws shoppers with higher retail expectations than those of bike enthusiasts. But only 200 yards away from the Platte River Trail, it's also frequented by cyclists.

Open for just a year and three

months as of late September, the store so far is meeting its sales goals, Schoenfeldt said. —Lynette Carpiet



**Vint Schoenfeldt**

## DEALER PROFILES

## Downtown Denver shop enjoys loyal following

Scott Taylor admits that how he came to own a bike shop was more by happenstance than by plan. “I didn’t plot this business out—all of a sudden I woke up and I had a bike shop,” said Taylor, 34, owner of Salvagetti.

Taylor, who had worked in a couple of bike shops, was laid off from a large bike chain, and with a small loan from his parents opened his first store in a 400-square-foot space across from his old employer. Seven years later he’s on his fourth location in downtown Denver (he has outgrown the previous three).

“We’re killing it,” he said. “Numbers wise, four out of the seven years we’ve been in business, we’ve doubled sales,” he said, adding that its urban location gets a lot of foot traffic.

His growth is even more impressive

given that three other bike shops are within 2.5 miles.

The two-story Salvagetti shop stocks perhaps the most eclectic mix of bikes and accessories in Denver, spanning from Surly commuter bikes to Kona dirt park and ‘cross bikes to custom Parlee and Mosaic steel and titanium bikes. Santa Cruz and Pivot round out its off-road product mix.

“We serve a wide customer in terms of wealth—from Surly to Parlee,” Taylor said. Offering a full size run of Parlee demo bikes isn’t cheap, but it makes his store a destination shop, he added.

Still, Salvagetti exudes an urban shop feel. Messenger bags from Chrome hang alongside touring bags from Arkel and packs from Osprey; and as far as apparel and shoes, it’s Louis Garneau and Giro.



Scott Taylor

The shop offers fittings on all the bikes that go out the door, he said.

A year ago, Taylor added a coffee bar

to the mix with the idea to sell freshly brewed java and a few parts for commuters on the go from a separate window early in the morning. But it hasn’t quite panned out.

“Denver doesn’t get it,” he said, adding that many people come by asking for service or repair and think the entire shop is open. Taylor is thinking of spinning the coffee shop into a separate location a few miles away since a steady, core group drops in on a regular basis for a cup of joe.

And although Salvagetti is steps away from a Denver B-Cycle station, Taylor said he couldn’t be happier about bike sharing in Denver. The program has been operating for over a year now, and he hasn’t seen it affect his sales. “I love it. It will have a positive impact, for sure, people seeing bikes out there,” he said. “It needs to become normal.”

—Lynette Carpiet

## Bicycle Village strong with 29ers, kid bikes

When Chris Arterburn opens up Bicycle Village for the day, he’s just one of more than 150 store managers making decisions for Specialty Sports Ventures (SSV), a five-state operation managing outlets in ski, golf, fly fishing and cycling.

Before joining Bicycle Village, Arterburn had managed a Top 100 store in Bozeman, Montana, and had worked at Danzeisen & Quigley in suburban Philadelphia. It’s been quite a ride for the economics major at Texas A&M who once raced for the university’s cycling team.

But Bicycle Village has a history in Colorado, and it’s a unique operation within the bicycle industry. Bicycle Village dates to 1974, when Milt Schuring founded the first store. It eventually be-

came part of Specialty Sports Venture, owned by the Gart family. The Garts sold their remaining shares in the company to Vail Resorts in April 2010 for \$31 million.

SSV is a wholly owned subsidiary of Vail Resorts, publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol MTN. Arterburn’s Boulder store is one of five, with additional storefronts in Aurora, its flagship location, Littleton, Westminster and Colorado Springs.

Bicycle Village, like its siblings, reflects the suburban area that surrounds it. There’s no corporate merchandising and the 11,000-square-foot store is located in a bustling shopping center not far from downtown. A large boulder sits out front with a Fuji chained on top. It makes a statement.

It’s been a strong season for sales, Arterburn said, despite selling out most of its 29ers in June. “29ers were hot,” he said, predicting the trend will continue next year. Among the five stores, his ranks second in sales despite facing competition from almost 20 other stores in the Boulder metropolitan area.

So what accounts for its success? “Most [customers] already have two or three bikes—road, mountain and some sort of commuter,” Arterburn said. It’s a statement that reflects the kind of community Boulder is—its citizens ride bikes. And kids ride too. “My kids business is through the roof,” he adds. —Marc Sani



Chris Arterburn

## At Bike Source, it’s the staff that matters most

Marc Eisenberg stands in the middle of 12,000 square feet of retail stocked with bikes, accessories and a broad array of apparel. “None of this really means anything,” he said looking around. “It’s the staff that really counts,” added Eisenberg, a lanky 55-year-old who started in the business at age 15 sweeping floors.

Today, Eisenberg oversees Bike Source, a nine-store, multi-state chain plus a seasonal operation at Winter Park Resort in the Colorado Rockies. The scope of Bike Source’s far-flung enterprises puts his retail philosophy in context—staff quality can make or break a business.

While the Denver area is home to three Bike Source locations, the company’s corporate offices and a seasonal



Marc Eisenberg

operation in Winter Park, now closed, there are three more stores in Columbus, Ohio, two in Kansas City, and one

in Charlotte, North Carolina.

As a group, Bike Source bleeds the “Red S” with Specialized as its main line at all locations. Still, Eisenberg said the stores aren’t quite concept stores. Customers can find Ridley’s and Electras in the lineup as well as Giants and Kuotas at its Charlotte operation. And the stores carry a variety of non-Specialized accessories.

Besides the 12,000 square feet of retail space at its Littleton operation, there’s an additional 8,000 square feet of storage space tucked behind a wall. The store once housed a Linens ‘n Things. It was one of 571 stores the chain shut down in 2008 as the recession took a toll on big-box retailers.

Eisenberg moved into The Promenade Shopping Center two years ago.

His next-door neighbor is Lowe’s, the home improvement chain. Despite a slow economy, Lowe’s and other stores in this sprawling mall still attract hundreds of shoppers every day. But are they shopping for bikes? he’s asked.

What’s important about this location, Eisenberg explains, is that it reminds shoppers that a bicycle store is also part of the mall. Still, Bike Source is up against some stiff competition for cycling customers—REI, a Bicycle Village, Big Kahuna and a Performance store are all nearby.

The sheer number of outdoor enthusiasts in the Boulder/Denver area supports dozens of bike stores. And the region’s demographics bode well for Eisenberg’s business. “Denver is serious about its sports. They use their equipment seriously, and they’re willing to pay for it,” he said. —Marc Sani

## GUEST EDITORIALS

## Valmont Bike Park offers model for cities across U.S.

A personal highlight of my Dealer Tour experience was an impromptu visit to the Valmont Bike Park in Boulder. For those of you not familiar with this project, it was championed by Boulder Parks and Recreation with a lot of help from association, city and state partners.

The park, which opened in June 2011, includes 40 acres of riding terrain with skill sections for all levels of riding ability. I was in awe as I saw a proud father spot his children learning to ride across a 30-foot log and immediately recognized these kids were developing fundamentals that will surely lead to lifelong enjoyment and consumption of bicycle products.

As we toured retail shops across the Boulder area I consistently asked, Is this park leading to more riding participation and sales? And the answer was invariably yes. Not that it has led to double-digit sales increases (yet), but retailers noted that they see more families in their stores, and more demand for various accessories such as tubes, tires and helmets.

And it got me thinking that as an industry, we should be pushing for a park like this in every town in America. It is a



lofty ambition. This park was 15 years in the making and Boulder is arguably one of the most bike-friendly cities in the country. But the blueprint is now there, and by pursuing a very specific goal, our industry can focus collective resources, track milestones, and positively influence sales along the way.

—Andy Tompkins, show director/vice president, Interbike

## Rider finds cycling nirvana on the Denver Dealer Tour

Bicycling and bicycle retail in the Denver region can be described in two words: passionate and diverse.

The passion I saw from the people I met during our rides through Boulder and Denver was energizing. The folks who work at IMBA, Bikes Belong and the city of Boulder are among the most passionate, and they just don't get enough appreciation for all they do. They work tirelessly to create riding opportunities that are sustainable for years to come. They're constantly working to improve an already outstanding bike-friendly infrastructure. They vigorously promote cycling as a healthy lifestyle and transportation alternative.

Bicycle retailers in the region, who thrive in such a supportive cycling culture, are diverse and passionate as well. From the large retail footprints of Bike Source and Bicycle Village, to the new retail models of Giant Cycling World-Denver and Boulder Cycle Sport, to the legendary shops of University Bicycles, Full Cycle, Campus Cycles and Wheat Ridge Cyclery—you can frequent just about any type of retailer and suit your cycling lifestyle. The passion that was expressed by the storeowners and staff made each visit fascinating, and there



were great stories shared.

As someone who rides BMX, road, MTB, as well as with my kids to school, I was in cycling nirvana. A ride over to the Valmont Bike Park via the bike paths that wind through Boulder was amazing. When I got there I felt like I was at the Disney World for cycling. The place is incredible. Kudos to the city of Boulder, IMBA, Bikes Belong, all the retailers and all the volunteers who made it happen. Their passion and diversity has me wanting to come back again and again.

Let's replicate this everywhere.

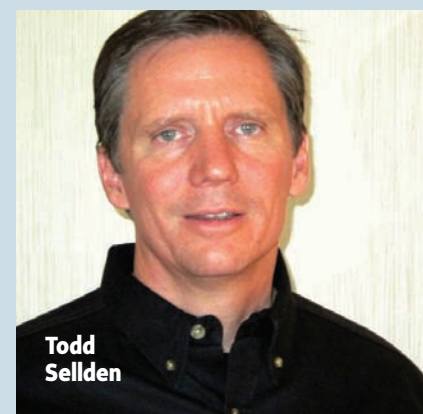
—Gregg Frederick, director of sales and business development, Giant USA

## Gates gets Denver retailers to try Carbon Drive technology

The most exciting aspect of the Dealer Tour for Gates Carbon Drive was getting bike shop employees to ride and experience a wide array of belt-drive bikes: commuter and pavement bikes, mountain bikes, single-speeds, internally geared hub bikes and even a track bike. As we say at Gates, you need to “get on it” and ride a bike with Carbon Drive to understand its smooth, clean, quiet and strong attributes. The dealers were surprised at all the bike options for model year 2012 (150 belt-drive models worldwide).

We are a new player in the bike industry and we sometimes get skeptical questions from dealers and consumers like “Why pay more for a belt-drive bike when chains are a proven technology?” It's a valid question. Our answer is that all consumers, when buying bicycles or cars or computers, often pay more for premium performance. Otherwise, there would be no such thing as carbon fiber bikes, hydraulic disc brakes and suspension systems. All of these advances faced initial skepticism but have become commonplace because they improve ride quality.

During our visit to Full Cycle in Boulder, the owner told us that he has



sold multiple belted commuter bikes to customers who initially were only concerned about price. The customers decided to spend more for belt-drive bikes with internally geared hubs after being convinced of the simplicity and low maintenance of Gates Carbon Drive for all-weather commuting. Carbon Drive is popular with single-speed racers due to its lighter weight, but its highest attribute is its ability to get more non-enthusiasts on bikes. Paired with an internally geared hub, Carbon Drive is the future of low-maintenance commuter bikes.

—Todd Sellden, director of Gates Carbon Drive Systems

## Visiting shops on two wheels renews passion for industry

It was wonderful timing to have the BRAIN Dealer Tour come to Boulder/Denver just as CatEye went direct to retailers. Visiting the different shops gave me a renewed enthusiasm for why we are loyal to specialty retailers. Their diversity and numbers are our industry's strength. Their passion and dedication are what make this industry so enjoyable to be a part of.

I especially appreciated that we rode bikes from shop to shop on the same roads and paths our customers ride every day. In Boulder, we rode bike paths that have their own morning rush hour, and at around 10 a.m., about 100 cyclocross riders rolled up to Boulder Cycle Sport, making a strong statement about community participation. While the Denver shops were spread out, it was great to see retailers make a personal connection with their customers with services such as layaway or a much-needed espresso.

We are reminded that every day



across this country, specialty retailers open their doors and offer a product we can all be happy about. Our retailers are providing a service to their communities. Everyone on the tour had a passion for cycling they wanted to share. Retailers sell bikes, parts and accessories, and those products ultimately change our lives and help our communities. They provide us transportation, a method of exercise and a healthy way to socialize. I'd like to thank BRAIN for the opportunity to participate.

—Thomas Prehn, president, CatEye America

Continued from DT1

# Front Range

Hodges opened his third store in Lakewood in January 2008, one month after the official start of the recession, choosing the location in part because his landlord had so many vacant properties that he cut Hodges a deal.

As Linens 'n Things shut 500 stores around the country, including one Littleton storefront, Marc Eisenberg jumped into part of the space two years ago to open a 20,000-square-foot Bike Source, with an additional 8,000 square feet of storage.

Scott Taylor is on his fourth Denver-area location for his shop Salvagetti, scaling up store size with each move.

And anxiety hardly describes how Ron Kiefel and his brother-in-law, Gil McCormack, felt as they finished an extensive up-market remodel of Wheat Ridge Cyclery in 2007, just in time for the economy to crash.

"Yes, we wondered what was going to happen, but I'm happy to say the renovation was good for our business and we are on our way to a very good year," said Kiefel, Wheat Ridge Cyclery's general manager.

And in Kiefel's experience, his customers are actually spending substantially more for their bike purchases now than before the recession or his remodel.

Kiefel does note that a few good shops



in the area have closed, such as Denver Spoke and Bike Station, but he does not think that suggests any cooling of consumer interest.

"The Front Range is all about having fun, and bike retailers sell fun. I don't think the economy has had an impact on the business," he said.

So it's clear the area's bike retailers are vastly more successful than retailers of other goods, and they know it. They attribute their success to a deep and mature market that fuels their continued growth.

Area shops say their typical customer owns three bikes but is always looking to upgrade. And they buy quality not just for themselves, but for their kids as well.

Most shops have sizable kids' sections—bikes and clothes—and kids' sales



U-Bikes' Doug Emerson touts his bicycle museum.

keep growing. And area retailers are quick to note that Wal-Marts are everywhere.

"We get six turns on our kids' bikes. It's hard to keep up with sales sometimes," said Bobby Verenna, co-owner of Campus Cycles in Denver. And while Verenna says there are no Wal-Marts or Targets close to Campus Cycles, he does not think that is a factor for his customers.

"In this market people want quality bikes, and that includes bikes for their children," Verenna added.

Sales of Striders, the little crankless push bikes, were so hot this season many of the shops visited reported they sold out at times during summer.

One look at the floor space devoted to service at area shops is another indication of how active the market is. Boulder's

University Bikes dedicates about a third of its valuable street-level floor space to service. Coming through the front door, you'll see more mechanics at stands than inside a Park Tool seminar.

Vecchio's Biciletteria has carved out a successful business servicing the Alfa Romeos, Lancias and Ferraris of the bike world. Classic bikes may be hanging from the rafters at many area stores—the collection at University Bikes is not to be missed—but they are also ridden as hard as they ever were.

Vecchio's owner Peter Chisholm notes that not only does he know how to work on the various Huret and Simplex derailleurs and has the service parts to do so, but customers bring in French bikes for serving. **BRAIN**

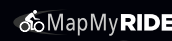
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# BRAIN DEALER TOUR DENVER

The *BRAIN* Dealer Tour of retailers in the mile-high Denver market kicked off in the platinum-level bike-friendly community of Boulder, some 25 miles northwest of Denver proper. Participants visited five shops and

tallied only 13 miles between them, breaking for lunch at Bikes Belong and IMBA headquarters. The day included rides along scenic bike paths like the Bear Creek path, Broadway bike path and the Boulder Creek path. On the second day, the group hit Denver and the suburbs of Littleton and Lakewood. The final day started in downtown Denver. The crew rode past the Coors brewing facility on the way to Golden, stopping in Wheat Ridge on the loop back to Denver.

Photos by **Jake Orness**

Check out the Dealer Tour video at: [bicycleretailer.com/videos.html](http://bicycleretailer.com/videos.html)



With an early start each day, caffeine was a must for most of the Dealer Tour riders.



Local industry veteran Ray Keener hosted the group at his house for an early gourmet breakfast to kick off visits to Boulder shops on the first day.



The crew stopped in to see the Bikes Belong and IMBA headquarters in Boulder, where they laid out a generous taco bar. Bikes Belong recently moved next door to IMBA, something that has enabled them to work more closely together.



University Bicycles owner Doug Emerson helps riders onto the roof of his Pearl Street shop for an amazing view of Boulder, including the Flatirons.



A creative, Phil Liggett-inspired display at Full Cycle



Wheat Ridge Cyclery marketing manager Evan Lee shows off the bowling trophy that is kept in the shop's offices by the winning team of the companywide tourney held in 2008.





**BRAIN's Matt Wiebe checks out the Denver B-Cycle bikes in a station next to the U.S. headquarters of Gates Carbon Drive Systems in downtown Denver.**



**Golden Bike Shop's furry friends Bob Ross (left) and Kettle greet customers as they walk into the fat-tire-focused shop.**



**Wheat Ridge's Ron (left) and Eugene Kiefel gave a tour of their store and its storied history in retail as well as Ron's pro racing career.**



**Full Cycle hosted an end-of-day party attended by more than 100 industry members in the Denver/Boulder area. Thanks to the store owners, the Gronholms, and other sponsors and organizers for putting it together.**



**Campus Cycles, the last stop on the second day, welcomed the Dealer Tour group with open arms.**



**Interbike's Andy Tompkins and BRAIN's Lynette Carpiet and Matt Wiebe catch up on news during the drive out to Giant Cycling World, the starting and ending point for visits by bike on the second day.**