

# Bicycle Retailer

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## GOING OLD SCHOOL

Vintage mountain bike scene still waiting for its event.

Photo by Steve Walcott

### NBDA study: Drop in ridership, middle-class squeeze hinder growth

By Matt Wiebe

COSTA MESA, Calif. — Bike sales are not growing, fewer people are riding and the number of U.S. specialty bicycle storefronts has dropped to 3,790, according to a report compiled for the National Bicycle Dealers Association. If growth is your mandate, things are

not looking good.

The NBDA commissions the Gluskin Townley Group for a bicycle market overview written by Jay Townley. The report takes a 30,000-foot view of national supplier, retail and consumer trends, but does not examine any geographical regions or provide any rural versus urban market analysis.

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By Matt Wiebe

KEYESVILLE, Calif. — Brand-centric vintage festivals and vintage race categories come and go at popular races, but collectors and riders of vintage mountain bikes are still waiting for events comparable to the vintage roadie celebration of L'Eroica.

The Keyesville Classic is one of the oldest mountain bike races in the country, celebrating its 27th consecutive race this year. The race has two long-running vintage classes — '86 and earlier, and '87 to '96 — and current race promoters Sam Ames and Keith Barnden are stepping up promotion of the classes.

"When the race started in the late 1980s, it was probably just a couple of like-minded riders chasing each other around and drinking beer afterward. But what those riders started has continued

all these years and we want to promote that heritage," Ames said.

Ames and Barnden took over as race promoters four years ago.

"We get about 30 riders participating in the vintage classes, but each year we hear from riders wanting to know more about the class. So the interest is there. We just have to promote it better," Ames added.

Barnden is active in vintage motocross racing, and the pair think mountain biking has enough history now to take vintage racing to another level. They will host an expo tent at next year's March event celebrating Keyesville Classic history. The historical exhibit will showcase old race jerseys, swag and photos of old events.

They hope to have a display of vintage bikes that may have been raced there in the early days, and plan to give out awards such as best vintage riding kit

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# Juiced Riders happy to sell in 'unsexy' part of e-bike market

By Doug McClellan

CHULA VISTA, Calif. — When Tora Harris, a former Olympian and U.S. champion high jumper, would compete in China, he'd head off after the track meet on an unlikely quest to check out e-bike manufacturers.

"I never really talked about it. I just did it on my own," Harris said.

Harris was preparing for a career after track and field by laying the groundwork for what became Juiced Riders Electric Bikes.

Based just south of San Diego, Juiced sells one style of e-bike that, Harris says, is unlikely to get shout-outs from passers-by. The Juiced ODX is a small-wheeled e-bike with a 500-watt front hub motor, a step-through frame, a sturdy rack on the back that can carry a kid in a child seat, and a basket in front for cargo.

"We're very, very focused on one type of product. This is an unsexy part of the market," Harris said. "It's not a very flashy part of the market. It's an electric bike. It does what it does. That's kind of it. It's very inexpensive. It's very reliable."

The low price is key in a market where e-bikes routinely start at \$4,000 and can climb much higher. A Juiced ODX begins at \$2,199 and tops out at \$3,199 for a model with its biggest battery and a range of some 100 miles. Harris said customers are typically commuters, families with children, and industrial firms such as delivery companies.

"We're not saying this is the end-all for electric bikes. We really know what we are trying to accom-

plish," Harris said. "We're not going against a very nice road bike or a nice 29er. We don't have to worry about competing against that market."

Harris traces his interest to e-bikes to the three years he spent training in the Netherlands and Germany.

"When I was there training, I just had my bicycle: a folding bicycle with 20-inch wheels, very compact. That was all I needed," Harris said. "For months at a time I didn't even get in a car."

When he returned to the States, he mounted an e-bike kit on his folding bike but realized it wasn't a good marriage. The bike was heavy, its range was limited, and it couldn't carry heavy loads.

Harris started Juiced in 2009 to import large-capacity lithium-ion batteries, which were much lighter than the lead acid batteries common at the time. He soon began importing complete bikes.

Juiced went through two generations of its e-bikes, but in 2013 Harris was introduced to Jie Ni, the founder of Luyuan Electric Vehicles, one of the biggest e-bike manufacturers in China.

With Luyuan, Harris developed his third version, which went on the market this year. He credits Luyuan for improving the quality while keeping prices low.

Harris has one big advantage when he visits Chinese suppliers: He speaks fluent Mandarin, something his Taiwanese mother insisted on when he was growing up.

"Being able to speak Mandarin is, I think, extremely important," Harris said. "You need to be able to talk to the engineer, tell him what exactly



Juiced ODK U500 e-bike



A former Olympic track athlete, Tora Harris founded Juiced Riders in 2009. Here, he competes in the 2010 USA Outdoor Track and Field Championships.



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needs to be done. When you talk through an interpreter, he or she may not understand exactly how to translate it. It's literally just lost in the translation and you can get something that you didn't necessarily want."

Harris said his training as a world-class athlete has been a big help as the founder of a small business.

He's a four-time national high jump champion and was a member of the 2004 U.S. Olympic team. A graduate of Princeton University, where he majored in mechanical and aerospace engineering, Harris set several Ivy League records.

Athletics taught him discipline and focus, which is why he has hired other former athletes at Juiced.

"Starting a business is very challenging. It's not like a typical job," Harris said. "You need to be able to handle a lot of stress, and sometimes you have to finish stuff that's hard to finish."

"For us, if we need to work at a normal rate, we work at a normal rate," he added. "If we need to work at 4X, then we can just hit the button and work at 4X."

Excelling in high jump was far from effortless, just like starting a company.

"Pretty much everything I've done, I've never just hit it out of the park right away," Harris explained. "You say, 'OK, I messed up there, let me figure it out and try it again.'" **BRAIN**