

Bicycle Retailer

AND INDUSTRY NEWS

Pacific Adopts New Quick-Release Design, Others Could Follow

BY MATT WIEBE

MADISON, WI – Wal-Mart and Dynacraft recently won a lawsuit, dismissing allegations that the companies covered up dangerous and defective quick-releases. Despite the victory, which confirmed the safety of a correctly installed and adjusted quick-release, the trial brought the issue of quick-release safety to the fore.

The national media picked up on the story and a parents group launched a web site, www.shokkbikes.org, to warn other families about the dangers of quick-releases on Wal-Mart bikes.

In the midst of swirling debate, Pacific Cycle announced plans to abandon traditional quick-releases in favor of a new design developed by Montague Inventive Technologies.

Pacific, the largest supplier of bikes to the U.S. market, intends to utilize the new quick-release design on most Schwinn, GT and Mongoose bikes slated for distribution in the specialty, sporting goods and mass market channels next year. According to Montague, other bike suppliers may follow suit.

"I think the Montague System is the greatest advance in wheel removal and retention that the bicycle industry has seen since the invention of the traditional quick-release system," said Chris Hornung, Pacific Cycle's founder and Chief Operating Officer.

Current quick-releases have changed little since Tullio Campagnolo invented them in 1927, despite the fact that dropout-retaining tabs and lips that came into vogue years later basically defeated his design.

David Montague, Montague Inventive Technologies' president and inventor of the Montague Wheel Fastening System, said his design promises greater ease of use, increased rider safety and limited liability for the manufacturer.

"We have substantially reduced rider error in the operation of our quick-release," Montague said.

Unlike a current two-sided quick-release that requires adjustment on both sides, the Montague System disengages with a strong manual push on just one side of the hub. The system reengages with an audible sound, letting the user know that the wheel is locked. Once the wheel is locked, it will not disengage even if the release is left open.

The Consumer Protection Safety Commission (CPSC) is currently reviewing the quick-release as are Asian manufacturers interested in licensing the design for production. Montague is licensing the patented design and has no plans to manufacture the system.

The Montague system is designed to work ideally with a ramped fork end, but also is backward compatible with a fork with tabs.

"When 10-speed bikes went down market in the 1970s, we were no longer selling bikes to hardcore enthusiasts but to novices. And these customers did not fully understand how a quick-release worked. So bike companies like Schwinn and Suntour developed ways to retain the wheel even with the quick-release open," said Tom Franges, Interskill's president.

Franges writes the Bicycle Product Suppliers Association Generic Owner's Manual. He also was vice president of Suntour in the '80s when they developed dropout-retaining lips.

"In my opinion these retaining lips make a quick-release no longer quick and difficult to get working correctly. Instead of a bike shop being able to set retention pressure, customers need to rest quick-release tension every time they remove a wheel and this is where problems develop," Franges said.

With Pacific throwing its weight behind Montague's design and other suppliers interested in spec'ing it, the almost 80-year run of Campagnolo's original quick-release could be coming to a close. **BRAIN**