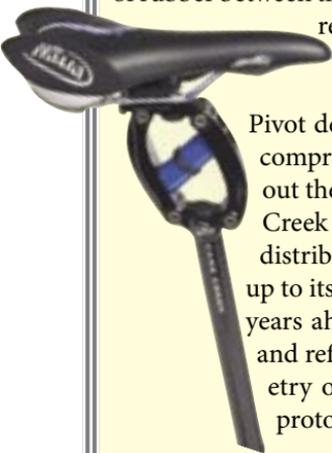


Tech Briefs

Thudbuster Revamped, but Keeps Geometry

FLETCHER, NC—The original Thudbuster suspension seatpost was first sketched by Ryan McFarland on a Pizza Hut napkin after a mountain bike ride more than 10 years ago. “This was the original single-pivot design,” McFarland said. “It was born from thinking about the movement of the bike relative to the terrain. How the rear tire rotates around the front tire and the front tire rotates around the rear tire as variations in the terrain are encountered.” This was back in 1993, when bike suspension was still new. The first suspension seatpost McFarland built was simple. “I cut an existing seatpost about three inches down from the clamp, welded in two aluminum blocks with a leading pivot and threw a hunk of rubber between the blocks for cushioning,” McFarland said. “It actually worked



really well even in this very crude initial form.” This initial Uni-Pivot design still had its limitations, so McFarland began working on a parallel-link system. The new Quadra-Pivot design would still move the saddle down and rearward upon compression, but would keep the saddle at the same angle throughout the entire travel range. McFarland sold the Thudbuster to Cane Creek in 1999. “They had the engineering staff, the marketing and distribution means, and the money to really bring the Thudbuster up to its potential,” McFarland said. “The new Thudbuster LT is light years ahead of the original Quadra-Pivot in its strength, durability and refinement. It’s fun to note, though, that the mechanical geometry of the suspension linkage is almost identical to the original prototype built back in 1995.” The Thudbuster LT retails for \$149.

Spyder Armor Stiffens to Protect its Wearers

BOULDER, CO—The hardcore downhill crowd should be impressed with Spyder’s new Freeryde line, including its d3o Armored Top and d3o Ultimate Chamois Short. The line will hit stores next spring. Spyder’s marketing guru Jeizel Pickett calls this new gear an industry first. “It’s the first time



that downhill mountain bike protective gear is actually pliable thanks to the d3o technology,” Pickett said. Instead of wearing hard armor like traditional downhill gear, the d3o top and short protects the wearer equally as well, yet remains flexible and comfortable for range of motion. The d3o panels are on the points of most probable impact like the elbows, chest and knees, stiffening on contact within a millisecond (almost like an airbag). Pickett said Spyder first began using this technology with its pro ski racers, helping them feel less impact when they hit the gates. The Armored Top’s super-stretch fabric is so accommodating that it’s gender neutral. It will retail for \$350. The Short will be available in a men’s and women’s version.

All-Mountain Stout Suited for Varied Terrain

MILL VALLEY, CA—WTB introduced the all-mountain Stout tire with a flurry of other tires in fall 2007, yet it was sort of overlooked. But now WTB is getting more great feedback on this tire than the others. “It’s not going to be the best tire for SoCal conditions, but it has become very popular on the East Coast and in the Sierras,” said Dain Zaffke, marketing coordinator for WTB. Square blocks of tread are widely spaced, allowing the Stout to bite into the ground in corners for maximum traction. The open spaces of the knobs really dig into muddy, rocky and rooted terrain found in places like West Virginia. “We’re finding the same thing in Downieville, where the soil is so damn powdery in places,” Zaffke said. “Tires are always a question of compromise. You’re probably thinking, ‘What’s the catch?’ Well, normally, this style of tire rolls incredibly slow and the knobs squirm and flex on asphalt and hardpack.” The Stout combats these pitfalls, he said, by heavily supporting the large knobs so they don’t squirm. The tire also has staggered tread, which creates an efficient centerline for little rolling resistance. One compromise could be weight. At 820 grams (29 ounces), the Stout is a meaty tire.

