

New bike design may be riders' revolution

Windsor entrepreneur's 'roundtail' eases back strain

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Lou Tortola knew he couldn't reinvent the wheel, so he turned his focus to a design that hasn't undergone much change since its inception.

"It has always really bothered me that the bike has been simplistic and the biggest problem with cyclists is when we ride 100 to 200 kilometres there's a lot of stress on the back," said the Windsor entrepreneur, who's come up with a brand-new take on the bicycle.

"The intent was to remove the straight line from the rear of the frame ... and with the rings it helps distribute the impact loads that occur on the bottom of the bike and makes



Windsor entrepreneur Lou Tortola unveils his innovative bicycle design at the Caboto Club on Saturday. The RoundTail bicycle design helps to reduce stress on the rider's spine by absorbing the impact through the two adjacent circles.

for an overall more comfortable ride."

The path from fantasy to fruition spanned only five months

as what started as a napkin sketch took wing.

The design would eventually be computer tested, prototyped

and approved by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

After Tortola discovered

there was method behind his madness he contacted renowned bike craftsman Paul Taylor of Bozeman, Mont., who cast the prototype.

"After I showed him the drawings he said he couldn't sleep for three days and all he could think about was how he was going to build the bike," Tortola laughed.

"Now I have companies who manufacture bicycles who are excited about it and they actually get it."

Not everyone seems to "get" Tortola's design.

He said some people have commented on blogs questioning the practicality of the design, but Tortola said many of those questions usually get answered once they see the bike in person.

"Some people have looked at pictures and asked if the peddles would hit the frame," Tortola said.

"What I'm finding is when people look at pictures of it they don't get it, but when you see it in person you get it right away."

Though you may not see

the RoundTail bicycle at this year's Tour di Via Italia, Tortola said 12 are currently being handmade.

By September, Tortola plans to have the bike in titanium, carbon fibre and the current material, "Columbus Spirit," which is the same thickness as a business card.

The current version of the bike costs about \$10,000, but Tortola said he hopes to eventually have a variety of mountain bikes and street bikes available that will cost between \$200 and \$1,500.

"This bike is about \$10,000 because each component of it is very expensive, so when you put all the pieces together a bike like this can be anywhere from \$2,000 to \$10,000," Tortola said.

"This is just another variation on the bicycle and I don't want to take over the world with it, but I would like to sell a few of them."

For more information on the Tortola RoundTail bicycle visit roundtail.ca.

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