

X Games Champion Helps Riders Choose The Right Helmet

(NAPSA)—Today, bicyclists don't just ride—they fly.

Freestyle BMX riding, known for its high-flying mid-air stunts, is a high-growth sport in the world of cycling. In fact, sales of BMX bikes have jumped nearly 50 percent since 1995.

As BMX riding expands outside the action sports arenas, pros like Dave Mirra—11-time X Games BMX champion—offer up advice to non-competitive riders on choosing the right helmet for action sports.

"A lot of guys think that just because they're not competing in the big events, they don't need to wear a helmet," said Mirra. "No matter where you're riding, the ground doesn't get any softer. A BMX type of helmet with more coverage area on the sides and back of the head can mean the difference between walking away from a crash and not walking at all."

Mirra, who has worn Bell helmets for more than seven years, now consults with the company's designers, crash impact testers and biomechanics experts on helmet shapes and features for BMX and other action sports.

In 1975, Bell developed the first protective cycling helmet made of expanded polystyrene—now the industry standard for bike and skateboard helmets. Since then, organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and ASTM International have developed helmet performance standards for cycling and skating respectively.

In stores, helmets that can be used for cycling and skateboarding are called "multi-sport" or "BMX" helmets. The CPSC and ASTM certification stickers inside the helmets indicate that they can



Photo by Rich Van Every

Dave Mirra, 11-time X Games BMX champion, encourages riders to wear helmets on and off the ground.

be used for bicycling and other non-motorized wheeled sports.

Dr. Sylvain Palmer, a neurosurgeon with Children's Hospital at Mission Viejo, Calif., encourages competitive and recreational athletes to use certified helmets that meet the demands of the sport. Dr. Palmer noted, "Even minor accidents can cause lifelong brain injuries resulting in sleeping disorders, loss of smell and taste, and many other conditions that affect a person's quality of life."

While major competitive events like the XGames require athletes to wear helmets, Mirra says he'd wear one anyway.

"BMX is more than just a sport—it's a lifestyle," said Mirra. "You give up way too much if you get injured. It's just not worth it to take that chance."

For more information on helmet shapes and sizes, visit www.bellsports.com.