

# Former US national champion assists YHS Mountain Biking Team

By ZACHARY ECKERT  
Special to the News Mirror

Yucaipa resident Penny Lundgren was still in elementary school when she received her first bike — a Schwinn Sting Ray — and to her it was the coolest bike to have at the time. Little did she realize that the company that built her first bike would also go on to sponsor her during a period in which she would win a variety of national mountain biking championships.

“The feeling of flowing and focusing on the moment as I rode, made me realize I was born to ride a bike,” said Lundgren. “My love of the outdoors was the initial motivation for me to mountain bike.”

Upon graduating college with a degree in accounting, Lundgren still had the drive and ambition for athletics that had been instilled in her when she was in high school.

“I was inspired when congress passed Title IX in the ‘70s, because I came out of a time period in which women were less regarded when it came to athletics,” Lundgren said. “Title IX basically ensured that girls in high school would get an equal amount of funds for sports programs,” she explained.

By training and developing the discipline of mountain biking in her high school and college years, Lundgren decided to compete in her first cross country event in Mammoth



Penny Lundgren wins the Jeep National Championship in 1993.

California in 1986.

“I remember riding as hard as I could and not giving up,” she said. “It was my first mountain biking competition and I came in first place. The grand prize was a brand new bike and from that moment on I was driven to compete often.”

Within the next seven years Lundgren would go on to compete in over 100 different races and would go on to claim two national championship victories in downhill mountain biking.

“Downhill mountain biking requires a great deal of strength and balance to keep your momentum. You’re con-

stantly pedaling and it does get quite dangerous as you reach speeds of up to 50 miles per hour,” Lundgren explained.

Lundgren would later go on to do commentary work for ESPN. “I was talking to a sports reporter about a particular race and he told me that they needed a new commentator because the initial reporter died tragically of an unexpected heart attack,” she said. “It was a unique thing, because one day I was competing and the next day I was doing commentary work.”

These days, Lundgren assists Yucaipa High School mountain biking coaches Mike

Bagg and Scott Kennedy with directing the relatively new YHS mountain biking team. “We are moving into our fourth year here at YHS. We have 32 riders on the team, and there are 28 teams in the southern California area that are part of the National Interscholastic Cycling Association,” explained Bagg.

Although mountain biking as a competitive sport is a relatively new phenomenon in high schools across the nation, it is proving to be quite popular among students.

“It’s been fun the whole time, because I’ve seen the exponential growth of the program,” said YHS student Steven Gamache, who’s been with the team since its inception.

“I think it’s a great thing because it gives student athletes a venue to be active as well as various scholarship opportunities,” Lundgren said. “My goal is to make the students realize that by following what they love to do they can succeed,” she concluded.

The team has its first competition of the year on Feb. 26 at Vale Lake in Temecula.

For more information about



Penny Lundgren wins the Jeep National Championship in 1993.

the league visit [www.Socal-dirt.org](http://www.Socal-dirt.org).



Yucaipa Mountain Bike Team meets on campus before training.